

# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

## Annual Review 2007-2008



*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

## *One of England's Finest Landscapes*

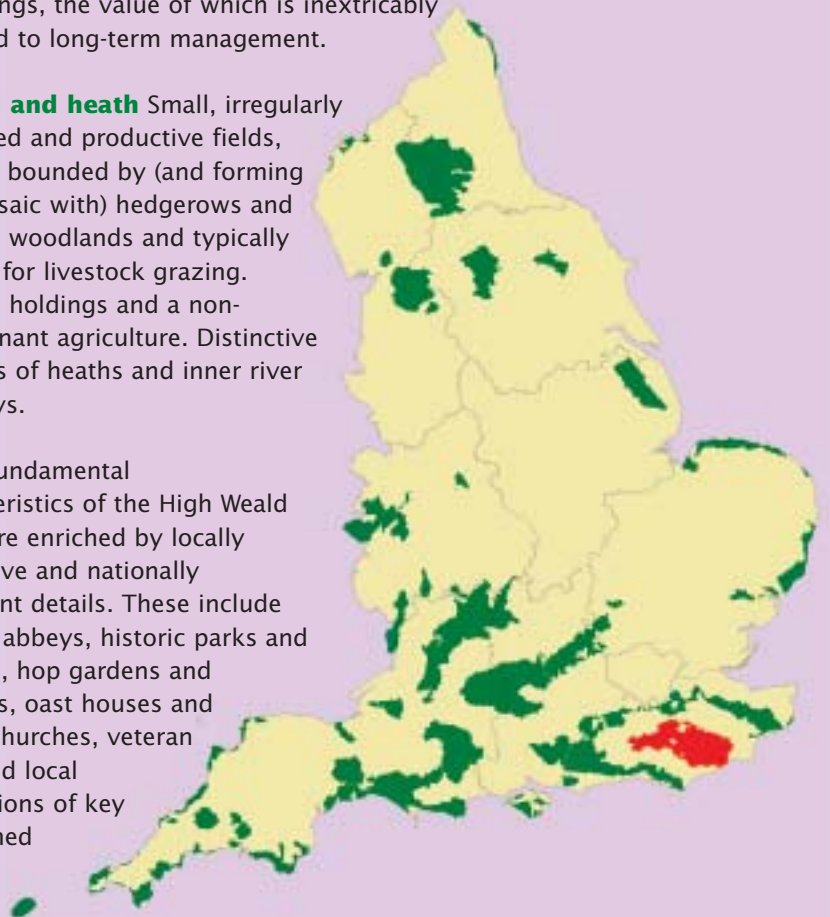


The essential character of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was established by the 14th century and has survived major historical events and social and technological changes. It is considered to be one of the best surviving, coherent medieval landscapes in Northern Europe.

The five key components of its character are:

- **Geology, landform, water systems and climate** Deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone. The ridges tend east-west and from them spring numerous gill streams that form the headwaters of rivers. Wide river valleys dominate the eastern part of the AONB. The landform and water systems are subject to and influence, a local variant of the British sub-oceanic climate.
- **Settlement** Dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads, hamlets and late medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.
- **Routeways** Ancient routeways (now roads and Rights of Way) in the form of ridge-top roads and a dense system of radiating droveways. The droveways are often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees, hedges, wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.
- **Woodland** A great extent of ancient woods, gills and shaws in small holdings, the value of which is inextricably linked to long-term management.
- **Field and heath** Small, irregularly shaped and productive fields, often bounded by (and forming a mosaic with) hedgerows and small woodlands and typically used for livestock grazing. Small holdings and a non-dominant agriculture. Distinctive zones of heaths and inner river valleys.

These fundamental characteristics of the High Weald AONB are enriched by locally distinctive and nationally important details. These include castles, abbeys, historic parks and gardens, hop gardens and orchards, oast houses and parish churches, veteran trees and local populations of key threatened species.





## ■ A Message from the Chairman

I am delighted to introduce the High Weald Annual Review 2007-08. Four years on from the publication of the first statutory AONB Management Plan in 2004, it is gratifying to see so many new partnerships and programmes supporting the long term management of this wonderful landscape.

The earmarking of £2 million in April 2007 by the Heritage Lottery Fund towards a £3.3 million scheme to restore the Weald Forest Ridge's medieval landscape, was particularly welcome. On behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee I would like to thank all the many people in the 18 organisations who worked so hard to put this scheme together and particularly staff at the AONB Unit who co-ordinated the bid.

Our research programme, which seeks to understand the fundamental framework of the landscape, continues to generate valuable insights to help us plan change and meet new challenges, whilst retaining the High Weald's much loved character. English Heritage has been an invaluable partner in our work to protect historic farmsteads and retain their links with land management, whilst our ancient woodland survey, now operating in Ashford, Rother and Tonbridge and Malling, has further uncovered a wealth of fascinating cultural and historical artefacts surviving in our woodlands.

One of the highlights of the past year was the launch of 'High Weald Hero Welly Walks', an excellent new education resource for schools. Ten schools have launched their walks which start and finish at the school gate and provide a chance for children and parents to explore and enjoy their local countryside.

Our Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) project completed its two year mission to provide targeted support to sites currently outside existing agreements, restoring 465 ha of ancient woodland and garnering this praise from our Forestry Commission partners for its final report – "an impressive write-up of an important local initiative to take forward our Keepers of Time policy".

I hope you will enjoy reading about all the many activities undertaken in the past year and particularly the 34 community projects supported by our Sustainable Development Fund. We look forward to working with all of you to support this special landscape and I would like to encourage everyone to contribute to the review of the AONB Management Plan taking place during 2008-09.

Finally, on behalf of the JAC I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new patrons Gregory Barker MP, Dr Lisbet Rausing, Lord Astor of Hever and Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith who have joined us to help promote the wonderful qualities of the High Weald.



Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy

Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy  
Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)  
July 2008

### Contents

■ Foreword	1
■ Structures and Partnerships	2
■ Policy and Research	6
■ Communications	8
■ Initiatives	13
■ Resources	22
■ Financial Summary	28
■ High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee	30
■ High Weald AONB Unit	32
■ High Weald AONB Fact and Figures	33

# STRUCTURES AND PARTNERSHIPS

*Locally, regionally, nationally and across Europe*

## ■ High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)



Conserving and Enhancing

The High Weald JAC's main purpose is to provide advice and guidance to constituent authorities and other organisations, on the management objectives for the AONB. The JAC has considered national and regional issues as a result of, among other things, the series of recent reforms to the land-use planning system, the mandatory five year review of the High Weald AONB Management Plan, the increasing general interest in and concern with climate change and the continued movement of Natural England towards its Executive Board's aspirations.

The High Weald JAC has continued to work closely with local, regional and national representatives of Natural England. As a response to a series of reviews Natural England has instigated that have a bearing on the future of protected landscapes, the JAC has promoted a consistent case for the work it undertakes, in an attempt to influence and inform Natural England of the special qualities of protected landscapes and of the High Weald in particular.

The High Weald JAC was dismayed to learn from the Audit Commission that, despite the effective accounting systems the JAC has had in place for the last 15 years, the Commission had decided that all the AONB management organisations in England and Wales are now subject to the Audit Commission Act 1998 and, as a result, are required to produce statutory accounts. Although the High Weald JAC remains to be fully convinced that, given its constitution, it needs to meet this requirement, it has fully complied with the Audit Commission views and national governance and accountability guidance. The High Weald JAC remains concerned about the additional financial cost of this requirement.

The High Weald Management Board, which consists of six JAC members, has met with the Unit staff on a frequent basis and has continued to closely assist the High Weald AONB Unit staff with the delivery of the AONB management plan and the JAC business plan objectives.



Furthering Public Understanding and Enjoyment



## ■ Local Partnerships

The High Weald Unit continued to work with a range of stakeholders throughout the year.

### Patrons

Gregory Barker MP, Dr Lisbet Rausing, Lord Astor of Hever and Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith were welcomed to the fold after they agreed to become Patrons for the High Weald AONB. The High Weald JAC was keen to attract a small group of individuals with an enthusiasm for and a commitment to the High Weald landscape, to be advocates for the High Weald AONB, to raise both the awareness of the special qualities of this nationally valued landscape and the actions we can all take to help conserve and enhance it. By virtue of being respected, either publicly or within their specific professions, the Patrons have been successful in attracting attention to the needs of the High Weald AONB specifically and protected landscapes generally.



Gregory Barker, High Weald patron, at the Unit's Heathfield Show marquee

### Local Authorities and other Organisations

With support from local authorities and other organisations, a number of projects were developed and expanded this year. The development phase of the Weald Forest Ridge has been excellent for bringing together 28 organisations to work jointly to meet AONB objectives. Agreement to expand the PAWs project was made with support from the Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission. Local authority enthusiasm for the Unit's research work saw the continued roll out of the Ancient Woodland Survey and, with ongoing support from English Heritage and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, recent farmstead research is being developed into useful advisory tools. The Unit was pleased to be able to provide office accommodation for the new Rother Woods Project Officer, an employee of Butterfly Conservation, from November.

The Unit has continued to provide advice on AONB Management Plan delivery to other organisations e.g. The Kent High Weald Project and Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and to other partnerships e.g. the Wealden and Rother Rural Regeneration Partnership and West Kent Economic Partnership, Ashdown Forest Higher Level Stewardship Panel and the Ashdown Forest Visitor Management Partnership.

### High Weald Landscape Trust

Throughout the year the High Weald Unit worked on a number of projects with the High Weald Landscape Trust, which has financially supported important areas of the Unit's work, notably the Weald Meadows Initiative and the 'High Weald Heroes' education programme. The Trust has also supported the Unit by continuing to raise awareness of the AONB and its landscape, to encourage greater understanding of its special qualities, which culminated in their attendance at the 10th Annual Woodfair.

### Schools

Building on the success of the High Weald Heroes primary school education programme, the High Weald Unit has taken steps to work more closely with older school children and students. The Unit joined the Kent Business 'Buddy in Science Scheme' and has been matched with Skinners' School of Royal Tunbridge Wells. The scheme aims to encourage better links between the scientific, business and professional community and their local schools. The

Visiting the RSPB's Broadwater Forest site





# STRUCTURES AND PARTNERSHIPS

*Locally, regionally, nationally and across Europe*



School children on a High Weald Welly Walk

Unit has also joined a new East Sussex County Council project that aims to increase the number and quality of work placements and eventually apprenticeships, for young people aged 14-19. Both these initiatives should ensure that young people are better informed about the businesses within their local area and encourage the schools to gain a better understanding of how these organisations work, the skills and qualifications they seek, and the potential local employment opportunities available.

## Landowners

The Weald Meadows Initiative and PAWS project have continued to provide direct advice to landowners. It was very pleasing to the High Weald Unit, to learn that Keith Datchler, manager of the Beech Estate at Battle, was awarded the top honour in Natural England's prestigious 'Future of Farming Awards'. Keith overcame 15 other regional finalists to take the national title in the inaugural year of Natural England's award scheme, which seeks to show that first rate environmental land management and sound farm businesses, can go hand in hand. The award recognised Keith's work to protect a precious yet threatened habitat – unimproved grasslands – whilst running a successful farm business.

## Parishes

With the ambition of working more closely with the 99 Parish Councils of the AONB, the High Weald Unit has produced parish council information sheets and produced five articles about the High Weald – specifically designed to be published as a series in Parish and local magazines.

## ■ Regional and National 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. Much time and effort over the year has been dedicated to providing Natural England with advice and guidance on a variety of landscape policy matters, most notably the series of reviews of protected landscapes – their remit and future – and also to the changes to the targeting and prioritisation of Environmental Stewardship schemes.

Laura Newland, the South East Protected Landscapes' Regional Lead Officer, has continued to work in close consultation with the South East protected landscapes, to effectively influence both regional and national policy to ensure that 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 the Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA).

In the South East, the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (SE Development Plan) and South East Economic Development Agency's Economic Strategy, have set targets to ensure that 20% of the total energy provision is derived from renewable sources by 2020. The implication of this is clear; the South East is likely to be required in the future to contribute to the country's efforts to meet national renewable energy generation targets. Advising on how the South East

Two EDF undergrounding schemes under way



AONBs can best contribute to this new demand, whilst also maintaining and enhancing the protected landscapes existing value and quality, is an important issue for the regional AONB Units, which have been working with SEEDA to identify how these landscapes can both adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change and to provide advice to others, using a strong evidence base.

During the past year the High Weald Unit has worked with the Environment Agency's Southern and Thames regions, to propose and discuss options to be considered for the river catchments of the AONB as part of the river basin planning the Environment Agency is required to undertake, to meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.

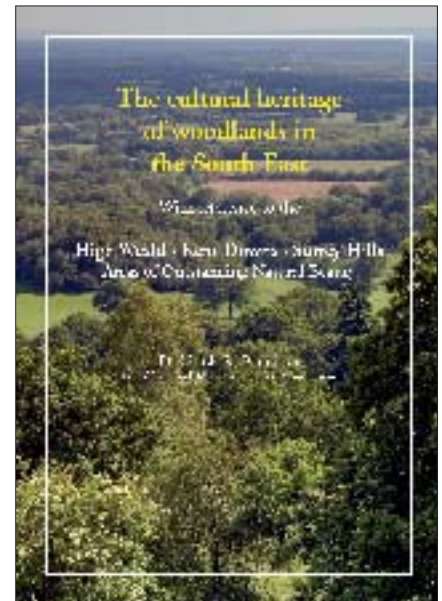
'The Cultural Heritage of Woodlands in the South East' was published in October, with funding from the Forestry Commission, Natural England, and the High Weald, Kent Downs and Surrey Hills AONBs. This book complements the efforts being made regionally to increase the understanding of the way in which woodlands have helped shaped the South East's landscape, to improve our knowledge of their cultural, archaeological, and historical importance and to provide robust evidence for the policies of decision-making organisations within the region.

A regional project partnership between South East AONBs and EDF enabled the Unit to develop a second project in partnership with the National Trust at Scotney Castle as part of the EDF Energy Network Undergrounding Scheme. The project will route underground nearly 2 km of overhead electricity cable at a total cost of just over £230,000. The route starts at Little Scotney Farm on the National Trust estate, passes through the hop gardens and turns at Finchcocks House towards Spelmonden, taking in areas of the surrounding parkland adjacent to Finchcocks. The scheme, which will help restore an important area of landscaped parkland, has been approved by the Protected Areas Steering Group and the initial consents work is under way, with the lines expected to be removed in 2009. Work on the Brightling Down scheme approved last year has begun with minor associated works finished and full line removal expected to be completed by the autumn of 2008.

### ■ European Partnerships

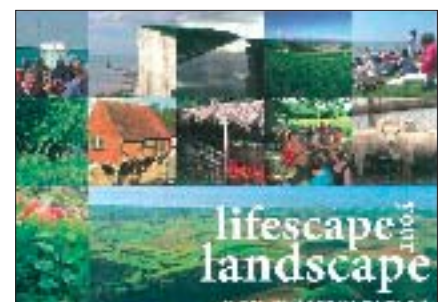
The final partnership event for the 'Lifescape Your Landscape' project was held in Brussels in December. Its objective was to disseminate the conclusions drawn from joint working between 14 partners across five countries, on approaches to tackling rural conservation and development. It was attended by politicians from across the project area and representatives from the European Union and other organisations and agencies such as the European Landowners Association. Sally Marsh, High Weald Director, gave a presentation on: 'Involving Local People and their Communities'. The final project report was made available in April 2008.

Kempens Landschap, a Belgian not-for-profit land owning organisation with an interest in natural and cultural heritage, chose to visit the High Weald AONB as part of their tenth anniversary celebrations. Kempens Landschap are reviewing their current remit and, as part of their research into the development of potential future policies for their area, they were keen to learn about the High Weald Unit's experience advising on the conservation of one of the UK's most valued landscapes.



The Cultural Heritage of Woodlands

Lifescape Your Landscape  
Final Report





Woodlands – 66% of management plan targets met

### ■ Management Plan Review

The review of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004 began in earnest with the JAC authorising a review of the plan at its November 2007 meeting.

An additional research officer was recruited to support this work, undertaking day-to-day GIS data management and research into:

1. High Weald cultural literacy perceptions, to help understand how the landscape is valued by the public
2. sustainable or eco buildings, to assist the Unit comments on the increasing number of planning applications in this area
3. climate change, given the need to set out an approach on this issue for the High Weald.

A further report to the JAC March 2008 meeting presented results of the initial review, on the basis of which the JAC authorised a full review and preparation of a replacement plan.

The consultation comprised a full stakeholder survey distributed to 160 stakeholders in early December 2007. The survey achieved an 11.8% response rate from a wide range of stakeholders, councillors, local authority officers, and parish councils and showed that:

- the plan is overwhelmingly used as required, rather than regularly
- 89.5% agreed that the plan is easy to use, concise and clear about its objectives and direction
- 88% were also satisfied that the plan is fit for purpose and delivers their requirements
- 60 – 80% of users supported the components overall.

Respondents raised issues relating to climate change, biodiversity, historic environment and archaeology, as requiring more attention.

The Review showed that progress in meeting the plans targets and indicators has been good. Achievement of targets is variable across the components with the greatest success achieved in meeting targets for Woodland (66%) & Settlement (63%), with targets for Routeways scoring lowest (21%). Progress towards meeting the indicators showed that about 26% of the indicators are currently (or partially) being met. Over 38% of Indicators showed improvement towards being met with about 35% showing little or no progress towards being met.

Following the review, work began on amendments and revisions to bring the Plan up to date.



Routeways – 21% targets met

#### **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 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 provides guidance on the care and management of them.



## ■ Consultations

Over the year the Unit has been consulted on over 70 general and minor planning applications across the High Weald. As well as these there have been a number of significant major planning applications and planning appeals that the Unit have been consulted on, or asked to be involved with. Appeals include a new farm unit at Bidborough ridge, a new farm development in Tandridge and an Eco Home near Heathfield. Major applications have been a major sports facility and squash club at Steel Cross, Crowborough and a major housing development at Blackfriars, Battle, and an ongoing consultation re the Freshfield Lane Brickworks.

Other planning related consultations have been received and responded to regarding Rother and Hastings Core Strategies, Wealden's Local Development Framework (LDF) Issues & Options report, the Wealden Design Guide SPD and the Mid Sussex & Wealden's Landscape Capacity Studies and three local development framework consultations from Horsham, Crawley, and Kent County Council. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping opinion for the Biddenden Mid Kent Water pipeline has also been sought.

The Unit also attended a major event regarding the Baldslow Link A21 improvement with the Highways Agency and also responded to the government consultation paper on Permitted Development Rights for Householder Microgeneration.

Work has been progressing with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on the Historic Farmsteads project. English Heritage, Unit Officers and Tunbridge Wells staff have visited a number of farmsteads and discussed the options. The site visits will help to refine the ongoing development of the English Heritage toolkit for the reuse and adaptation of historic farmsteads.

## ■ Ownership Boundaries Research

In support of the historic farmsteads project, the Unit created a digitised set of Farm ownership boundaries for Wittersham Parish, which covers years from the tithe map (c.1840) to present day when farm censuses were carried out (1910 and 1941). The more detailed surveys (1910) include information on the building types and construction materials, as well as farm size and workforce – all of which are especially useful to the historic farmsteads project.

The information provides a new dimension to existing knowledge about farms and farming history in the High Weald and opens up opportunities for further development and understanding through the future use of socio-demographic data. Importantly, being digital the Unit can now map these boundaries in relation to other important features or key components of natural beauty, for example meadows, or routeways. It also supports the cultural landscape research the Unit undertakes, particularly with regard to our understanding of historic boundaries.



View of Goudhurst

Farm boundaries in Wittersham Parish 1941





Adapting and mitigating climate change is a key issue for the management plan review

### ■ Climate Change Research

As climate change is high up on the agenda of both Governments and organisations, the Unit has spent some of its time during the past year collating evidence and actively researching some key climate change issues. Primarily to inform the Unit's assessment of the likely impact of climate change on the AONB, the Unit's research officer has undertaken the following in the last year.

- Information gathering on climate change and related subjects, e.g. renewable energy and keeping this up to date.
- Keeping up to date with progress of global regional and local thoughts and policies relating to climate change.
- Researching the wind energy debate – in particular concerns regarding visual impact.
- Looking at climate change in relation to the High Weald's key components, landscape and biodiversity.
- Attending meetings to commission renewables projects to look at renewable technologies and their suitability for use within the High Weald landscape.
- Summarising key documents relating to climate change, ensuring that the Unit has a grasp of global as well as local issues.

This research is ongoing, as thoughts and understanding of global warming (as well as the likely future scenarios for our climate) are still highly changeable.

### ■ AONB Map Library

The Unit revised its set of maps for use in publications, reports and online in 07/08. Images were updated and all were produced to a new set of criteria to ensure maps follow a High Weald 'standard,' as this will give the Unit more consistency in its digital and paper document outputs. Templates of the key maps which the Unit uses regularly have been created in GIS. Having an up to date library should also reduce the time spent making individual maps for documents and publications.

### ■ AONB Statistics

In support of the Management Plan review, a number of statistics have been revised and generated for the High Weald Unit. The statistics have been referenced to make it quick and easy to reproduce them in the future, in order to show change more accurately. The Unit now has an updated Facts and Figures sheet on the website and available to all staff to ensure figures quoted for the most common attributes of the AONB region are as up to date and accurate as possible.

The Environmental Report (part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment process for the Management Plan Review) has been produced and will be consulted upon in 2008/09 by members of the public and external organisations.

New AONB Routeways map



During 2007/08, the Communications Team continued to promote and explain the High Weald landscape, both directly through Unit projects and indirectly, by enabling partners to interpret the special qualities of the AONB.

## ■ Events

### Ashdown Past and Present

Cllr John Barnes, Chairman of East Sussex County Council formally opened the Ashdown Forest 'Past and Present' exhibition which ran from the 4th to 20th May. The exhibition brought together 200 old and new images of Ashdown Forest, historic photographs of Ashdown Forest life, views and villages circa 1900 collected by Peter Kirby, Gareth Price's contemporary photographs of similar Forest locations, Juliet Murray's present-day landscape paintings and the Unit's digital media.

The aim of the exhibition was to test this variety of visual media to interpret Ashdown Forest's landscape and how it has been influenced by people and their activities. A particular focus was developing a greater awareness among local people that Ashdown Forest is:

1. a special place within the heart of the High Weald AONB
2. the largest and best preserved area of open heathland in the South East created by people and their livestock over many centuries
3. needs careful management to retain its distinctive heathland
4. that the term Forest, as applied to Ashdown Forest, does not mean dense woodland, which is the modern meaning of the word.

An estimated 1190 people visited the exhibition over its three-week life with 64 positive comments recorded in the visitor book saying how much people enjoyed the exhibition. There were additional benefits to the local economy – £1,336.60 was taken in sales and £1,400 in orders, by the three local artists.

### Heathfield Show 2007

A Mesolithic Hunter, Drover, Roman Soldier and Iron Master's wife, all Unit staff with dramatic leanings, brought the High Weald alive at the Unit's Heathfield Show marquee. A DVD with the historical characters (produced by the Unit using a local amateur dramatic group) watched in the Unit's 'cinema', was a popular feature of the marquee.

A particular aim of the day was to gauge the public's interest in wildflower hay, packaged in small quantities as pet feed and bedding. Approximately 60 people showed an interest in bags of wildflower grassland. They were asked to make a donation to High Weald Landscape Trust, based on the price they would be happy to pay for the hay. Donations of £125.55 were made. Five bales of hay were needed to fill the bags, making each bale of hay worth the equivalent of £25 – significantly more than the £4 when sold as cattle or horse fodder. This suggested that an alternative marketing approach may be worth considering for some landowners.

### High Weald Landscape Trust at Weald Woodfair

The Unit and its Projects attended the 10th Annual Woodfair three-day show with added backup from project supporters the High Weald Landscape Trust (HWLT). Based at the High Weald AONB Unit's stand, the HWLT trustees operated a rota of two members per day, assisting the Unit staff on duty.



Ashdown Past and Present



High Weald Roman draws in the crowds

Unit stand at WoodFair







All the trustees found the show an enjoyable experience and a great opportunity to mix with members of the public and Unit staff. Their focus was promoting the Trust's small grant scheme and fundraising for the Weald Meadows Initiative & wildflower grasslands. The 99 wildflower grasslands surveyed from public rights of way this summer by the WMI on the Heathfield – Battle ridge were displayed on a large scale map and donations were taken for 'Weald Wildflower Hay' packaged in both jute and paper bags.

Donations of £335 were made over the three days, which was a credit to the trustees' work. As a result of the success of their attendance the HWLT intend to run a number of other fundraising and educational events.

## ■ Publications

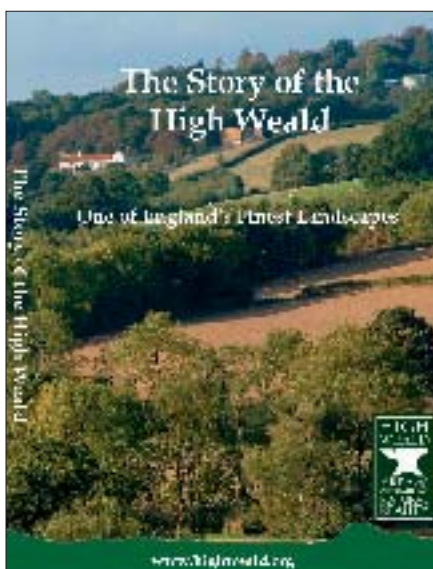
### High Weald Anvil 2008

Aimed at AONB residents and visitors, the 2008 edition, featuring the younger generation as the main theme, was published in March with a print run of 80,000. Using National Letterbox Marketing, 67,000 were distributed with free papers to households within the AONB. A further 6,000 were distributed directly to local tourist attractions and farm shops. This, the ninth edition, features articles on living sustainably, the High Weald Heroes, the Ashdown Forest Shepherd and exploring opportunities for young people to learn about wildlife.

### New Landscape Character Stories for AONB Website

Previously, the story of the High Weald's landscape has been told on the AONB website through two pages entitled 'Livestock and Landscape' and 'Materials and Landscape'. These stories have now been incorporated into five 'stories' – one for each of the five AONB Landscape Character Components. In June, the following new pages were therefore written and added to the website's 'About the High Weald' section:- The Geology Story – The Woodland Story – The Routeways Story – The Settlement Story – The Fields and Heaths Story.

### New landscape character stories



### The High Weald – the Movie

It is now possible to watch the Story of the High Weald – the creation of one of England's finest landscapes – either as a 15 minute long story on CD or as two minute webclips focused on each of its components – rolling hills, scattered settlement, historic routeways, ancient woodland and fields and heaths at [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org). The 'movies' provide a unique view of the area through stunning aerial photography. Three additional webclips aimed at grassland owners/managers have also been added to the website – the six clips now cover Identifying meadow flowers and grasses; Understanding grassland types; Managing a hay meadow; Weed control; Creating a wildflower grassland from scratch and Diversifying an existing grassland.

### 'My High Weald' Audio Visual Display Unit

In May the Unit's Audio Visual Display Unit (AVDU) supported the Ashdown Forest Past and Present event by playing the three Ashdown DVDS produced by the Unit in 2006/07; An introduction to the Ashdown Forest, The History of Ashdown Forest and the Management of Ashdown Forest. From August 2007, the Unit gave partners the opportunity to host the event in their visitor areas and share the High Weald's landscape heritage with local people.

The ADVU was set up with five interactive buttons to display material from 'My High Weald'. 'My High Weald' presents five historical characters who talk about their lives, comparing the High Weald countryside they lived in with the countryside as it is now. The characters are: Maximillius – a Roman Soldier from the 2nd Century AD; Edmund – an Anglo Saxon Drover; Hugh – a Commoner of Ashdown Forest from the Medieval period; Edith – a Farmer from the Medieval period; Jane – a Tudor Iron Master's wife; Ruby – a Hop Picker working between the wars.

The AVDU was placed in Tunbridge Wells Museum in August and September and Hastings Tourist Centre from December to March. The Unit has the capacity to show other material so it is expected that it can continue to travel the High Weald area in 2008/09 and beyond.

## Parish Newsletter Articles

In August the Interpretation Officer produced five articles about the AONB, designed to be published as a series in Parish and local magazines. They tell the story of how our outstanding landscape came to look the way it does today, mainly as a result of human interaction with the natural environment. In suggested order of publication, the articles are:

1. Landform Story
2. Woodland Story
3. Routeways Story
4. Settlement Story
5. Fields and Heaths Story

The response from Parish Councils has been enthusiastic. For example: "Thank you so much for the articles about the High Weald AONB. I am pleased to say we have printed Landform Story in our September issue and plan to use the other four articles over the next few months. I am sure they will be very popular with our readers." (Cowden 'Anvil')

## Website

The High Weald website receives an average of 4000 hits per month and there is an average of 3000 downloads of AONB documents made each month during the year. The top downloads continue to include copies of the High Weald Anvil, habitat leaflets and the general AONB leaflet. New additions include further pages on the education resource My High Weald such as the Welly Walks around High Weald Hero schools. The AONB Management Plan pages have been renamed AONB Policy to reflect the ongoing work on the Management Plan review 2009 and AONB Publications and multi media pages have been added, allowing easy access to all the Unit's downloadable publications and the growing library of webclips.

## Media

### National Future of Farming Awards – High Weald winner

After celebrating his success at winning the regional final in October, Keith Datchler, a farm manager from the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), was awarded the top honour in Natural England's prestigious 'Future of Farming Awards'. Keith Datchler, of Beech Estate near Battle, narrowly pipped the 15 other regional finalists to take the national title in the inaugural year of Natural England's award scheme, which set out to show that



Listening to Edith's story





Keith Datchler, manager of the Beech Estate at Battle

first rate environmental land management and sound farm businesses can go hand in hand. The award recognises Keith's work to protect a precious yet threatened habitat that supports a rich mix of native wildlife – including wildflowers, butterflies and other rare insects – whilst running a successful farm business.

Keith manages a 772 hectare ancient meadow landscape, owned by The Sir John Spencer Wills Trust. He is passionate about conservation and is a founder Trustee of the High Weald Landscape Trust. In recent years, he has worked alongside the High Weald AONB Unit – particularly with the Weald Meadows Officer – to improve the biodiversity and access on the estate, to enhance its landscape and historic assets and to widen the estate's income base. The whole estate is covered by an Environmental Stewardship Agreement that gives farmers and land managers access to funding in return for effective environmental management.

### **Geographical Magazine features the High Weald AONB**

In February the Features Editor of the Royal Geographical Society's magazine 'Geographical' visited the High Weald AONB to interview AONB Unit staff about the area and the Unit's work as part of an on-going series to focus upon one Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty per issue. The issue on the High Weald was published in May 2008 and is available at [www.rgs.org](http://www.rgs.org)

## **■ Enabling Partners**

### **Training courses**

On January 17, an 'Interpretation in the Garden' workshop was delivered by Telltale Trainer, Susan Cross at Wakehurst Place, Ardingly. There were 13 participants – most of whom were garden owners/managers. The workshop arose from a successful course run in 2006/07 'Is our Interpretation working?' which prompted garden attraction owners/managers to ask for a course tailored to developing their garden interpretation skills. Feed back was positive with a number of participants keen to pursue further training.

### **Friends newsletter**



### **High Weald Awareness Programme**

Communications with parish councils and development control officers in 2006/2007 revealed that there was limited awareness of the JAC and the Unit's role in developing an understanding of the area, advising on its management and enabling action to take care of it. As a result the Unit has started an awareness raising programme beginning with the production of two AONB planning guidance notes aimed at development control officers and Parish Councils. To view the notes, please visit [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org)

### **Friends of the High Weald**

Friends received one newsletter in October. The newsletter included articles from two Friends, one highlighting how a Friend has used a small grant from the High Weald Sustainable Development Fund to restore a medieval hedge marking his ancient woodland boundary. This links in with his pledge on joining the Friends – to care for the High Weald AONB by retaining and restoring his overplanted ancient woodland. As of 31st March 2008 there were 246 Friends.



## ■ High Weald Education Programme

*Enabling primary schools and their associated communities, to understand and care for the nationally important landscape on their doorstep*

### The High Weald Hero Partnership

The current number of schools within the High Weald Hero (HWH) partnership continues to grow, with the total number of HWH Schools now standing at 26. Within this year 13 assemblies and four class based workshops were delivered, all based around developing children's understanding of the High Weald's key components. 'The Meadow Play' continued to be popular with four performances of the Key Stage 2 version and five of the new Key Stage 1 'The Lazy Bee' Play.

During the year, two HWH newsletters were circulated to all teachers within the partnership and schools were also included in event mail outs. The newsletter aims to raise awareness of the programme with all High Weald schools and promotes the work that the HWH schools are already undertaking.

### Training programme – raising awareness of the High Weald

Training has been a high priority for the project this year and 12 training sessions were held at schools to introduce teachers to the HWH partnership and develop their awareness, knowledge and understanding of the High Weald landscape. This has had positive results with schools planning how they will use the HWH Education resources such as the map sets, and the 'My High Weald' films. Some schools in the partnership have now developed High Weald themed topics.

The Ashdown Forest Education Forum, 'Enriching learning on Ashdown Forest', was held in March, to raise awareness of Ashdown Forest as an education resource with local schools. This was a pilot event to evaluate the need for location based training and promotion of key sites in the High Weald as suitable locations for school visits. Attendees from 15 schools, from all four counties covered by the High Weald designation and two organisations, were introduced to the new education offers available from the Forest Centre. Attendees went on a guided walk with demonstrations of activities they could do with children. They also took part in and were appreciative of, a consultation workshop to inform the development of education at Ashdown Forest. Feedback from the event has been positive with schools already booking field trips. As a result, location based training events will now become a component of the HWH project.

### High Weald Heroes goes international

On June 20, children from one of the first High Weald Heroes Schools, Dallington, took part in a field trip to Dohem in Nord Pas de Calais. The two-day return visit (Dohem visited Dallington in June 2006) was packed full of activities to help the children understand the local distinctiveness of the area: landscape walks, view painting, wattle and daub wall building with opportunities to see projects being undertaken by the French children to enhance their local area, a recycling scheme and the school garden. The whole of the French school community were involved with the visit – with the High Weald children being particular impressed by the involvement of the Mayor.

#### 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 Hero plaque given to new Partnership members

Teachers on a mirror walk



# INITIATIVES

## *Furthering awareness and understanding*



### **Welly Walks – helping schools communities further the boundaries of their outside classroom**

High Weald Hero Welly Walks are a new education resource for schools that have been produced as part of the High Weald Heroes education programme. The walks start and end at the school gate and wherever possible, are circular. Walks leaflets can be downloaded from [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org) and have also been professionally printed. Officers will be working with schools to look at inventive ways that they can promote them in their communities. The leaflets enable children to ‘read’ the landscape and as well as written route directions, provide pictorial guidance to assist navigation – an approach to walks leaflets developed through the Ashdown Forest Interpretation Project that has been well received.

Schools in the HWH partnership have been enthusiastic about this resource, welcoming the opportunity to further the boundaries of their “outside classroom” and have been making good use of their walks. Since April 2007, ten walks have been created for the following schools; Benenden, Biddenden, Penshurst, Cranbrook, Colliers Green, Lamberhurst, Hever, Burwash, Dallington and Netherfield. There are many more on the waiting list.

### **High Weald Hero School of the Year 2007**

The first High Weald Heroes Award was judged in July, with the judges from the High Weald Landscape Trust visiting seven schools to find out what they had been doing as High Weald Heroes. The judges were delighted to announce Netherfield Church of England Primary School as the very first winners of the award.

For them, what made Netherfield stand out from the other entries, was the action the school community had taken to clear fly-tipping from their local woodland. Whilst going on a walk to explore and find out more about the landscape surrounding their school, they were shocked to see the amount of rubbish that had been dumped. They decided to do something about it and successfully petitioned the local landowners and council to get it cleared. At the judging, the children impressed the judges with their enthusiasm and commitment to making a difference to the quality of their local landscape and environment. The children performed a short play about the consequences of dropping litter in woods, recited a poem and pledged their commitment to keep on “Making a Difference”.

### **Enabling Schools Mapping: Schools GIS Layer**

In order to be able to store information about the schools in the High Weald in one easily accessible programme, we have completed a queriable GIS layer. This layer provides information and accurate locations of primary and secondary schools, both state and private, within the High Weald and the areas around its periphery. It will primarily be used for the High Weald Heroes programme, to maintain details of HWH schools and target new ones.

Accurate school locations means maps can be overlain with any feature, for example driveways and can be produced quickly allowing the Unit to show schools the features of the High Weald they have on their doorstep.

The completion of this tool will make targeting schools and the production of High Weald Hero literature and school resources much more straightforward, as well as providing the Unit with the ability to view local features in relation to key schools in the area.

Netherfield school performing their play



### Rationale

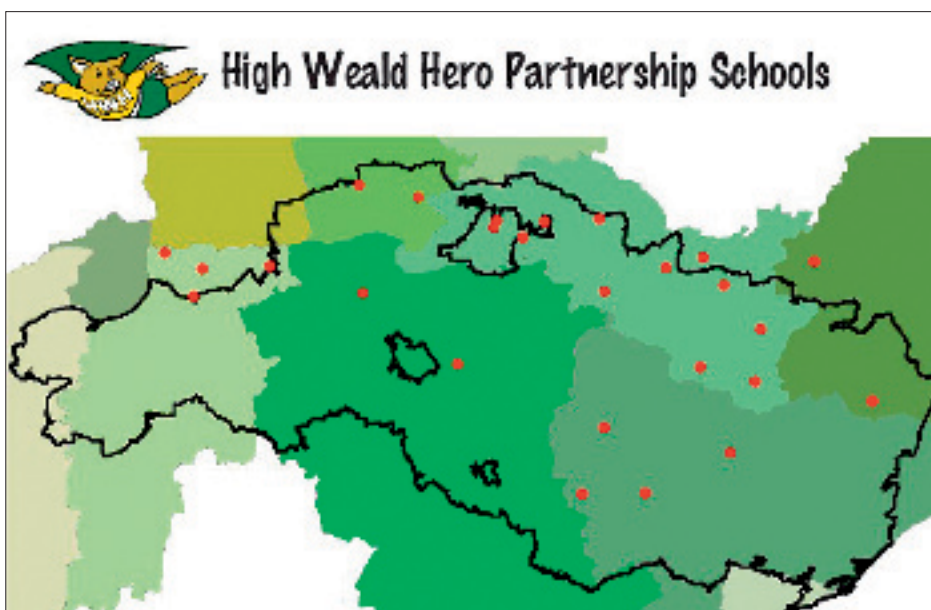
The High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) has until recently, focused on working with policy makers, landowners and visitors. Following the recruitment of a teacher to its staff unit however, it has sought to broaden its influence by developing a programme that engages school communities (both in and around the area) with the High Weald.

The High Weald Hero programme has been developed to implement the recommendations of the High Weald Primary Education Strategy. This strategy identifies opportunities for joint working with schools to enable implementation of the government's Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto, the National Framework for Sustainable Schools and Excellence and Enjoyment: A Strategy for Primary Schools, as well as the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives. It also takes into account the specific logistical circumstances of the High Weald – distribution of schools, resource restrictions, programme sustainability issues etc.

The programme is based around the five High Weald Hero Actions, *Find Out About*, *Explore*, *Take Care of*, *Be Proud of* and *Enjoy*. The actions are positive, proactive and non-prescriptive, leaving room for discussion and creativity in their achievement. The programme offers a package of support that is responsive to individual school needs, to enable HWH actions to be delivered in a way that suits the teachers. There is a strong emphasis on teacher training, engagement and filling gaps in school support materials, to enable activities to continue beyond the life of the programme



### Location of High Weald Hero Schools





### ■ Weald & Downs Ancient Woodland Survey *Updating the Ancient Woodland Inventory*

#### **Profile**

#### **Weald Ancient Woodland Survey**

##### **Purpose**

To update and enhance the existing Ancient Woodland Inventory including woodlands under two hectares. 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**

Natural England, Forestry Commission, Wealden District Council, Mid Sussex District Council, Ashford Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Rother District Council, The Woodland Trust, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, High Weald AONB Unit, Sussex Wildlife Trust and Sussex Biological Records Centre.

##### **Timescale**

Wealden District: start February 2004, completed March 2006.  
Mid Sussex District: start October 2005, completed October 2006.  
Tunbridge Wells Borough: start 2006, completed October 2007.  
Ashford Borough: start 2007, to be completed November 2008.  
Rother District: start November 2007, to be completed November 2009.  
Tonbridge & Malling Borough: start November 2007, to be completed November 2009.

The Weald & Downs Ancient Woodland Survey had its beginnings in 2003/04 with a pilot project, The Weald Ancient Woodland Survey. This was completed in 2006 and, as well as providing an enhanced ancient woodland inventory for Wealden District, established a methodology which was subsequently extended into Mid Sussex District, Tunbridge Wells District and Ashford Borough. In autumn 2007 the programme further expanded, and changed its name to reflect a widening scope, to become the Weald & Downs Ancient Woodland Survey. Two new officers were appointed, one based at the High Weald AONB Unit, working towards a complete survey of East Sussex and Kent and another based at the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre covering surveys in West Sussex.

#### **Achievements 2007/08**

- Revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Tunbridge Wells Borough has been completed. The whole of the Borough's woodland resource has now been re-examined including woodlands under two hectares that had not been previously mapped.
- Over 70% of Tunbridge Wells Borough's woods have been identified as ancient. The area of ancient woodland since the original inventory was produced has risen from 4,719 hectares to 5,391 hectares, a gain of 672 hectares. Overall, the total ancient woodland cover has risen from 14.24% to 16.27% as a result of this revision.
- The revised inventory of Ancient Woodland for the borough of Tunbridge Wells was launched at Bedgebury Bell International School in October with a successful seminar event and lunch.
- The Survey methodology is now being implemented in Ashford Borough, Rother District, Hastings Borough and Tonbridge & Malling Borough.
- The mapping of potentially ancient woodland in Ashford Borough is complete with field survey and archival research ongoing to verify the status of all sites. The final dataset is expected to be delivered in November 2008 with a formal launch event in Ashford.
- Priority mapping of approximately 40% of the Rother District area and 30% of the Tonbridge & Malling Borough area has been completed and field surveys in these two areas are planned for summer 2008.
- 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 & Downs 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.

## ■ Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) Project

*Improving and maintaining the ecological condition of ancient woodland sites*

Since December 2005, the High Weald Unit, the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission have jointly funded a project to restore unmanaged plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS). Following on from the successful delivery of the first phase, the project has been extended for a further twelve months. The project officer will work concurrently on a project to improve SSSI Woodlands in the region.

A report to disseminate the findings from the first phase of work has been published and is now available on the High Weald website. The report has been circulated nationally to partner organisations, and was well received by the heads of the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust.

In order to continue 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 2007/2008

- 12 schemes supported with EWGS or Felling Licences.
- 13 advice/reports on Restoration.
- 'Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites Final Report 2008' published.
- A specific High Weald PAWS grant was created by the Forestry Commission.
- The area of PAWS being gradually restored was increased to 465ha.
- A training event was organised at Brick Kiln Wood for 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.
- The PAWS programme was promoted at the Heathfield Show, the Weald Woodfair and a national PAWS seminar organised by the Woodland Trust.

### 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.

### 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 31 March 2008, Phase II March 2008-March 2009.



Sawpit Discovery

### Woodland Inspection



### 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 and Sheepkeep.

##### Timescale

Initiated spring 2002, ongoing.

## ■ The Weald Grazing Network (WGN)

During 2007/2008 the Weald Grazing Network worked in partnership with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and a landowner initiative called 'Sheepkeep' – a web based database of land and graziers. Following consultation with the Weald Grazing Network members contact details were passed onto Sheepkeep. Weald graziers and landowners now have an online High Weald database search facility and ability to access wider contacts, plus the opportunity to update their own details and requirements via the website Sheepkeep 'moderator'. As in 2006/07 there is still an unmet need for grazing on sites of biodiversity importance, particularly on small fragments of herb-rich grassland. Grazing has been increasingly difficult to facilitate due to Blue Tongue and Foot and Mouth movement restrictions.

### Achievements 2007/08

- Email to all Weald Grazing Network members re Exmoor Ponies in need of home due to pressures caused by Blue Tongue and Foot & Mouth.
- Network meeting to discuss the design of the High Weald search facility on Sheepkeep.
- All Weald Grazing Network members (105) contacted for approval to pass details on to Sheepkeep.
- Web page design and links from the High Weald AONB grazing pages to Sheepkeep established.
- 64 sites and 31 grazier records from the Weald Grazing Network database were successfully transferred to Sheepkeep.

### Rationale

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

Meadow restored by grazing  
Hebrideans





## ■ 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 second year of phase IV funding, due for completion in September 2009.

### Achievements 2007/08

#### **Conserving and enhancing the wildflower grasslands resource**

- Twenty owners had an advisor session on management and 28 site visits were carried out providing management advice and flora surveys as part of a detailed site assessment form.
- Three management plans delivered for species-rich grasslands site, one resulting in acceptance into Higher Level (HLS) Environmental Stewardship and the other two resulting in scoping for Entry Level Stewardship with a view to HLS in the future.
- Overseen seven harvesting operations on seven unimproved grassland sites resulted in 54 kg of seed and an income to meadow owners of £543.
- Ten people contacted the WMI with feedback on their sites and some 52 organisations made contact with queries on seed, site suitability, project set up, grassland management, seed labelling and grants.
- 308 ha of grassland have benefited from advice and support given by the WMI.
- 1057 records of existing, restored and newly created sites were maintained on the grasslands sites database held at the High Weald AONB Unit.
- With the two contracts let by the WMI over 141 meadows have had their boundaries verified and indicator species entered into a biodiversity package called Recorder. Relevant sites have been noted for follow up visits.

#### **Restoration and re-creation projects for landowners**

- Twenty people contacted the WMI for wildflower creation & enhancement advice.
- The un-cleaned weight of all harvested Weald Native Origin Seed (WNOS) was only 95 kg (in a poor weather year) and the clean out % (once the chaff and unwanted species were removed) was 57% for the seed collected from seven machine harvested sites. Therefore the final dry clean seed weight was a small but precious 54 kg of WNOS.
- 34 kg of dry, cleaned and packaged WNOS was replanted on 11 suitable sites, totalling 17.7 ha of creation and enhancement. All landowners received technical advice to assist their sowing.
- Purchasers of WNOS included 4 Countryside Stewardship agreements landowners, three organisations and eight private individuals.

#### **Wildflower grasslands project development & research**

- Verified and mapped (using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) systems) 141 meadow from public rights of way.
- Added 141 meadows records to the Recorder 6 package for biodiversity recording. 08/09 work will include these results being passed back to selective landowners as part of targeted, proactive site visit in the Heathfield – Battle Ridge and wider AONB.
- 1 x draft High Weald AONB grassland strategy produced with further consideration to landscape scale methodology to be explored. The strategy highlights a deterioration of 40% in the 141 species-rich grasslands verified and mapped in 2007. The document's main conclusions are:
  1. The planning system has a vital role to play in helping to conserve the

### Profile

## Weald Meadows Initiative

### Purpose

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

### Funding partners

High Weald Landscape Trust, The Tubney Charitable Trust, INTERREG IIIB' Lifescape Your Landscapes', 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

Initiated 1996, Phase IV July 2006 – September 2009.

### Yellow Rattle



# INITIATIVES

## *Developing strategic and practical solutions*



Proactive work with NE has secured grants for meadow management

remaining species-rich grassland resource, primarily through development control.

2. Agri-environment schemes will help to finance the management of some sites, but sustained individual support for grassland owners is also needed.
  3. We need to accept that effective meadow conservation may have a cost implication, in common with other high value but uneconomic semi-natural habitats such as ponds, hedges and reedbeds. In extreme cases, site purchase may be the only option to conserve the best and most threatened meadows.
- Proactive working with Natural England identified 25 sites suitable for joint working, including many meadow/grassland sites that are due to come out of existing ten year Countryside Stewardship Schemes in October 2008.
  - Landowner networking to explore options for new outlets for 'Weald Wildflower Hay' with trial marketing via farm open day.

### ***Furthering public understanding and enjoyment***

- 500 copies of the Wildflower Grasslands in The Weald leaflet were distributed at events and in response to information requests received by the Meadows Officer.
- 5584 hits were received on the meadow pages of [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org) with 621 of these total hits being on the new web clips.
- 131 Weald Wildflower hay wedges were provided for pet feed and bedding to raise awareness of the nutrient value of species rich grassland hay.
- Developed, scripted, filmed and edited 6 x introductory online meadows web clips for landowners/contractors. Clips include:
  - Identifying Meadow Flowers and Grasses
  - Understanding Grassland Types
  - Managing a Hay Meadow
  - Weed Control
  - Creating a Wildflower Grassland From Scratch
  - Diversifying an Existing Grassland
- Organised and ran a range of targeted meadows events including:
  1. 1 x contractors course for 6 contractors
  2. 6 x landowner courses involving 217 landowners
  3. 1 x advisors course involving 9 advisors
  4. 2 x networking events including introducing meadows to the new director of Kew at Wakehurst Place with other staff.

WMI Smallholders' Farm Walk



### ***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 2007/08 has concentrated on surveying the resource for future proactive advice and promoting meadow products and innovative engagement mechanisms that help support ongoing management.

## ■ Historic Farmsteads Project

Work continued in partnership with English Heritage and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on historic farmsteads and their potential role in a sustainable approach to small settlements in the Weald. Rapid characterisation was completed for the Low Weald of Kent, providing us with a detailed understanding of the age, plan form and survival of all historic farmsteads across East and West Sussex, Surrey High Weald and the High and Low Weald of Kent.

Detailed studies were made of sites in Tunbridge Wells representing the main plan forms, providing us with case studies to examine re-use and re-development issues for different farmstead types. Aerial footage and video interviews with specialists exploring the history and farm buildings were also gathered. Web guidance, drawing on this work and using photographs and moving images, is being produced for planners and site managers.

Two additional pieces of socio-economic research were commissioned to improve our understanding of the role of farmsteads in the rural economy and settlement policy. The Countryside and Community Research Unit, University of Gloucestershire and West of England were asked to develop a new approach to defining sustainable development in areas of dispersed settlement like the High Weald. Their report 'The Sustainable Development of Dispersed Settlement in the High Weald AONB' proposed a set of generic, type and local criteria that could be used to ensure that character, as well as community aspirations, could be considered alongside national sustainable development criteria in settlement planning. The Department of Town and Regional Planning, University of Sheffield looked in detail at the economic and social characteristics of historic farmsteads, identifying where there is a strong, surviving agricultural economy (for example around Heathfield) and where residential conversion and change are concentrated. The research will help refine the focus for farming and land management support.



Re-use and re-development issues for different farmstead types have been examined

### **Profile** **Historic Farmsteads Project**

#### **Purpose**

To develop an understanding of High Weald farmstead character and survival, identifying patterns at a landscape scale and providing a framework for more detailed archive, site survey and guidance.

#### **Partners**

English Heritage, West Sussex County Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

#### **Timescale**

Initiated April 2006, ongoing.

### **Rationale**

The aims of this project are to provide a consistent understanding of farmstead character and survival at a landscape scale of the High Weald AONB and the areas of East Sussex and West Sussex outside the AONB, in order to inform policy and interpretation. The collation and analysis of data in this project will then be applied to a range of scenarios, including:

- land use policy and planning (including Supplementary Planning Documents)
- the development of Historic Environment Records
- inform local development frameworks and to provide the context and guidance for applications relating to individual historic farm buildings
- the sustainability of rural settlements, building on the results of a pilot project being undertaken for the AONB Unit by Land Use Consultants (due to report in December 2005)
- the targeting of Higher Level Environmental Stewardship in the High Weald and to assist landowners, managers and advisors with applications and Farm Environment Plans.

Socio-economic research has improved the understanding of the role of farmsteads







WFR Forum workshop

### Profile

### High Weald Lifescape – Your Landscape Project

#### Purpose

The 'Lifescapes' project, funded by Europe's INTERREG IIB 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 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

## ■ Securing Funds

The focus of the Unit's bidding activity in 2007/08 was the development phase of the £3.3 million Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme. However, the initial development work on three new projects was begun and the Project briefs/Project Implementation Plans produced as a basis for further discussion with partners and grant-aiding bodies prior to bid submissions. The projects were as follows:

### ■ High Weald Heroes roll out

*Enabling primary schools and their associated communities, to understand and care for the nationally important landscape on their doorstep*

**Partners:** Head teachers and other staff of primary schools within the project area, The Woodland Trust, East Sussex County Council Archaeology department (including East Sussex Archaeology and Museums Project), Sussex and Kent Wildlife Trusts, High Weald Landscape Trust, Kent High Weald Project, Ashdown Forest Conservators, West Sussex, East Sussex and Kent Local Education Authorities – legal responsibility for governance of extended schools.

**Budget:** £450,000 over three years.

### ■ Sustainable Rural Tourism in the South East's Finest Landscapes

*Developing innovative tourism products to support rural economy and environment*

**Partners:** Nine South East Protected Landscapes partners; Chilterns, the Cotswolds, the High Weald, the Isle of Wight, the Kent Downs, the Surrey Hills, the North Wessex Downs, and the South Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the New Forest National Park. Tourism South East, Local tourism business and marketing groups.

**Budget:** In the High Weald £140,000 over three years.

### ■ Weald Routeways Project

*Understanding the High Weald's Ancient Communication Networks*

**Potential Partners:** High Weald AONB Unit; East Sussex County Council (archaeologists, road management authorities and rights of way officers); English Heritage; local archaeology groups.

**Budget:** £135,000 over three years.

## ■ High Weald Lifescape Your Landscape Programme

This four-year programme ended on 31 March 2008. Under the programme a total grant of approximately 392,000 Euros was received from INTERREG, enabling six Units projects to either be established or extended.



## ■ Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

The 328km<sup>2</sup> Weald Forest Ridge (WFR) area runs east to west in an almost unbroken line from Tonbridge to Horsham, across parts of East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent. It is the highest ridge in the High Weald AONB and along its length are remnants of four medieval hunting forests: Ashdown Forest,

## Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB Management Plan

St Leonard's Forest, and the less well known Broadwater Warren and Tilgate Forest. Whilst almost 30,000 people live within the Ridge area, there is also a large urban population, approaching 300,000, living on its doorstep, in the eight neighbouring towns of Crawley, Horsham, Haywards Heath, Uckfield, Crowborough, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, and East Grinstead.

In April 2007, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) announced the earmarking of £2million of funds towards a £3.3million delivery scheme to restore the WFR's medieval landscape and reveal its hidden heritage. This was in response to a Stage 1 application for Landscape Partnership Scheme funding, submitted by the High Weald AONB Unit, on behalf of the JAC and the WFR Partnership, in autumn 2006.

The focus of work in the last year has hence been on the continued development of the scheme, gearing towards submission of the Stage 2 application in spring 2008 and hopefully the start of project delivery in January 2009.

### Achievements 2007/08

- Simon Aguss started at the Unit in September as the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme Project Manager, with the remit to submit the Stage 2 application, and then move on to deliver the three year implementation phase.
- The 37 partner projects contained within the Stage 1 application were rigorously assessed on objective-led, financial and timescale criteria, to ensure only fully deliverable and achievable projects progressed to the Stage 2 application. As a consequence, eight projects did not progress to Stage 2 and a further project was moved to the central scheme management programme.
- The Weald Forest Ridge Partnership rationalised to 18 partners directly delivering the 28 Stage 2 projects supported by a broad partnership of over 25 statutory, community, business and heritage interests.
- Two Partnership Forums staged, with support from Mid Sussex and Wealden District Councils, to further develop and strengthen the WFR Partnership. Participatory workshops, delivered with assistance from High Weald AONB, East Sussex CC and partner staff, enabled exploration of many key areas of work including project inter-relationships, procurement strategies, project monitoring, communications, financial control, promotion, target audiences and networking.
- WFR Partnership Board established, to steer and guide the £3.3million Scheme, and Memorandum of Agreement signed between the members. The Board is chaired by East Sussex County Council, with current membership of officers from the Forestry Commission, English Heritage, Natural England and the Conservators of Ashdown Forest. During the delivery phase of the Scheme, it is planned to enhance this membership with key community champions from within the Weald Forest Ridge area.
- Weald Forest Ridge web pages within the High Weald AONB's website updated and enhanced.
- Deliverables for the Stage 2 application clearly identified with the HLF; to be a revised Landscape Strategy, enhanced Training Plan, and a fully detailed Implementation Plan.
- On target to deliver Stage 2 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the end April 2008 deadline.

### Profile

## Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

### Purpose

To resurrect the once well known Weald Forest Ridge name, and celebrate the area's local distinctiveness. The Weald Forest Ridge Partnership is working to widen access to and conservation of, the area's special landscape, cultural and historic features, by involving local people and organisations in the area's integrated management. The Partnership is seeking almost £2 million under the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Scheme programme, to enable the Scheme's development and to meet implementation costs of over £3.4million.

### Partners

There are 18 Delivery Partners with projects in the Stage 2 application: BTCV, the Conservators of Ashdown Forest, East Sussex Archaeology and Museums Partnership, East Sussex County Council, ESUS Forestry & Woodlands Ltd, FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group), the Forestry Commission, Gatwick Greenspace Partnership, Highbrook Village Hall Committee, Horsham District Council, Kent High Weald Project, Plumpton College, RSPB, Sussex Police, Sussex Wildlife Trust, THE SOUTH, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, and the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum. These are supported by a much wider range of other partner organisations; with statutory, community, business and heritage interests.

### Timescale

First initiated 2004. 3 year delivery phase planned 2009 – 2011.



Cranbrook School Woodland Project



Energy monitoring in Hever School

### **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).

#### **Timescale**

Annual grant awarded from 1 April 2007– 31 March 2008.

## ■ The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

In 2007, the High Weald AONB JAC secured £70,000 to operate the High Weald SDF for a third year. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) set the world a challenge – drastically cut carbon emissions within the next eight years, or face a dangerous rise in global temperatures. In 2007 the High Weald SDF largely focused on projects which provide outstanding examples of action to reduce carbon emissions and to safeguard the High Weald and its landscape.

### **Achievements 2007/2008**

- Awarded 78,445 grants to 34 projects of which 21 were completed.
- 3 Conservation, 3 Heritage, 6 Sustainable Energy, 5 Rural economy, 1 Community and 3 Sustainable Education projects were supported.
- 6 of the 21 projects (27% of the total projects spend) specifically focused on reduction of carbon emissions.
- 63 SDF funding enquiries received by the High Weald AONB Unit.
- 16 events days took place via SDF projects which actively encouraged individuals to understand and learn about sustainable energy and the High Weald Landscape.
- 7 new groups/partnerships were formed through SDF.
- 13 projects have indicated they will be continuing.
- 11 projects would not have happened without the SDF funding.
- 64 individuals were supported through SDF funding.
- 58 community/voluntary groups were funded.
- 16 schools and colleges, which involved 1900 children, were beneficiaries of SDF projects.
- 50 local businesses were directly involved with, or benefited from, SDF projects and a further 22 local suppliers provided goods and services to SDF funded projects.
- Four press releases and one TV promotion were issued publicizing SDF
- One new website was established supporting the High Weald AONB.
- During 2007/08 SDF funded projects delivered over £600,000 of benefits to the High Weald AONB.

High Weald AONB Unit staff provided guidance and technical expertise on the delivery of specific SDF funded projects:

**High Weald Land Management Projects:** Mike Chapman supported Kent High Weald Project with the Cranbrook School Woodlands Project. Dawn Brickwood worked closely with CEN and Burwash school to create their own outside Meadows classroom

**Understanding & Enjoying the High Weald Projects:** Through partnership working, Gemma Swallow has helped organisations to deliver High Weald educational objectives through the High Weald Welly Walks which involved seven schools and allowed them to enjoy and learn about their local High Weald Landscape.

Over the last three years, the High Weald SDF has helped turn great project ideas into reality, by providing grants totaling over £227,000 to 78 organisations and individuals in the High Weald.



*Securing financial support to deliver the High Weald AONB Management Plan*

S  
D  
F  
  
P  
R  
O  
J  
E  
C  
T  
S

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	SDF Grant Award
Wilderness Wood	Re-roofing visitors centre	Training of local volunteers to produce shingles from local timber using traditional craft techniques. The shingles have been used to re-roof Wilderness Wood's visitor barn.	£4,400
Scott Partnership	Installation of Woodchip Boiler	Installation of a woodchip boiler to heat two workshops used to produce furniture. To use knowledge gained through the project to publicise to similar enterprises, via open days, the potential of woodchip boilers as a sustainable energy resource.	£4,900
Turners Hill Primary School	Wind Energy	Installation of two Windsave Micro Wind Turbines on the school premises to support the school's sustainable energy programme.	£1,400
RSPB Broadwater Warren	Landscape restorations	Archaeological and ecological surveys of the Broadwater Warren nature reserve. The project also included habitat work such as the removal of rhododendron ponticum throughout the area.	£6,800
Hever Primary School	Energy Awareness Project – SLUSH	Installation of solar panels to support the schools sustainable energy programme as part of a wider eco-school programme.	£3500
Claremont Primary School	Protect our future	First phase of the installation of solar panels to produce a sustainable energy resource for Claremont Primary School, supporting its cross curricular educational programme	£1425
Caroline Fitzgerald	Heathland Hebridean	This is an alliance between the owners of 3 flocks of Hebridean sheep. The sheep are being used for conservation grazing of High Weald heathlands. The project has supported marketing aids such as a website and events tool kit (which has enabled promotional events such as the Ashdown Forest sheep walk) and undertaken some product development such as the production of clothing and wool kits from the sheep's wool.	£3521
Biowoodlands	Coppice Sawmill Project	To purchase one piece of saw milling equipment for a small timber business that uses local materials.	£3000
Causeway Wood	Medieval Hedgerow	This project has supported restoration of a medieval hedgerow which lies on the boundary between the Wadhurst clay and a Tunbridge Wells sand outcrop. The hedgerow, which is 470 m in length, has been cut. 100m of the field has been cleared of brash. 200m of barbed wire has been removed and the ditch has been fully excavated.	£2100
Woodlots	Woodlots Website	Woodlots is an organisation which promotes local timber and wood products grown sustainably in the High Weald. The project enabled additional features to be added to the website <a href="http://www.woodlots.org.uk">www.woodlots.org.uk</a> – an interactive searchable database, immediate online publication of advertisements and an online notification process.	£2000
Rother District Council	Weald & Downland Ancient Woodland Survey	The desk-based component of the revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Rother district. The inventory will ensure that ancient woodlands less than two hectares are identified and listed.	£3750

*continued*

# S D F P R O J E C T S

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	SDF Grant Award
Cranbrook Primary School	Woodland redevelopment	To produce a 10 year conservation plan to develop a woodland site in school grounds so that Cranbrook primary school can utilise this area as an outside classroom.	£2000
Action in Rural Sussex	Promoting Local produce for school meals	Evaluation of the scope to introduce local produce into school meals in East and West Sussex. This involved visiting French schools that currently use local products to produce school meals and looking at local case studies to see the viability of a new approach in High Weald schools.	£1885
High Weald AONB Unit	Cultural Heritage of Woodlands in the South East	Publication of 500-1000 copies of the Cultural Heritage of Woodlands in the South East. The book is being widely distributed within the High Weald AONB to organisations and individuals to raise awareness of the importance of woodlands.	£2000
High Weald AONB Unit	High Weald Heroes Welly Walks	Production of High Weald Welly Walks leaflets for schools involved with the High Weald Heroes scheme and encouragement of the wider community to use the information to discover the High Weald. Individual schools were involved with the pre-production and walking the route. It encourages schools to use their immediate landscape as a cross-curricular resource without unnecessary travel.	£1368
Skinner's School	Solar Panels	Installation of solar panels to support the schools sustainable energy programme which is part of a wider conservation school programme	£2000
CEN	Burwash Primary School Meadows Project	Burwash Primary school has turned over land to make a Meadow outside classroom. The project has allowed the school to purchase High Weald Meadow seed and make the ground good for sowing in autumn as well as making the area safe and secure with fencing.	£2298
Action in Rural Sussex	Sussex Community Rail Project	Promotion and management of two guided walks along the High Weald line between Tonbridge and Hastings to engage with the wider community and support for other community engagement events.	£3317
Brenchley & Matfield Primary school PTA	Trim Trail	Installation of a timber Trim Trail in an unused section of the school playing field. They are a High Weald Heroes school and this part of a wider scheme to understanding their local landscape.	£2994
Malcolm Curtis	Trifor Winch	Purchase of a specialised Tirfor winch by a local tree surgeon which enables woodland management in dense forested areas that are impassable to vehicles. The winch allows sensitive parts of dense woodland to be managed without affecting the surrounding trees.	£595
Pestalozzi international village trust	Sussex Barn	Ben Law has designed a Sussex Barn to be built on land at Pestalozzi international village. The barn will be used as a training establishment to support local woodcraft skills.	£2400

## ■ AONB Unit Staff Resource

Staffing levels for core staff fluctuated between 6.6 FTE and 5.3FTE. Ruth Childs joined the core team in June 2007 to assist with the research required to support the management plan review and to support the Unit's developing policy role. Two core officers left in January 2008 – Janina Holubecki and John Hill. Janina continues to work for the AONB 'family' as an Interpretation Officer for the Nidderdale AONB. The AONB Business Managers' hours were increased to enable key core activities for the January-March period to be delivered.

Staffing levels for project staff fluctuated between 5.6FTE and 5.4FTE, so were fairly static overall. Philip Sansum and Simon Aguss were recruited to develop the next phases of two existing projects – the Wealden Ancient Woodland Project and the Weald Forest Ridge Project. Janet Whitman remained a staff member, but was seconded to AIRS as a Rural Development Manager and Matt Pitts' secondment from Kent High Weald Project ended when he left to go travelling.

Consultants were used to deliver some of departing staff's work programmes (core and projects).



Exploring wet heathland at Broadwater – the RSPB's new 180 ha reserve

## ■ Staff Members

### Core

**Director** (job share) – Sally Marsh (0.6 FTE)/ Jason Lavender (0.6FTE)

**Business Manager** – Gerry Sherwin (0.6 FTE to 7 January 2008, 0.8FTE to March 2008)

**Policy and Research Officer** – Andrew Shaw

**Interpretation Officer** – Janina Holubecki (until mid January 2008)

**Research Officer** – Ruth Childs (from June 2007)

**Administrator** (job share) – Kerry Baldwin (0.5 FTE)/John Hill (0.5 FTE until end December 2007)

**Team Support Officer** – Samantha Nicholas (0.8 FTE)

### Project

**Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites Officer** – Mike Chapman

**Weald Meadows Officer, Weald Meadows Initiative** – Dawn Brickwood

**Weald Meadows Development Officer** – Matt Pitts (until October 2007)

**GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer, Weald and Downs Ancient Woodlands Project** – Philip Sansum (from October 2007)

**Project Officer, INTERREG and Education** – Gemma Swallow

**Project Development Officer** – Janet Whitman (until October 2007, subsequently seconded to AIRS)

**GIS Access and Habitat Mapping Officer** – Matt Grose (0.6FTE to September, 0.4FTE from October 2007)

**Weald Forest Ridge Manager** – Simon Aguss (from October 2007)

Team awayday to examine Knepp Castle's rewilding project





# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008

## ■ Total Expenditure

Core supplies and services included:

**Office costs** – utility bills, office equipment including IT purchases, stationery, photocopying, postage, website management and telephones.

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

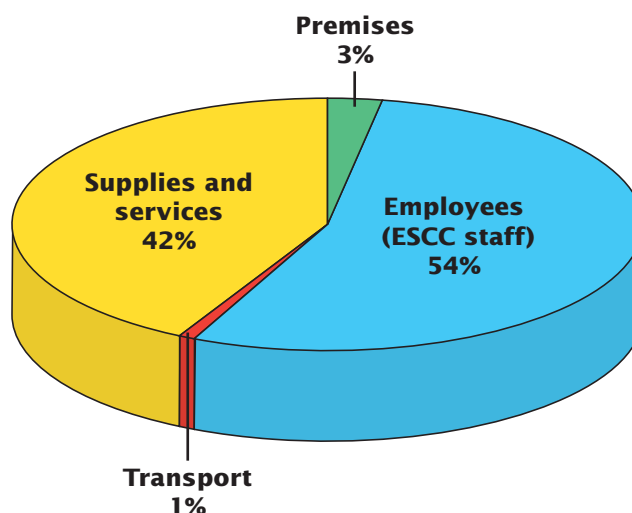
**ESCC support costs** – IT, personnel and finance services.

Local authority core contributions were as follows:

	£000s
East Sussex County Council*	20.9
ESCC accommodation	12.8
Kent CC*	12.9
West Sussex CC*	9.0
Surrey CC	2.7
Wealden DC*	6.7
Rother DC*	6.7
Mid Sussex DC*	5.2
Tunbridge Wells BC	6.2
Horsham DC	4.4
Sevenoaks DC*	3.4
Ashford BC *	0.8
Hastings BC**	1.4
Tandridge DC	2.0
Tonbridge & Malling BC **	0.3
Crawley BC**	0.3

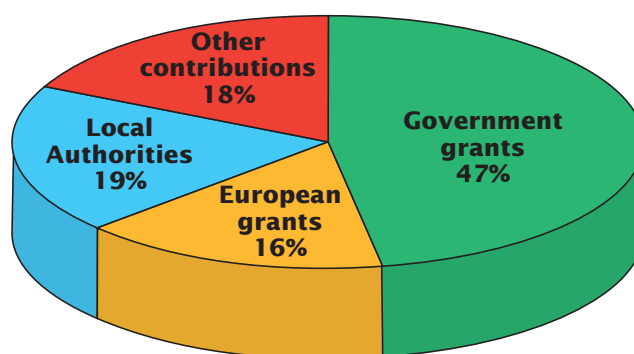
The local authority contributions reflect the balance of their land area within the AONB. Those marked with \* also made a contribution of £2,000 (\*\* £300) to the Partnership Enabling Funding 2007-2008.

### Gross expenditure £744,000



## ■ Total Income

### Gross income £747,000



The Joint Advisory Committee received its income from Natural England, local authorities and other bodies as follows:

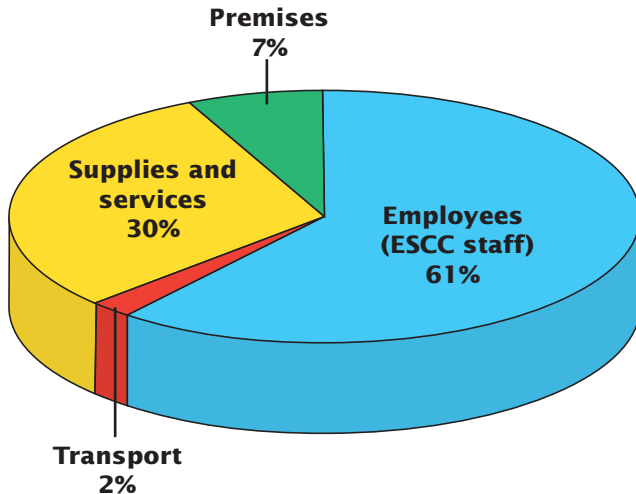
Natural England	£353,975
European Union (INTERREG IIIB)	£116,549
Local Authority partners	£144,771
Other bodies	£136,606

Other bodies included English Heritage, English Nature, the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Heritage Lottery Fund, High Weald Landscape Trust, the Woodland Trust and others.

The final position for the year is a reserve of £49,422 at 31 March 2008, which includes the £8,041 surplus for 2007/08.

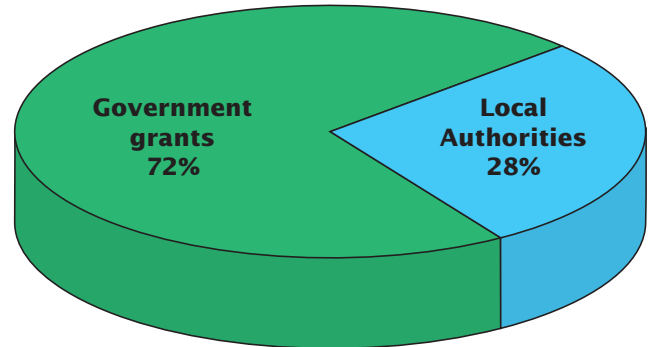
## ■ Core Expenditure

**Gross expenditure  
£337,600**



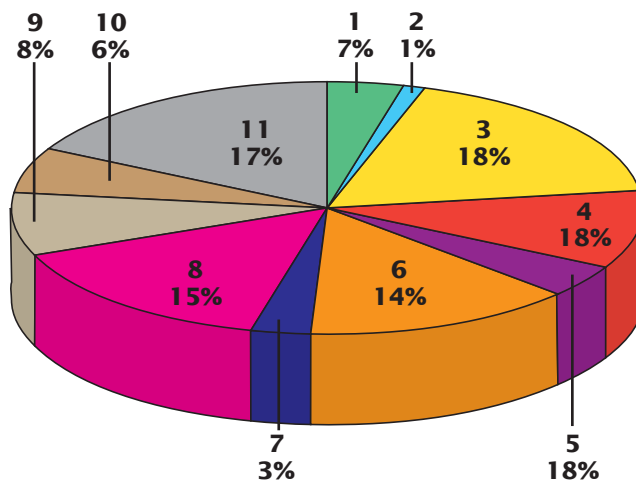
## ■ Core Income

**Gross income  
£345,500**



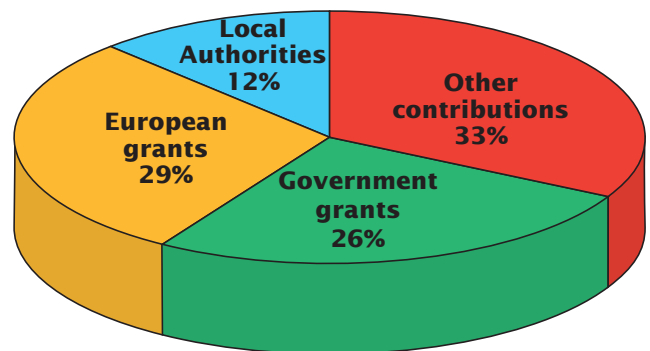
## ■ Project Expenditure

**Gross expenditure  
£406,300**



## ■ Project Income

**Gross income  
£406,400**



**Key:**

- |                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Action in Rural Sussex          | 7 Ashdown Forest             |
| 2 Lifescapes Admin.               | 8 Interpretation Project     |
| 3 Weald Meadows Initiative        | 9 Weald Forest Ridge Project |
| 4 Plantation of Ancient Woodlands | 10 Green Living Project      |
| 5 Historic Farmstead Project      | 11 Sustainable Dev. Fund     |
| 6 Weald Ancient Woodlands         |                              |

# HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*Working together to care for a nationally valued landscape*

## JAC Co-optees

### 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

Michaela Frost, Gemma Barlow

## AONB Management Board

Councillor Mrs S Tidy  
Councillor B Kentfield  
Councillor B Acraman  
Councillor J Davison  
Councillor Mrs E Kitchen  
Natural England Representatives

## ■ Membership

Membership of the Joint Advisory Committee and Steering Group Officers  
For the year April 2007 – March 2008

**Chair** – Councillor Mrs S Tidy

**Vice-chair** – Councillor B Acraman (until November 2008) Councillor B Kentfield

**OSG Chair** – David Phillips

### Natural England

James Seymour  
Joanne Spickett

### East Sussex County Council

Councillor R Tidy (until summer 2007) Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy  
Simon Hickmott

### West Sussex County Council

Councillor B Acraman  
Jackie Lewis

### Kent County Council

Councillor Mrs P Stockell (until winter 2007) Councillor Roy Bullock  
Judith Feline (until winter 2007) Elizabeth Holiday

### Surrey County Council

Councillor K Rimington  
Mike Dawson

### Wealden District Council

Councillor Mrs S Tidy (until summer 2007) Councillor Jonica Fox  
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; Alma Howell

### Horsham District Council

Councillor Mrs E Kitchen  
Catherine Howe (until late 2007) Helen Sissons

### Crawley Borough Council

Councillor Mrs C Denman (until summer 2007) Councillor Brenda Burgess  
No OSG representative (until late 2007) Andrew Gudrun

### Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Councillor E Thomas  
Gill Harris (until summer 2007) David Scully

### Sevenoaks District Council

Councillor Ms J Davison  
Caroline Lingham

### Ashford Borough Council

Councillor R Taylor  
Daniel Carter (until early 2008) Danielle Brough

### Tonbridge & Malling District Council

No member representative  
Phil Linskey (until autumn 2007) Jenny Mentz

### Tandridge District Council

Councillor M Sydney  
Paul Newdick



## ■ JAC Terms of Reference

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

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

## ■ Core functions of an AONB Unit

The Unit delivers the following core functions in the context of the AONB Management Plan 2004 and in accordance with a three-year business strategy agreed by the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

- 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

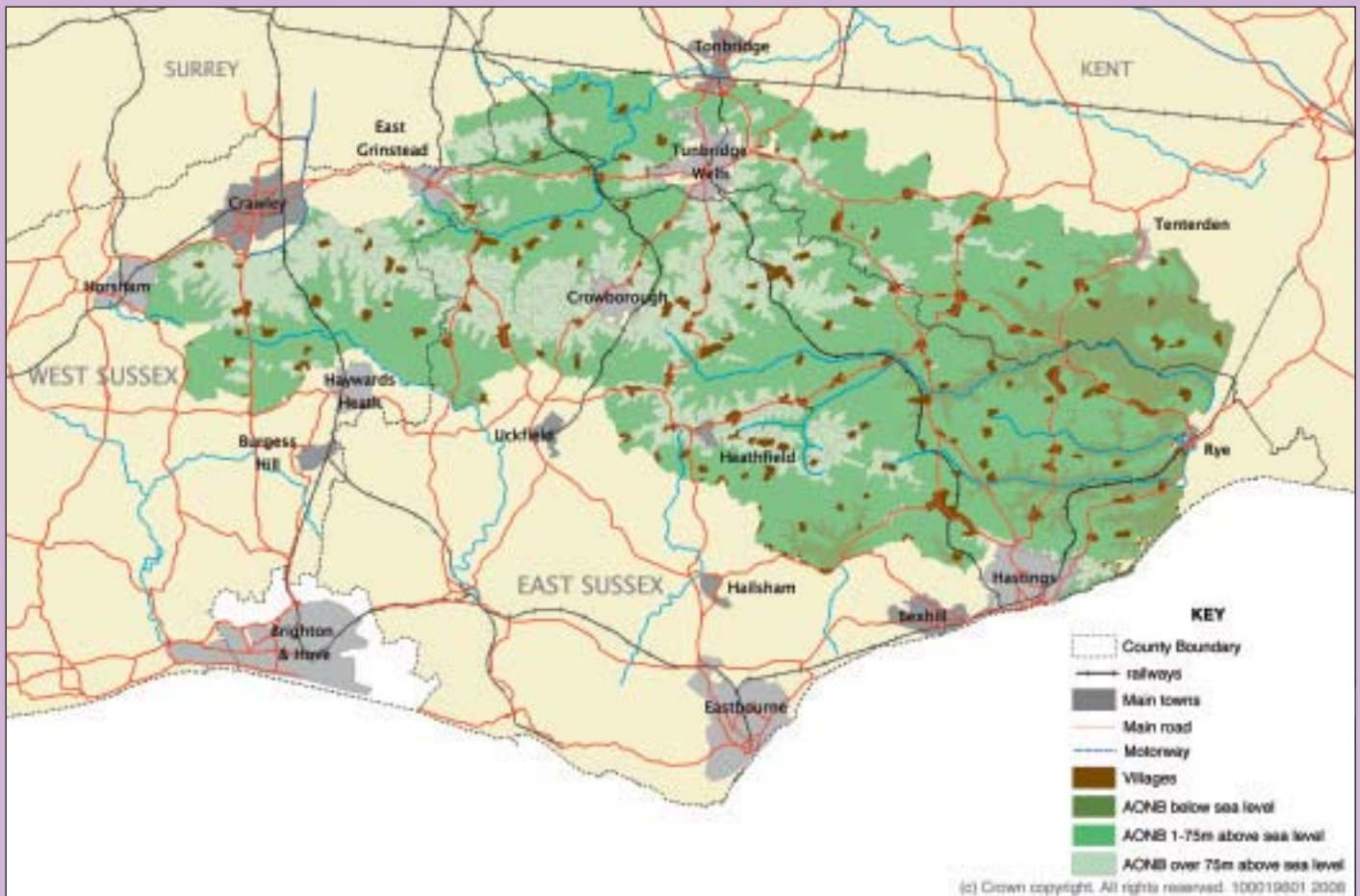
**Extracted from *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: a guide for AONB partnership members*.**

- **Designation** The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation was confirmed by the Secretary of State for the Environment in October 1983. The first AONB to be designated was the Gower in 1956 and the most recent the Tamar Valley in 1995.
- **Size** The total area of the High Weald AONB is 146,170 hectares (1,461 square kilometres). This makes the AONB the largest in South East England and the fourth largest in England and Wales (The largest being the Cotswolds AONB at 2,038 square kilometres and the smallest being the Isles of Scilly AONB at 16 square kilometres). Currently there are 36 AONB's covering about 15.5% of England.
- **Administration** The designated area extends across parts of four counties (Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent), 11 districts or boroughs, and 99 parishes. The administrative map (below) illustrates the overlapping boundaries of the AONB and the local authorities.
- **Population** With an estimated population of around 124,880 and a density of 0.85 people per hectare, the High Weald AONB is a reasonably populated but essentially rural area. The boundary excludes urban areas such as Tunbridge Wells town and Crowborough, but includes Battle (population over 6,000) – the largest built-up area within a landscape of scattered villages and dispersed settlement. The population is high for a designated landscape but, compared to urban areas and the neighbouring parts of rural West Sussex and north Kent, it is lowly populated.
- **Built environment and settlement** The High Weald has a dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads, hamlets, and small villages. There are around 100 villages but 38% of the population lives in the countryside outside villages.
- **Landform – highest point** The highest ridge of the High Weald AONB rises to 223m (732ft) above sea level on Ashdown Forest and 225m (738ft) at Crowborough Beacon, on the edge of Crowborough Common. As a comparison, the highest point of the eastern South Downs directly opposite the High Weald is Firle Beacon at 217m (712ft) above sea level.
- **Agriculture** For hundreds of years, agriculture has been concentrated in small livestock farms. It is still the main AONB land use but in 2007, only accounted for 67.5% of the total area – an increase of 6% from 2000. Agriculture may account for less than half the area by 2010. Only around 4,500 people are now employed in agriculture, out of a total estimated population of 124,880.
- **Woodland** By Domesday in 1086, the High Weald was the most wooded natural area in England. The total area of woodland in the AONB today is 39,905 hectares, or 24.5% of the total AONB area – compared with the National Average of about 9% of the total area. 17.6% of the AONB is Ancient Woodland, in other words over half of all the High Weald's woodlands are ancient. The area of the High Weald AONB represents only 1% of England yet it has 3.39% of England's woodlands, making it one of the most densely wooded landscapes.
- **Wildlife conservation value** There are 50 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the AONB, totalling 5535.49 ha in area. There are 202 Sites of Nature conservation Importance (SNCI) totalling 10,663 ha in area.
- **Archaeological and architectural value** There are 111 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the AONB and 64 conservation areas in built-up areas (containing many of the listed buildings).
- **Visitor attractions** There are 92 visitor attractions within the AONB, including 9 National Trust Properties and 2 Country Parks.
- **Public rights of way** Several long distance paths cross the AONB: High Weald Landscape Trail, Weald Way, 1066 Country Walk, Saxon Shore Way, Vanguard Way and Sussex Border Path. The total length of footpaths is 2063 kilometres.



# HIGH WEALD AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

## Location



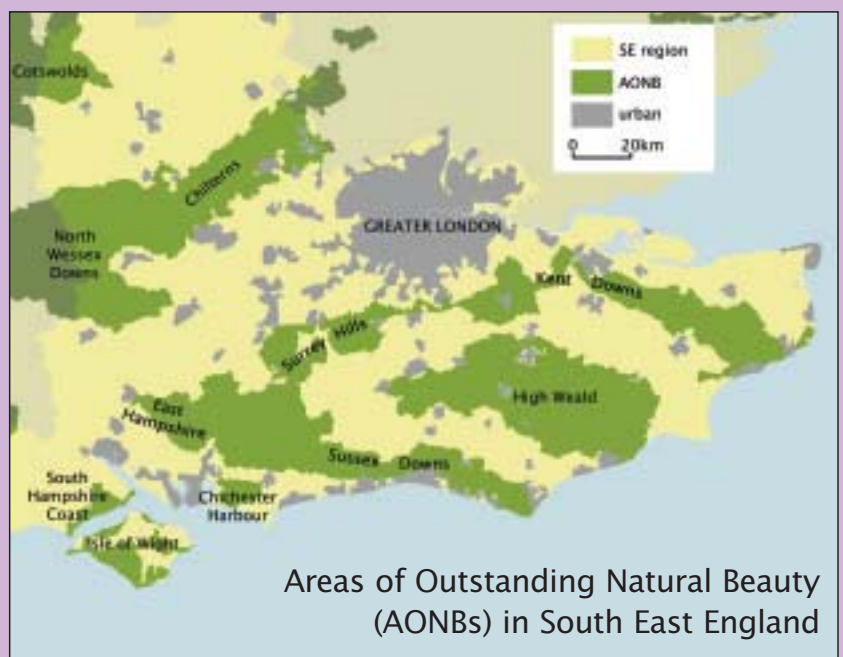
Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Mapping with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
 East Sussex County Council – 100019601, 2007; West Sussex County Council – 100018485; Kent County Council – 100019238; Surrey County Council – 100019613



### High Weald AONB Unit

Woodland Enterprise Centre  
 Hastings Road  
 Flimwell  
 East Sussex TN5 7PR  
 Tel: 01580 879500  
 Fax: 01580 879499  
 Email: [info@highweald.org](mailto:info@highweald.org)  
 Web: [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org)

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



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in South East England