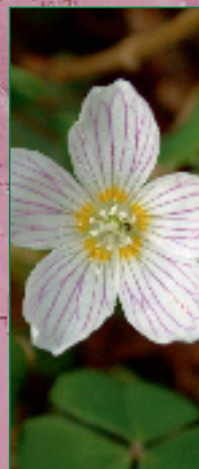
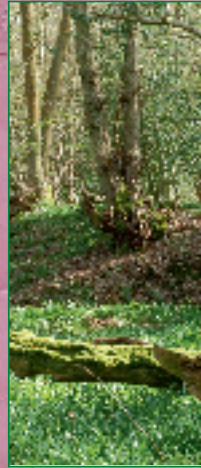
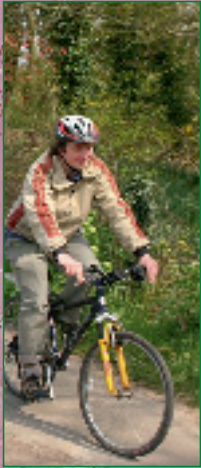


High Weald Joint Advisory Committee Annual Review 2009-2010



Working together to care for one of England's Finest Landscapes



The High Weald 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.

High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

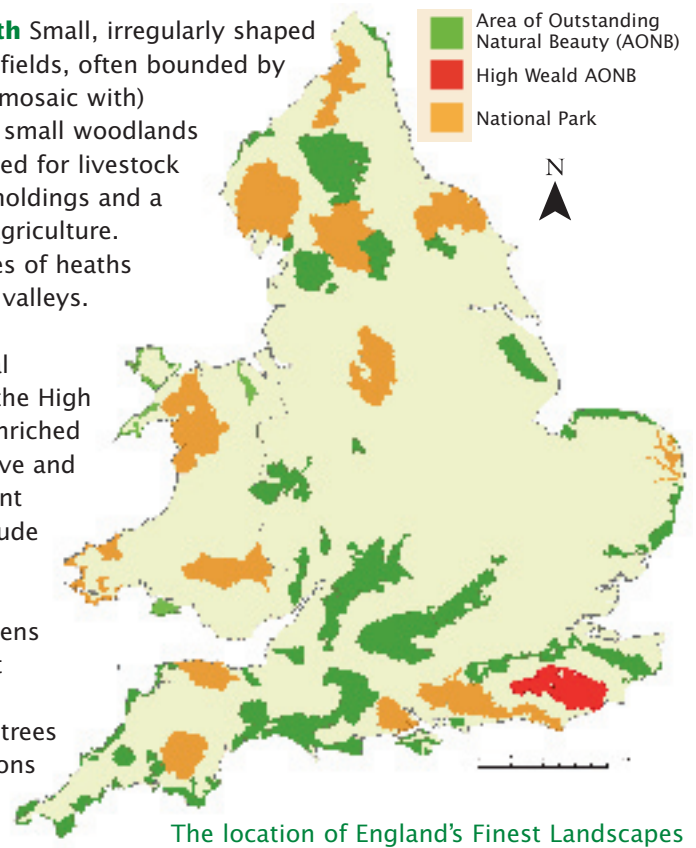


The essential character of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was established by the 14th century and has survived major historical events and social and technological changes. It is considered to be one of the best surviving, coherent medieval landscapes in Northern Europe.

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 inned 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

This year we celebrate 20 years of partnership working to conserve one of England's finest landscapes, the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Coming at a time of financial insecurity it is heartening to see in this annual review how much can be achieved through partnership and sharing resources.

We have come a long way since 1989 when the local authorities covering the High Weald came together to create one of the first AONB Forums. With support from the government agency responsible for landscape, the Forum employed an AONB Officer and produced one of the first AONB Management Plans. Barely recognised by local people at the time, the High Weald is now embedded in local school curriculums, promoted as a good place to live, work and visit by businesses and the JAC is recognised as leading the way in finding solutions to ensure the landscape is worked for the benefit of people whilst maintaining the character we love.

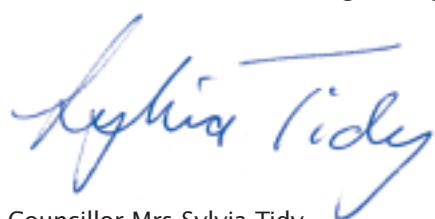
With an understanding of the past so important in shaping the places we live for the future, the JAC were delighted this year to be able to launch a free service to landowners and communities providing them with detailed information on their local landscape. The response from residents has been tremendous.

Our Sustainable Development Fund continues to provide targeted support to communities who have come together to address local issues that matter to them: from support for sustainable energy schemes to coppicing, pond restoration and pruning traditional orchards.

With grant-aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund secured, our 28 community-led projects across the Weald Forest Ridge began in earnest. The beating hearts of the four giant maidens of the Weald were lit during a fiery evening celebration attended by hundreds of children and their families at Tilgate Park, Crawley. We look forward next year to the many creative activities developed by our partners to restore the heathy forests and inspire people to enjoy and take care of them.

The need for a vibrant woodland industry has never been greater and trees and woodlands, so important to the Weald's history and to its future, continue to feature strongly in our work programme. This year has seen completion of the ancient woodland survey for three further districts – Rother, Hastings and Tonbridge and Malling – together with a range of events and site advice to help restore planted ancient woodlands. The huge challenges still facing us were brought into stark relief by our research into the housing needs of coppice workers. With over 90% of workers unable to afford any kind of accommodation in the High Weald urgent action is necessary and we hope that our research supports efforts by districts to address this problem.

Finally I would like to thank all of our partners, especially the volunteers in Rolvenden, who spent many cold and wet days earlier in the year uncovering the fascinating history of our ancient routeways. Their enthusiasm and commitment to the High Weald is inspiring and exemplifies the vital contribution communities and individuals make to safeguarding this precious landscape for the future.



Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy
Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)
July 2010



Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy

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*Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

1 Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan



Rationale

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Section 89/11(b) requires that local authorities act jointly to review and publish AONB Management Plans every 5 years. The next review is due to be completed by March 2014. In order to effectively review management of a landscape of the High Weald's size and complexity, ongoing work with the following focus is needed; data gathering to inform baseline information and monitoring; understanding change and assessing policy impacts; and engaging stakeholders and raising awareness.

The condition of the High Weald AONB is a key measure of the successful implementation of the AONB Management Plan. A system to assess AONB 'condition' has been developed which doesn't measure features or extent and loss/gains to a landscape element, but instead assesses the threats to the landscape and the direction of change/activity of landscape components. This system is being rolled forward to monitor landscape condition annually.

Performance against High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004 objectives is measured against a range of Indicators of Success (IoS) and Targets. A monitoring system to track these 'scores' was developed for the 2008/09 management plan review and this is being rolled forward to monitor the plan annually.

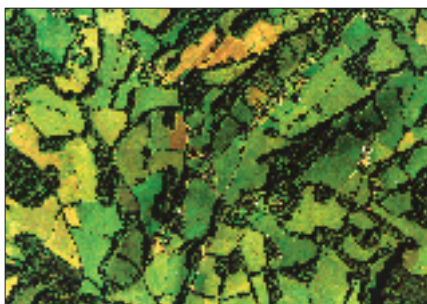
1.1. Management Plan

High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004 2nd edition 2009 published

The revised management plan was published following approval by the Joint Advisory Committee and adoption by the 15 relevant local authorities. Over 500 plans were sent to councillors, parish councils, regional and national partners, land managers and the local councils, as well as other interested parties. The new plan updated the 2004 edition, adding new targets and objectives for climate change and public perceptions, and moved the plan forward to look at the future of the High Weald in 2014.

Policy Matrix developed to show wider value of Management Plan implementation

A quick and simple reference that compares the objectives within the High Weald AONB Management Plan against the strategic objectives of key AONB partners and broader national policy goals was produced. The Policy Matrix assists with the Unit's business planning process and will help key partners understand how delivering the High Weald AONB Management Plan can achieve their goals. The Matrix will be updated when policy changes, helping to ensure that the Management Plan is relevant in the context of regional and national policy goals and drivers.



Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan

1.2 Understanding character components

The JAC's research focused on developing and promoting those elements of the AONB's character that are least understood.

Settlement

English Heritage/JAC historic farmstead character research promoted and used regionally/nationally

Following completion of the High Weald historic farmstead research programme, the focus in 2009/10 was its promotion.

- AONB Unit staff presented the conclusions of the research on the High Weald's farmstead pattern to the Historic Farm Buildings Group Conference 2009 resulting in invites to present the research, particularly its more challenging conclusions, to other relevant forums.
- Using new guidelines from the AONB Unit/English Heritage based on the research programme, a local developer piloted the 'Historic Farmstead Assessment Framework' for one of the area's farmsteads. The assessment enabled a successful planning application and was highly praised by the developer.
- The value of the methodology developed for the High Weald research programme was recognised by Kent County Council and rolled out across the county.
- The work was used as a basis for major new English Heritage publication: 'Historic Farm Buildings, Extending the Evidence Base'. The report sets out a new approach to farmsteads which it considers as important to the future of the countryside, advocating building databases of farmstead buildings to provide new information on the character and condition of the stock of historic farm buildings and, most importantly their relationship to the broader landscape. It argues that this approach can shed new light on the re-use of barns and other listed farm buildings for residential and business use.
- English Heritage also published a new farmstead mapping toolkit and a revised character statement for the High Weald, both of which add to the new policy for historic farmsteads from English Heritage.

Housing needs survey of woodland workers in the Weald published

The JAC published a report on the 'Housing Needs of Woodland Workers in the Weald'. The report concluded that for the majority of coppice workers in the industry, earnings are well below average and consequently only 8% can afford any kind of housing accommodation in the Weald at the present time.

The report contributes to the debate on how to create a vibrant woodland industry. With Government targets to generate 15% energy from renewable sources, areas like the High Weald AONB, with over one quarter woodland cover, are at the forefront of initiatives to harness energy from sustainably harvested wood. The outlook for the industry and the woods that depend on it is bleak unless urgent action is taken to ensure the needs of this sector are taken account of by housing associations and local authority housing policies.

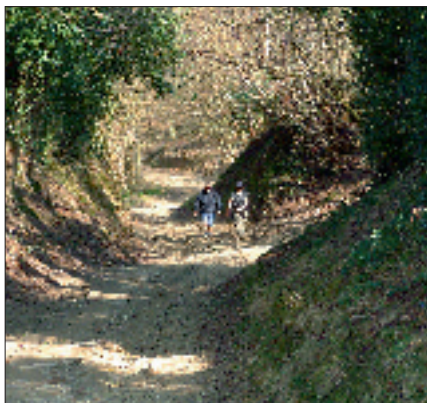


High Weald farmstead research has contributed to new farm building guidance at a High Weald, Kent and national level

The JAC's 'Woodland Workers Housing Needs Survey' has informed key worker definitions



Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan



Knowledge of historic routeways has been expanded as a result of new survey methodology

The report proposes that land-based key workers in the High Weald AONB are workers in agriculture, forestry or rural craft industries whose occupations directly manage and conserve the special character of the High Weald. It was used by Rother District Council in its consultation on key worker definitions.

Digitisation of farm ownership boundaries

Farm ownership boundaries were digitised for three time periods for Goudhurst parish. This work complements previous work for Wittersham parish. This detailed mapping work uncovers the changes in land ownership and farm tenure, showing where farms have been amalgamated or farm holdings consolidated over time. This helps us to understand changes in farming and how smaller, scattered farms have slowly been merged. This often helps to explain changes to farmsteads, or why farmsteads appear where they do, or explains 'lost' or isolated farmstead buildings.

Routeways

New Routeways research programme established in partnership with University of East Anglia and local volunteers

Working with English Heritage, County Archaeologists, the University of East Anglia, historic landscape experts and local volunteers, the Joint Advisory Committee began a project to provide baseline evidence for the distribution of historic routeways and to develop an understanding of their age and character.

As a first phase the AONB Unit, working in partnership with the University of East Anglia (UEA) and enthusiastic local historians, piloted a routeways survey methodology. The methodology was designed to collect as much evidence about local routeways as possible. The evidence was 3-fold: historic evidence – from maps and archives; landscape features – evidence of possible archaeology/past land use; and ecological evidence – recording key species along routeways.

The method was tested by volunteers in Rolvenden parish who, under the guidance of landscape historians at UEA, undertook practical survey work and desk-based historic research to begin to build up a picture of routeway development in the Rolvenden area.

At the end of 2009/10 the Unit was in the process of digitally mapping and analysing the results including adding additional routeway surveys undertaken by High Weald's Cultural Landscape Advisor.

As a result of the pilot, the method and associated instructions will be amended and made available to other local/natural history societies in parishes across the High Weald. The project is designed to be owned by Parishes who, after initial induction and training will be able to recruit and train their own team of routeway surveyors.

Routeways are one of the least understood AONB character components and the pilot project has been an important first step in building up the evidence base for routeways, improving local knowledge, informing local plans and ultimately decision-making. It is expected that the new

Goudhurst ownership boundaries in 1910



Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan

understanding will enable advice to be provided to road managers and rights of way teams about the best way to manage historic routeways sensitively – as heritage assets, ecological corridors and sustainable transport routes.

Geology, Water Systems and Climate

- A new data set – Springs in the High Weald – was developed to help us build up our understanding of the geology and water systems in the area. Springs were compared with the underlying geology to identify any relationship between them and the faulted (displaced, shifted and folded rock formations) geology to assess what impact this has on landscape features and use of the land (e.g. springs as a water source for farms).
- An assessment of the need for revising and updating sandrock data was undertaken. Sandrock outcrops are important features in the High Weald, as archaeology, habitats and amenity, and an important historic resource. In particular sandrock shelters are significant Mesolithic features where early settlers in the High Weald first started to have an impact on the High Weald.

Public Understanding and Enjoyment

- GIS data was generated for rural socio-economic information in the High Weald. This evidence is produced by the Office of National Statistics and spatially shows areas of high benefit collection or fuel poverty, for example. This forms part of the Unit's ongoing evidence gathering to produce spatial socio-economic profiling of the High Weald which will help inform Management Plan policies.
- Sustrans data – local and national cycling routes – were sourced to update Unit datasets.
- Preliminary study of literary references to the High Weald was begun to support work reviewing our cultural perceptions of the High Weald. Writers have referred to the High Weald from as early as 1610, showing a range of attitudes and appreciations of the High Weald landscape. This is supported by a short study of our cultural appreciations of natural beauty and how these have changed over time.

1.3 Policy analysis

Working with South East Protected Landscapes (SEPL) and engaging with bodies such as RELU, Defra, SEEDA, GOSE and the Forestry Commission, the AONB Unit assessed the impact of regional and national strategies on the AONB, attending events and providing responses to regional and national consultations on strategies where appropriate.

Regional and national consultations

The Unit attended and responded to a range of regional and national consultations and reports:

- Kent County Council Spatial Vision – event attended
- Gatwick Noise Action Plan – response submitted
- Permitted development rights for small scale renewable and low carbon energy technologies and electric vehicle charging infrastructure – response submitted



Cycling route datasets were updated

The Unit responded to wind energy consultations



Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan



The High Weald Condition Report concluded over 90% of the landscape is under threat

- Draft PPS4 consultation – response submitted
- New and revised PPS on the Environment to replace PPS9, consultation – response submitted
- Draft PPS15 consultation – response submitted
- Natural England Planning Protocol – the Unit worked with Natural England to develop a joint planning protocol
- National Parks and Broads Draft Circular Revision consultation – response submitted
- Natural England ‘Wind Energy’ policy consultation – consultants presented a paper on the JAC’s behalf
- Natural England ‘National Ecosystems Approach’ policy consultation – response submitted.

1.4 Condition monitoring

Condition monitoring for 2009/10 concluded that the overall state of the AONB is considered to be average or good (60%). That means that about two thirds of the landscape is reaching, or has attained, its appropriate state in line with the Management Plan. The remainder (40%) is in a poor state and this is obviously a cause for concern and future action. However, this result is highly tempered by the conclusion that over 90% of the landscape is under threat or vulnerable to issues and actions acting on it. The AONB is a very endangered place, whose overall condition is challenged by the many threats it faces. Developing systems for monitoring landscape condition is an area in development and the AONB Unit contributed its understanding and expertise to national workshops as follows:

- South East Protected Landscapes Monitoring Systems workshop
- Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Scheme consultation and national workshop

1.5 Performance monitoring

For 2009/10 (the first year of the revised Management Plan’s operation) performance monitoring results were understandably modest, as the indicators of success are devised to cover the Plan’s five-year operational life. However the Indicators show reasonable progress towards meeting the Objectives, with 24% actually (or partially) being met, 55% showing minor or broad progress, and only 21% of Indicators showing no change or progress. For the Targets, the plan is currently achieving a score of 34% completion across the board. There is great variation though, with G2 for instance scoring 83% and UE4 only 6%. This reflects the nature of the objectives and the various projects in hand at this early stage that contribute towards them.

2 Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the AONB Management Plan by individuals and communities

Rationale

As a strong partnership and an effective champion of the AONB, the JAC is able to play a leading role in co-ordinating action by others. In achieving this role the JAC identifies, demonstrates and promotes new mechanisms to support the sustainable management of vulnerable habitats and cultural features in the AONB; develops new partnerships; leads funding bids and generates enthusiasm amongst communities and individuals to take action.



2.1 Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

Involving people with the unique heritage of one of England's Finest Landscapes



During 2009/10 the JAC's largest partnership project was in full swing with many of the 18 partners delivering their year 1 action plans. One key partner had to withdraw due to financial difficulties, however 2 new partners and projects were able to join the Scheme. Highlights from the year are listed below under the Scheme's programme headings.

Re-connecting People and Place

Training courses equipped 89 people with skills to help care for the area

The following activities were undertaken:

- Esus Forestry and Woodlands Ltd ran woodland management courses, including chainsaw certification for commoners exercising their timber cutting rights on Ashdown Forest.
- The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum ran three one-day courses on the conservation and restoration of the distinctive vernacular buildings of the Weald Forest Ridge. With trainees including crafts people, specifiers and homeowners, evaluation indicated that the courses delivered to a high standard and filled a gap in training opportunities.
- The East Sussex Archaeology and Museums Partnership (ESAMP) operated three year-long training placements. The trainees gained a range of wide skills and knowledge across archaeology, museums and heritage disciplines.
- The Forest Schools Programme trained 13 people to run Forest School activities.
- BTCV ran conservation training for 30 newly recruited volunteers.
- East Sussex County Council trained 10 people in hedge-laying.

Four new conservation groups established

One of the larger projects in the Scheme made significant achievements in its first year of delivery. A dedicated Project Officer, Warren Young, was employed by BTCV to implement the Inspiring People, Improving Places project.

Starting from almost a blank canvas, Warren promoted volunteering opportunities to a wide range of potential audiences across the Ridge and its 8 neighbouring towns with the long-term aim of establishing four new conservation volunteering groups that can help conserve and enhance the landscape and natural heritage of the Ridge. Over 30 volunteers went out on site in 2009/10.

Profile

Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

Purpose

A £3.2 million programme of activity, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to enrich the area's natural and cultural heritage and to enable people to understand, enjoy and care for the area.

Delivery partners

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, Plumpton College, Root and Branch Theatre Company, RSPB, Sussex Police, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum. These are supported by a much wider range of other partner organisations, including funding partners with statutory, community, business and heritage interests.

Timescale

First initiated 2004. Delivery phase Jan 2009 – Dec 2011.



Highbrook Smokery was restored

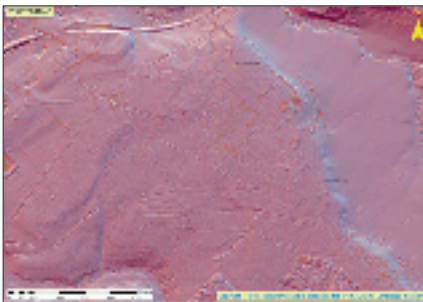
Importantly, and illustrating the benefits of cross-project interactions that the Landscape Partnership Scheme approach brings, 12 sites were identified by Scheme partners for Warren's volunteers to either work on, or receive subject-specific training.

Archaeology and Special Features

First Weald Forest Ridge project completed – Highbrook Smokery restoration

One of the first projects to start was completed just 6 months into the Scheme. The local community at Highbrook, near West Hoathly, restored the unique Highbrook Smokery building and opened it up to informal public access.

The Smokery, adjoining Highbrook's historic church, is thought to date from the 1740s and was used for smoking meat. It is assumed to be associated with the Clarke family, formerly of Brook House, although a lot of its history is unknown. Internal and external repairs included replacing rotten timbers, repointing brickwork, applying lime plaster to the walls and installing a solid floor. Seating was provided so that walkers passing through the ridge-top hamlet can rest their weary legs whilst admiring the building.



A LiDAR survey of the Weald Forest Ridge was completed

LiDAR Survey of Weald Forest Ridge completed

For archaeologists, there are still many questions to be answered about the human use of the High Weald. A key limiting factor to understanding the landscape is the heavily wooded nature of the area, which makes traditional techniques – such as field walking and aerial photography – relatively ineffective.

To help overcome these constraints, a LiDAR (Light Detection And Ranging) survey was completed over all of the 328km² Weald Forest Ridge, as part of the Historic Environment Awareness project. An aerial laser survey was flown, and computer manipulation of the data allowed the ground surface to be modelled beneath the canopy vegetation. Put simply, the trees were stripped away to reveal archaeological features on the ground: such as pales and warrens, furnaces, quarry pits and charcoal hearths. The images reveal just how much this landscape has been 'textured' by people over hundreds of years; multiple trackways, lost boundaries and newly-discovered enclosures are visible; unexplained features provide exciting prospects for 'ground-truthing' in the future.

The LiDAR data was generated in GIS and jpeg formats and in 2010/11 will be incorporated into the Historic Environment Records (HER's) of East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent, as well as being made available to interested volunteer surveyors.

Heathland restoration began at Broadwater Forest



Landscape Scale Connectivity

Heathland Restoration Commenced at Broadwater Warren

Major heathland restoration operations commenced at the RSPB's new Broadwater Warren reserve, following the Environmental Impact Assessment approval granted by the Forestry Commission at the end of 2009. Specialist machinery started to mulch and remove young conifer re-growth on carefully selected areas of the 180ha site. Future fencing and grazing management will encourage the growth of the heather seed bank lying dormant in the soil; enhancing the habitat for target heathland species such as Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark.

Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan

To minimise the environmental impact of the operation, the resultant mulch material was supplied as source material to a large biomass boiler – hence generating heat and power from the conservation by-product.

Learning and Celebrating

Public Launch of the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

The Scheme was launched at Calverley Grounds, Tunbridge Wells on Sunday 19 July. There was a wide range of activities and information about the Scheme for children and adults with: arts workshops run by Same Sky; bush-craft skills training; badge and bird box making with the RSPB; iron age cookery; medieval weaving demonstrations and much more. All of this was backed up by live music from Fanfarra: a fun, processional, four piece band. A formal opening for VIPs and local councillors preceded the event, with a speech from the Scheme's main funder, the Heritage Lottery Fund, amongst others. The day culminated in a colourful performance from local youth drama groups, enacting and interpreting some of the folklore of the area.

Fiery, giant-led evening celebration of the area's four medieval forests

An evening celebration of the four medieval forests of the High Weald – Tilgate, St Leonards, Broadwater and Ashdown – was attended by over 500 people. They experienced a musical, lantern-lit voyage of discovery through the woods of Tilgate Park in Crawley, passing illuminated installations telling stories of the High Weald. The evening culminated in a pyrotechnic finale during which the Forest's Giant Maidens were re-awakened. The celebration was the culmination of a Weald Forest Ridge funded community arts project led by Same Sky, which involved 12 schools and community groups in creating giant art-work Maidens and lanterns that celebrated the Forest's unique character.

Access and Biodiversity Enhancements

Ashdown Forest Education Resources

A range of new resources were developed by the Unit's Education Officer, funded one day a week by the Ashdown Forest Conservators supported by the Weald Forest Ridge Scheme.

- **Activity cards** A selection of activity cards were produced to facilitate outdoor learning sessions. The cards outline simple educational activities that teachers can lead with groups of children – helping them to develop basic field work skills, enjoy learning outside the classroom and find out more about the High Weald AONB.
- **Winnie-the-Pooh Story Sack** Ashdown Forest – at the heart of the High Weald AONB – is the 'home' of the famous bear. Using A.A Milne's book, *The House at Pooh Corner*, as inspiration, a Story Sack was developed with resources and classroom based activities to link to nearly all subjects in the Key Stage 1 Curriculum. The Sack is freely available for schools to borrow.
- **Nature v Nurture Debate Pack** A downloadable resource, designed to inform and promote discussion with Key Stage 2 children prior to, and during, a visit to Ashdown Forest was developed. This Debate Pack looks at the key management issue of cutting down trees, aiming to promote awareness of Ashdown Forest itself and an understanding of why such



Chainsaw training equipped local people with woodland management skills



Lantern-lit celebration at Tilgate Forest

Winnie-the-Pooh Story Sack



Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan



Forest Schools activities at the Weald Forest Ridge Forum

action is needed. Through activities, thoughts and discussion, children can consider different opinions and begin to make informed decisions about a relevant and often misinterpreted local issue.

Scheme Management

Weald Forest Ridge Partnership Forum

The first Partnership Forum in the WFR Scheme's Delivery Phase was held in early November. The WFR team brought together over 30 organisations involved Scheme.

The Forum's morning session focused on the achievements of the Scheme's projects. After lunch, a visit to the RSPB's nearby Broadwater Warren reserve enabled all participants to take part in:

- A tour of the RSPB reserve to look at the proposed heathland restoration work.
- Ground-truthing of the site's LiDAR survey.
- Forest Schools' activities, such as weaving rope from plant leaves and building fires!

New organisations welcomed to Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership

Three new Delivery Partners had projects approved by HLF: the Kent High Weald Project, the Woodland Trust and the Root and Branch Theatre Company.

It is well known than many sectors of the community lack confidence in accessing and enjoying their local countryside. HLF approved Kent High Weald Partnership delivery of a series of heritage-related activities, aimed at encouraging parents and their young children to access the Weald Forest Ridge countryside on their doorstep.

HLF also approved a £75,000 project led by the Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity, at its 61ha Hargate Forest site, adjacent to Tunbridge Wells. The project aims to increase awareness of, and the number and range of visitors to, Hargate Forest and to secure local community involvement in the site's long-term management. As a first stage BTCV, through its Inspiring People, Improving Places project within the WFR Scheme staged a trial conservation volunteering day to help start the process of establishing a community-led site management group.

Dragon Tails, a folk-arts theatre production for children, written by the Artistic Director of Root and Branch Theatre Company was also approved by HLF. It explores how dragons play a major part in the folklore of Sussex, particularly with reference to the St Leonards Dragon. It was added to the Scheme in winter 2009/10, to partially replace three other projects in the Learning and Celebrating Heritage Programme that unfortunately proved to be undeliverable.

Dragon Tails, a folk-arts theatre production



Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan

Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Grant Award
Forestry Commission	Forest Footsteps across the Ridge: Sheffield Forest	First tranche of scrub and conifer clearance carried out to create and link heathy woodland and conservation margins within the Forestry Commission-owned, publicly accessible site.	£2,631
Forestry Commission	Forest Footsteps across the Ridge: St Leonards Forest	First tranche of car park improvements and track upgrade carried out to upgrade pedestrian access within the Forestry Commission-owned, publicly accessible site.	£23,572
Horsham District Council	Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods restoration	Broad range of site works and activities undertaken to increase public access to, and enjoyment and understanding of this urban edge site in Horsham, including work on its important heathland habitat. Key achievements included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initiation of heathland conservation grazing. ▪ Initial chemical control of invasive rhododendron and laurel. ▪ Over 250 days of volunteer time carrying out site conservation work. ▪ Willow art sculptures installed on site as the first phase of a Community Artist working with the local community. ▪ A diverse programme of public guided walks and children's events delivered. 	£26,344
RSPB	Broadwater Warren restoration	Environmental Impact Assessment finally approved in December 2009, allowing major habitat works to commence on this regionally important heathland restoration project. Other site works completed in 2009/10 included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rhododendron removal from ancient woodland on site. ▪ Decoy pond restored. ▪ Boardwalk through important woodland mire habitat constructed. ▪ Site interpretation boards installed to main car park and 3 specific habitat locations around the site. 	£59,226
Sussex Wildlife Trust	Eridge Rocks habitat enhancements	Rhododendron removal from the sandrock exposures, 0.5 ha of ride widening undertaken and new site interpretation board installed in car parking area.	£2,097
Sussex Wildlife Trust	Old Lodge habitat enhancements	First tranche of bracken spraying carried out in summer 2009 on this important heathland nature reserve site within Ashdown Forest.	£753
Sussex Police	Kingstanding habitat enhancements	Removal of birch and creation of two scrapes to remove invasive bracken on this important heathland site within Ashdown Forest.	£3,640

Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan

Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Grant Award
East Sussex County Council	Pathways to natural heritage: Weir Wood LNR	Over 1km length of very muddy public footpath enhanced with surfacing to all-ability standards along the northern edge of the Weir Wood reservoir, in partnership with West Sussex County Council. 2 lengths of hedge-laying undertaken as part of a conservation training initiative, with other site habitat enhancements carried out with significant volunteer involvement.	£49,360
Forestry Commission	Pathways to Tudor heritage: Birchden Woods	Over 700m of all-ability standard path created leading from the car park towards Harrison's Rocks, with accompanying ride widening and bench installation, to improve access around this important site.	£25,055
ESAMP	Archaeological awareness activities	First of the family archaeological activity days staged in July 2009, with a total of 18 to be delivered by the end of 2011.	£3,479
East Sussex County Council	Historic environment awareness	A wide range of activities were undertaken to enable local communities to develop increased awareness, understanding and improved management of the historic landscape and environment of the Weald Forest Ridge, including: Appointment of a Project Officer to deliver the project; LiDAR survey carried out over the whole of the WFR area; 3 toolkits drafted – to identify, survey and record archaeological features in woodland using LiDAR as part of the process – in conjunction with the South East Woodlands Archaeology Forum (SEWAF) and other local experts, and currently being tested by community groups. The Project Officer also delivered a wide range of talks and walks for interested groups.	£79,672
Highbrook Village Hall Committee	Highbrook Smokery restoration	Restoration of a historic building in the hamlet of Highbrook, near West Hoathly, completed by the local Village Hall Management Committee, with match funding raised from four other sources in addition to WFR grant support.	£9,047
Conservators of Ashdown Forest	Discovering the magic of Ashdown Forest	Seven self-guided walks leaflet researched, designed and printed, to help Forest visitors understand the importance and significance of this European-designated landscape. Very good progress made in creating online access to the historical records of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest, dating back to 1885.	£2,954
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Family safaris	Over 40 people attended three family nature walks delivered in summer 2009 at Hargate Forest, Broadwater Warren and Brakeybank Wood (part of the Tudeley Woods complex), led by Ian Beavis of the Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery.	£148

Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan

Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Grant Award
Gatwick Greenspace Partnership	Forest Schools' focus for the Weald Forest Ridge	<p>Using the principles and practices of the Forest School Initiative, this project raised awareness and facilitated engagement with the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of the WFR through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appointment of a full-time Co-ordinator to deliver the project. ▪ Forest School delivery with up to 10 schools focused on the Crawley and Horsham area. ▪ Delivery also with the "non-school" sector, such as the Home School Network, Surestart and the Crawley Child-minding Group. ▪ Level 2 or 3 Forest Schools training delivered to 13 trainees. ▪ A cluster group of Forest School practitioners, interested teachers, etc established, with mentoring being undertaken to establish a sustainable legacy for the project. ▪ Numerous bushcraft sessions delivered during school holiday periods. ▪ Production and distribution of a promotional leaflet. 	£26,843
Conservators of Ashdown Forest	Educational resources at Ashdown Forest	<p>A one-day per week post has been created to deliver this project from spare capacity in the 0.6FTE High Weald Education Officer, based at the HW AONB Unit.</p> <p>"Nature v. Nurture" debate pack for KS2 children and Winnie the Pooh Story Sack for KS1 children produced. Additionally the Education Barn at the Ashdown Forest Centre was kitted out with essential educational resource equipment, including an interactive whiteboard.</p>	£4,119
ESAMP	Schools' archaeological activities	First schools' archaeological day delivered in November 2009, with a total of 18 to be delivered by the end of 2011.	£1,787
Root and Branch Theatre Company	Dragon Tails (or Tales of Dragons and Woodland Wyrms!)	Performances of the Dragon Tails play, plus associated drama workshops, delivered in five schools out of the programmed 10 to date.	£9,461
Esus Forestry & Woodlands Ltd	Working woodlands in the Weald Forest Ridge	Total of 8 woodland management-focused training courses delivered to local landowners and land management workers in the WFR, with a particular focus on certified chainsaw training.	£6,705
Weald and Downland Open Air Museum	Local distinctiveness and buildings heritage	<p>Three one-day training courses delivered in September 2009, to a total of 27 trainees, focusing on raising awareness of, and increasing skills in, the local distinctiveness and building heritage of the WFR. The specific courses were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An introduction to the conservation of weather-boarded and tile-hung buildings. 	£1,983

Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan

Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Grant Award
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An introduction to timber-framed buildings and their conservation. ▪ Conservation of ironwork. 	
ESAMP	Archaeological training placements	Three training placements were delivered in 2009, with recruitment of up to three further placements undertaken in early 2010. The placements gained considerable skills and knowledge across the whole archaeological and museums' heritage sector, with considerable overlap into other WFR projects, especially the Historic Environment Awareness project.	£4,164
BTCV	Inspiring People, Improving Places	<p>A wide range of activities were undertaken to increase residents' understanding and practical involvement in the care of the Weald Forest Ridge, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appointment of a full-time Project Officer to deliver the project. ▪ Extensive promotion of the projects' aims to parish councils and community groups. ▪ First of four target conservation volunteering groups successfully established at Horsted Keynes – the Horsted Keynes Hackers – who meet once a month and in which key volunteers have undertaken most of the requisite practical conservation skills training to enable them to become a self-sustaining group. ▪ Two further volunteering groups in the initial stages of development, plus conservation volunteering also undertaken with a roving group and targeted NHS group. ▪ Promotional leaflet produced to publicise the project and its outputs. 	£67,816
Sum of grant to partners			£410,856

Rationale – Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership

The Weald Forest Ridge runs west to east, in an almost unbroken line, from Horsham to Tunbridge Wells. It is the highest ridge of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and within it are the remnants of the Weald's four great medieval forests, as well as numerous unique sandrock outcrops. It lies in close proximity to a number of large urban settlements, making it an important recreational resource.

The Scheme will contribute the following to High Weald Management Plan targets:

- Over 250ha of nationally important habitats improved.
- Over 3,500 volunteer days carried out within the Scheme.
- Volunteering time to the value of £110,000 contributed to the local economy.
- Over 500 activities staged – on sites, in schools and with local communities.
- Over 23,000 people engaged with the Scheme.
- Enhanced access to, and interpretation of, the Weald Forest Ridge area, for both local people and visitors.

2.2 Sustainable Development Fund

During 2009/10 the Sustainable Development Fund supported 15 Projects and over £31,000 of grants were awarded through this scheme. Fourteen new partnerships were established; 104 volunteers were involved with the projects; 14 local businesses were used and over 1000 children learnt about the High Weald landscape and its heritage.

The projects included: two sustainable energy projects; six learning about the High Weald's landscape and heritage; five habitat conservation projects; and one project connecting people with local attractions and encouraging visits to the High Weald.



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 JAC.

Timescale

An annual grant has been awarded since 1 April 2005.

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	SDF Grant Award
Kent's Countryside Management Partnerships	Orchards for Everyone – Development Phase	Development of HLF bid for a community orchards project covering the 2 fruit belts of Kent & Sussex (5 boroughs). Project aim: to deliver a programme of restoration, creation and enhancement of community orchards with opportunities for training, celebration, marketing and promotion of local produce.	£500
Blackthorne's Community Primary School	Blackthorne's Community Primary School Solar Project	Two panel solar thermal systems were mounted on the roof directly above the boiler room in February 2010. It is estimated that the system will provide the school with 70% of its hot water usage. Photovoltaic array will also be installed providing 15% of the annual power requirement. The project will also be integrated into the school's curriculum for sustainable energy.	£4995
Jean Burgess	The Stone Ness Walled Garden Project	Restoration of a historic brick wall boundary so that a productive market garden following organic principles can be made; to provide social and therapeutic horticulture for individuals from the local community; to nurture the walled garden and to safeguard it for future generations.	£2000

Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	SDF Grant Award
RSPB	Coppicing and Ride Management at Tudeley Woods	To improve the habitat and biodiversity of Tudeley Woods through 2km ride clearance and traditional coppicing. Tudeley is well used by residents of Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge. 68 volunteer days were contributed to the ride and coppice management.	£2000
Kent High Weald Partnership	High Weald Energy Story	Building on the successful programme that was held last year over 200 children learnt about sustainable energy resources in their local landscape. On-line resources were developed to support the programme including an energy resource pack; lesson plans; classroom presentation and an energy day planner for schools that wish to manage an in-house energy day. The resources are available to all Primary Schools in and around the High Weald.	£4030
The Skinners School	Oakley Pond Project	Oakley Pond is part of a wider 'Living Classroom' project based at Oakley School in Tunbridge Wells. Over 30 children from local senior schools such as The Skinners School, supported by the expertise of Kent High Weald Partnership, have developed a naturalised pond and organic garden with nature trail. The area will be open to other schools to use and has facilities for an outside classroom; pond dipping experience and for water testing facilities for senior schools. The pond is open to children of all abilities.	£2000
High Weald AONB Unit	Ancient Woodland Inventory	Continuation of the successful survey and inventory programme of ancient woodland focused on the Kent sections of the High Weald AONB.	£4000
Tunbridge Wells Museum	Rocks in the High Weald	An exhibition celebrating the sandstone outcrops of the High Weald, their contribution to the region's topography and ecology, and exploring the story of human responses to the rocks as places of wonder and mystery from prehistory to the present.	£879
St Gregory's secondary school	One Drop	The One Drop Organic garden was created by the children and parents of St Gregory's school in order for the students to gain greater insight into global water conservation and managing an organic garden.	£250
Standen Fruit Farm Development Association	Orchard Pruning	Support to a small community group wishing to maintain a traditional orchard. SDF enabled the group to hire a cherry picker high lift platform and purchase equipment for pruning and restoring mature standard apple trees. A two day community open day was built around this to encourage volunteers to support the project and encourage other landowners to become more involved in the traditional orchard as a communal space.	£825

Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan

Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	SDF Grant Award
Kent High Weald Partnership	Combwell Woods	Combwell Wood (110.82 ha) is designated a SSSI and is owned by a group of enthusiastic landowners. This project has acted as a catalyst in unifying the woodland owners, by inspiring individual owners and their families, promoting understanding, enthusiasm and enjoyment of the wood, its management and local flora and fauna. Training days in 1. Identification of woodland flora and fungi and 2. woodland management and 3. an archaeological survey of the area were provided.	£3500
High Weald AONB Unit	High Weald Heroes drama programme	The project delivered participatory drama sessions to over 3000 children in 16 schools within or around the High Weald. The workshops took the form of an introductory assembly presenting the High Weald's timeline followed by one hour participatory drama sessions with 4 classes. Schools were offered a choice of themes; droving and pannage; Romans in the High Weald; and Tudor times in the High Weald.	£3600
Seven Wonders of the Weald	Seven Wonders of the Weald Website	Re-design of the Seven Wonders website to incorporate new members and a Seven Wonders Partnership scheme aimed at encouraging more visits to the High Weald. The scheme will offer complementary activities, hospitality and accommodation – encouraging visitors to the seven main attractions to stay in the area and boost the local economy.	£1000
Sussex Wildlife Trust	Volunteer equipment	Purchase of additional equipment for volunteers, allowing 8 volunteers to be trained in specialist work that benefits Sussex Wildlife Trust nature reserves.	£815
Picketts Wood Campsite for Girl Guides	East Sussex Girl Guides	Double fencing of a hedgerow newly planted by members of the Girl Guides in East Sussex. Local coppiced chestnut stock fencing was used.	£943



Training day for Combewell Wood Landowners



'High Weald Rocks' exhibition at Tunbridge Wells Museum



Orchard pruning at Standen Street

Profile

High Weald Heroes

Purpose

To enable schools in and around the High Weald to recognise and value the special features of the landscape and to use the landscape as a cross-curricular resource.

Partners

High Weald JAC, Kent High Weald Partnership, individual schools, Ashdown Forest Conservators

Timescale

Phase 1 April 2005 – March 2009
Phase 2 September 2009 to August 2012

2.3 High Weald Heroes

Enabling primary school communities to understand and care for one of England's Finest Landscapes



Laura Sweeting started as the Unit's Education Officer in September following a grant award to the project from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Your Heritage Programme. The three-year roll out of High Weald Heroes – the Joint Advisory Committee's education programme – will help primary schools value, access and care for the area.

This will be achieved through an exciting, landscape-focused, package of events – assemblies, plays, workshops, teacher training sessions and forums; resources – DVDs, map packs and newsletters; and opportunities to explore the local countryside – Welly Walks and site exploration packs.

School recruitment, induction and networking

A key task following the launch of the project was the recruitment of 45 new schools to join the 36 existing High Weald Heroes schools through assemblies, staff training and the provision of school-specific resources.

8 new schools registered bringing the total involved in the scheme to 44. Under the new project Tenterden CEP School, Bishops Down Primary School, Frant CEP School, St Augustine C of E School, Horsmonden Primary School, Guestling-Bradshaw CEP School, Ticehurst & Flimwell C of E School and Rolvenden Primary School became High Weald Heroes schools pledging to Find Out, Take Care Of, Enjoy, Explore and Be Proud of the High Weald.

11 whole school assemblies were delivered (reaching approx 1700 children).

9 school-specific map sets were produced.

3 staff training sessions were delivered.

1 x newsletter was circulated to the HWH partnership.

Ongoing support was provided involving answering requests for resources and building up a network of contacts to put schools in touch with organisations that can help with projects e.g. eco-schools.

School workshops

16 schools involved in new High Weald drama activities

With financial support from the Sustainable Development Fund, a new High Weald drama programme was developed in partnership with Bigfoot Arts Education. 16 primary schools in the High Weald received a free whole school assembly and 4 themed workshops – reaching over 3000 children. The interactive assembly gave a historical overview of the area whilst Key Stage 1 and 2 workshops delivered engaging activities on the themes of Tudors, Romans, Droving and the Environmental Story of the High Weald.

1 x High Weald Sustainable Energy Programme delivered

▪ 6 schools were engaged in learning about the High Weald Energy Story



High Weald Hero school plaque

High Weald drama workshop



Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan

- 6 schools took part in a Sustainable Energy Day based at Bedgebury Pinetum which involved a whole day of hands on activities including building solar cars, tracing the journey of a wood chip and using pedal power to generate electricity.
- 2 teacher training sessions were delivered for staff in the 6 schools involved
- Numerous new resources were created including the journey of a woodchip card, water wizard game, energy lesson plan and Powerpoint presentation and an school energy resources grid.

The programme was organised by the Kent High Weald Partnership but supported by the High Weald AONB Unit, Commonwork, Skinner's School, Weald of Kent Grammar School, Bedgebury Education team, Campaign for Real Events and SEASON (South East Alternative Science Network).

4 x Welly Walks produced

Welly Walks continued to be a very popular choice for schools. 4 more walks were planned, developed, tested and put together by a class of children from each of the schools involved. Welly walks are adapted to suit the school's requirements and aim to teach children not only about the High Weald landscape as a whole, but also pertinent local features. Schools are then encouraged to share the walk with the rest of the school and the wider community.

13 themed school workshops delivered

- 13 school-based workshops were delivered on a variety of themes e.g. Welly Walks (4), farming (2), meadows (2), habitats (1), woodland (1), landscape (2), mapping (1) engaging just over 400 children.
- A new 'mapping' workshop was developed to help teachers/pupils to access the map sets given to them when they join the partnership.
- The meadows play – originally planned for Key Stage 2 – was extended and made accessible for Key Stage 1 children.
- New activity sheets were produced to supplement existing workshops, equipping teachers to easily deliver sessions on meadows, High Weald habitats or the farming story of the AONB.
- All existing school workshops were updated to explicitly link with National Curriculum objectives for the appropriate Key Stage.

Rationale – High Weald Heroes

The High Weald Heroes (HWH) programme has been developed to implement the recommendations of the High Weald Primary Education Strategy. The 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 High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives.

The programme is based around the 5 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 and engagement and filling gaps in school support materials to enable activities to continue beyond the life of the programme.



Energy Day at Bedgebury Forest



Meadows workshop

Welly Walk



Profile **Weald Meadows Initiative**

Purpose

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

Partners

High Weald Landscape Trust, High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd, The Tubney Charitable Trust, Natural England, East Sussex County Council, The Nineveh Charitable Trust and private donors.

Timescale

Initiated 1996, Phase IV July 2006 – September 2009, Phase V November 2009 – 2011.



Barn Owl box

Bomford Meadow



2.4 Weald Meadows Initiative



Through the activities of the Weald Meadows Officer and High Weald Landscape Trust, financial support for an extension of the project for a further 2 years was secured from local sources; the Nineveh Charitable Trust and private donors. After 15 years of sourcing funds for and managing the partnership project the High Weald AONB Unit handed over the reins for the Initiative to the High Weald Landscape Trust.

From November the Initiative was led by the High Weald Landscape Trust with Meadows Officer, Dawn Brickwood, continuing to deliver the project. A successful move to a High Weald Landscape Trust base in Battle took place in mid-November and the fifth phase of the project began in earnest in February.

Meadows Management, Enhancement and Creation

- 20 sites visited and surveyed for potential harvesting of Weald Native Origin Wildflower and Grass Seed (WNOS).
- Seed from 7 species-rich meadows harvested.
- 34 site visits – 15 visits in the Heathfield/Battle Ridge and 19 in the wider High Weald.
- 81 landowners provided with management enhancement and creation advice and support.
- 325 hectares of grassland supported through visits and advice.
- 198 kg of WNOS was harvested from 8ha and dried, cleaned and stored.
- 98 kg of WNOS was re-sown on 20 hectares across 21 sites in the High Weald.
- 16 sites benefited from joint working with Natural England re their management.
- 15 Barn Owl boxes were installed following survey and analysis of suitable potential rural sites. Working with Colin Shawyer of Wildlife Conservation Partnerships the project has improved the coverage of Barn Owl nest boxes across unimproved and semi-improved grasslands in the Weald.

Weald Meadows Initiative Small Grant Scheme

3 meadows benefited from grants totalling £6,919 which were awarded by the Weald Meadows Initiative Grant Fund. Over the year the Weald Meadows Officer liaised with 10 landowners/ organisations interested in the scheme, with 5 applications received and 3 grants awarded. The projects were as follows:

- **Roffey Park (16ha) – Horsham, West Sussex** Fencing to allow the introduction of grazing for short term grassland restoration prior to application to ELS
- **Bomford – George's Field, Brightling, West Sussex (2ha)** New fencing and upgrade of sub-standard fencing to allow grazing on species-rich multi meadows with fruit trees
- **Hawkins – Lankhurst Meadow SNCI, Westfield (1ha)** Contribution to a water bowser to facilitate grazing on species-rich SNCI multi meadow

Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan

Research

- Rapid grassland mapping methodology tested in Heathfield and Hadlow Down using aerial photography interpretation and on the ground surveys, which resulted in the production of new records and a meadows mapping methodology.
- Added or amended 50+ records on the GIS which will feed into the High Weald AONB grassland policies.
- Supplied grassland management DVDs and interpretation data to Hadlow College for Countryside Management students.

Promotion and Events

New exhibition Vanishing Meadows launched at Wakehurst Place

Fergus Garrett, Head Gardener at Great Dixter, spoke passionately about the Weald's unique grasslands at the launch of the exhibition to raise public awareness of meadows – their beauty, special qualities, management and fragility. The launch event held on the 15 May was attended by representatives from 53 organisations, High Weald Joint Advisory Committee members and key individuals including the Deputy Lieutenants for both East and West Sussex.

The 'Vanishing Meadows' Exhibition was organised by the Weald Meadows Group, a partnership of the Weald Meadows Initiative, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Sussex University, and was part of the Royal Botanic Gardens 250th birthday celebrations. The exhibition ran until the end of September and Wakehurst's summer events programme included related demonstrations such as hay making with heavy horses, scything, mini-baling, sheep shearing and grazing.

Visitor numbers to Wakehurst increased during this exhibition period with 217,987 visitors (including 1,500 children on a weekly basis). Over 8,000 Vanishing Meadows exhibition leaflets were distributed.

Emerging wildflower grasslands campaign

Wildflower grassland conservation remains a high priority for the Unit and other key partners. Discussions on how to ensure longer term support for their conservation, possibly through public campaigns, were begun, led by the High Weald Landscape Trust and Great Dixter House and Gardens.

Rationale – Weald Meadows Initiative

As they are man-made habitats, wildflower grasslands require ongoing traditional management (hay cutting and grazing) to maintain their rare flora and fauna. The WMI work in 2008/09 has concentrated on proactively contacting the owners of meadows identified at risk following the 2007/08 grassland condition surveys.



Vanishing Meadows exhibition at Wakehurst Place



Profile

Ancient Woodland Restoration 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 and South Downs National Park.

Partners

High Weald JAC, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, South Downs National Park and INTERREG IV Multi-functional Forest Project Partners

Timescale

December 2005 to August 2008, Phase II April 2009 to September 2011.



Ancient woodland restoration

Rhododendron workshop



2.5 Ancient Woodland Restoration Project

Advising and enabling the restoration of ancient woodland in two of England's Finest Landscapes

Following the success of the Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) Project that ran in the High Weald between 2005 and 2008 the project was extended from April 2009 to include the South Downs National Park. With a purpose and partners very similar to the previous PAWS Project, the project officer divided his time between the High Weald (HW) and the South Downs (SD). In the High Weald the focus was to build on the work undertaken previously in order to engage owners of under-managed ancient woodland and facilitate ongoing management of these sites. Restoration of PAWS to more native woodland types of increased diversity was the long term objective of the advice that was provided.

Site Management

- A database was produced identifying the Project's target sites in the South Downs National Park area and statistics on the woodland resource highlighted.
- Contact was successfully made with the owners/managers of a total of 44 (31 HW, 13 SD) target sites.
- Reports were provided for 10 (6 HW, 4 SD) of the above sites representing over 430ha of woodland.
- Detailed advice was provided to the owners/managers of a further 8 (6 HW, 2 SD) of the sites contacted and visited, representing over 60ha of woodland.
- Forestry Commission approval for grant schemes and felling licences was received for 3 sites (all HW) enabling new work programmes to commence.
- Initial surveys were carried out on a further 29 (21 HW, 8 SD) target sites.

Promotion and Events

- The project was promoted through officer representation at the Weald Woodfair, Royal Forestry Society (RFS) and Sussex Biodiversity Partnership meetings. Liaison with a number of other organisations was undertaken, including the Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission (both project partners), but also Forest Research, Natural England, Royal Forestry Society, Institute of Chartered Foresters, Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre, English Heritage, Deer Initiative and Butterfly Conservation.
- The project was represented at 2 meetings with INTERREG project partners in UK and France.
- A highly successful Rhododendron workshop to enthuse landowners on the need to remove invasive Rhododendron and explore effective removal techniques was attended by 25 woodland owners, managers and contractors. It was held at the Ashdown Forest Centre and Broadstone Warren. Feedback was extremely positive. Natural England, the Forestry Commission, Conservators of Ashdown Forest and local forestry contractors were all involved in its delivery, bringing together a wealth of knowledge and experience. The event was the first in a series of Unit-led woodland events made possible with INTERREG funding.

Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the Management Plan

Rationale – Ancient Woodland Restoration Project

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 Woodland Restoration Project is to protect and restore these areas. A Project Officer works with woodland owners providing 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.

A new officer was appointed to advise on the High Weald's special features

2.6 Cultural Heritage Initiative

Matt Pitts was appointed as the Unit's Cultural Landscape Adviser and began work on 1 September. The post was supported by the Sustainable Development Fund which is operated with financial support from Defra/ Natural England. The project focused on offering free advisory visits to anyone living in the High Weald AONB with 1 acre or more. As part of the visit options for future management were discussed and landowners were pointed in the direction of more specialist advice. Following the visit landowners were given an interactive presentation of their site which includes a series of digital archive maps highlighting any High Weald character components on their property.

Promotion

The Scheme was promoted through many sources, including the Anvil 2010, parish magazines, local free newspapers and direct mail outs. The success of the promotions (measured by visits booked) was as follows: direct mail to farmstead owners using the farmstead GIS data set (5 visits); features in parish magazines (6 visits); a press release featured in Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's newspaper (7 visits); Unit partners and an article for the Small Woods Owners Group website (2).

39 'Introduction to the Landscape' site visits

Thirty-nine landowners received 'Introduction to the Landscape' visits and bespoke interactive site presentations. The majority were small non-farming landowners with under 10 acres of land.

The historical maps proved a useful way of engaging landowners. We have also been able to use this opportunity to demonstrate our approach to time depth and map regression. We have used a combination of digital technology



Profile **Cultural Heritage Initiative**

Purpose

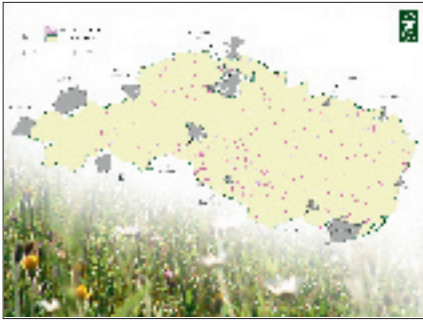
To inform and enthuse those responsible for undertaking site assessments (and making site decisions based on those assessments) about the AONB's special features, helping them to understand the historical development of the features and their value.

Partners

Defra, Natural England, JAC

Timescale

September 2009 to June 2011



Landowners were provided with interactive presentations of their sites

Rationale – Cultural Heritage Initiative

To inform and enthuse land managers (or other individuals involved with site assessments) about the special qualities of High Weald site(s) and through advice and support achieve:

- increased awareness of the AONB
- greater commitment by land managers (or other individuals involved with site assessments) to the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty
- and a demonstrable change in land management practices

A new 'mobile mapper' helped collect archaeological data



and the visual power of computer presentation to highlight historic landscape change and continuity in the High Weald. GIS gives us the ability to combine historic mapping with many other data sources, including archaeological and biological data to give the landowner a really good picture and put individual holdings into a wider landscape context.

Evaluation

Evaluation showed high levels of satisfaction with the visit and presentation, with all landowners fascinated to see old maps of their property. All said that their understanding of their property increased by 75% or more.

The main interest for most people was the historic mapping rather than management advice. There were a number of new landowners where it was possible to directly influence their understanding of the landscape and direct them towards other sources of advice, although these visits were in the minority. More often landowners had already been advised and were considering these options. The visit gave a chance to discuss the options in more detail and encourage them to take the next step. Some landowners were still concerned about losing control of their land when joining Environmental Stewardship. On small sites it is often more difficult to make the financial case for entering one of these grant schemes.

The biggest achievement of this project so far is in making contact with more landowners; raising their awareness of the AONB designation and the importance of the character components of this landscape.

3 Parish 'Making of the High Weald' talks and 2 talks to other groups

Hadlow parish was the first to benefit from the Unit's 'Making of the High Weald' presentation which gives an overview of how the area has evolved over 142 million years. An audience of approximately 30 people were present for the presentation by Jason Lavender, Co-Director, at the Hadlow Down Annual Parish Assembly which was held in the village hall.

The Unit's new Cultural Heritage Adviser offered a similar presentation to all 99 parishes in the High Weald and in 2009/10 two illustrated talks on 'the Making of The High Weald Landscape' were delivered to parish council annual meetings. These meetings provided the opportunity to present directly to county, district, parish councillors and residents and show case the evidence of landscape development to a wider audience.

Data-gathering to inform research and policy

The project ground-truthed AONB Unit GIS data as part of each site visit and noted archaeological features for addition to the Historic Environment Records (HER) of all the counties in the AONB. A mobile mapper was piloted as an efficient tool for undertaking such an activity, with a view to the tool being made available to local historians keen to gather archaeological data on the Unit's behalf.

2.7 Sustainable Visits to the South East Protected Landscapes

Following a successful bid to SEEDA, phase 1 – the research phase – of the project was started and completed in 2009/10. The research aimed to gauge the likely consumer interest in themed short breaks in protected landscapes and was as follows.

Business workshops

A workshop was held with 20 tourism businesses to brainstorm the scope to work together in the High Weald to develop themed packages for promotion to the short break market. The workshop focused on 3 themes; cycling packages, vineyards and woodland/bushcraft.

The workshop was one of 9 that took place in the protected landscapes across the South East with 215 businesses taking part and 111 (12 from the High Weald) completing forms to confirm their commitment to being involved in the project if funding is secured for the next phase.

Protected Landscape Consumer Research

A online survey of 2015 residents was conducted in January 2010 by Onepoll. It showed a strong level of interest in taking a break in South East Protected Landscapes – 84% of those surveyed were interested in a visit including an overnight stay. The majority (61%) prefer to stay in a place offering activities/experiences rather than just looking for a place to stay. Although 50 % preferred to book accommodation in advance, only 8% wanted to book a package of accommodation and activities – ensuring space for those choosing activities at the last minute presents a challenge for activity organisers.

Strong themes came through as to the type of break most people were looking for: food and local produce; historic houses; gardens and site; wildlife and nature; and walking routes. More experiences suitable for families were requested as were those around arts and crafts and nature.

Protected Landscapes Visitor Research

A review of all visitor research in the South East Protected Landscapes was undertaken to provide descriptive, attitudinal and behavioural information about visitors to the region's protected landscapes. Ten market segments were identified and some key conclusions were that:

- The overnight market was small but had potential for growth
- Walking was the most popular activity
- Use of pre-trip information sources was low.

Rationale – Sustainable Visits

Over 35% of the South East region is designated as protected landscape yet it has a low public profile as a rural visitor destination. The project seeks to create a strong market “persona” for the regions protected landscapes through a carefully planned and managed marketing campaign that projects a clear “brand” to carefully selected markets. This will maximise the economic benefit of tourism to the protected areas by increasing staying visitors, extending the average length of stay and increasing the average visitor spend in the rural economy.

Profile

Sustainable Visits to the South East Protected Landscapes

Purpose

To develop and promote rural tourism in the protected landscapes of the South East

Partners

SEEDA, Tourism South East, South East Protected Landscapes

Timescale

2008 – 2013

New research identified themes for sustainable tourism projects



Profile

Rother Woods Project

Purpose

To tackle the decline in woodland biodiversity by supporting active and sensitive woodland management and promoting the requirements and value of butterflies and moths.

Partners

Butterfly Conservation (lead), High Weald JAC, Heritage Lottery Fund, Tubney Charitable Trust, Forestry Commission.

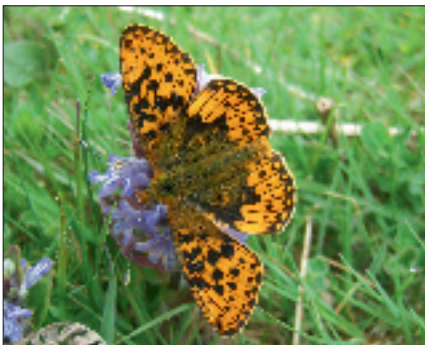
Timescale

November 2007 to 2010

2.8 Rother Woods Project

Butterfly Conservation's Rother Woods Project, which is hosted by the High Weald AONB Unit, achieved the following in the last 12 months:

- 67 visits to 45 sites, meeting the owner or manager at 35 sites, providing tailored advice to help owners and managers improve their properties for wildlife, access grants, identify good contractors and arrange wildlife surveys;
- Production of Woodland Improvement Grant applications worth over £112,000;
- Organisation of 5 workshops for Land Managers providing technical advice on countryside management;
- Organisation of 9 different introductory events for the public, attended by over 150 adults and 50 children.
- Encouraged over 288 days of volunteer time, carrying out butterfly and habitat surveys, supporting events, and helping landowners;
- Collected more than 30,000 butterfly and moth records in the High Weald, which are used to target future conservation management;
- Recorded and mapped 35 butterfly species and more than 600 moth species;
- Initiated a 3-year Pearl-bordered Fritillary reintroduction programme for the to a site in the High Weald with the first adults released in 2010;
- Raised over £48,000 from the Landfill Communities Fund to undertake targeted woodland enhancement work for key species.



Steve Wheatley/Butterfly Conservation

Pearl-bordered Fritillary back at a site in the High Weald after disappearing in the late 1990s

Rationale – Rother Woods Project

The Rother Woods demonstration area contains some of the richest woodland biodiversity in the country – it is a stronghold for many declining woodland bird species such as Lesser Spotted Woodpecker as well as encompassing a site with one of the richest moth fauna of any site in the UK. However individual sites are vulnerable and require protection from neglect, agricultural encroachment and fragmentation. The Project has been tackling the decline in woodland diversity by supporting active woodland management through a combination of: funded management in key target areas, advice and grant support for woodland owners, training for woodland managers and public engagement, including recruitment and training of volunteers.

Dr Patrick Roper leading a 'Caterpillar Masterclass' event for the public at Brede High Woods



Jim Barrett

3 Providing advice and guidance to our partners on CRoW, Section 85*

Rationale

Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 places a duty on all public bodies to have regard for the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in relation to any of their functions affecting land in an AONB. This duty has wide ranging implications which are yet to be fully absorbed by many public bodies. In addition to AONB management planning and co-ordinating delivery projects the AONB Unit can provide advice in the form of individual specialists, technical guidance, training events, web tools and interpretation to support partners in compliance with this duty.

3.1 Technical advice

Planning Consultations

Over the year the Unit received – and usually commented on – over 60 minor planning (and highways) applications as follows:

East Sussex (Rother 6, Hastings 5, Wealden 14), West Sussex (Mid Sussex DC 10, Horsham, 6) Kent (Tunbridge Wells 8, Ashford and Sevenoaks 5) and Surrey (Tandridge 6).

In addition the Unit responded to the following significant planning issues:

- Korker Sausage factory, Rolvenden.
- Affordable housing at Rogers Rough, Kilndown (refusal appealed against).
- Cranbrook Nursing Home, Quakers Lane.
- Temporary test oil exploration site, Bidborough.
- Heathfield school sports pitch floodlighting.
- Proposed CHP biomass powerplant, Northiam (refused).
- PPS3 exceptional design house at Boundary Farm, Hurst Green (design panel advice).
- Housing development at Bylanes Close, Cuckfield.
- Tinkers Park steam heritage site improvements.
- Judicial review for floodlighting at tennis courts in Wadhurst.
- Crowborough Common de-registration application (refused).
- Further consultations on the A21 improvements at Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst.
- A21 Tonbridge to Pembury trunk road improvement.
- A23 improvements at Pease Pottage.

Local Development Frameworks

- Rother DC LDF consultation called 'Active Countryside' – workshop attended.
- JAC research on housing needs of woodland workers used by Rother District Council to assist with developing local key worker definitions.
- Horsham Core Strategy review – response submitted.
- Sevenoaks Core Strategy & Site Allocations DPD – response submitted.
- Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy submission document and Independent Examination – response submitted.
- Tunbridge Wells Cranbrook Conservation Area Appraisal Supplementary Planning Document – response submitted.
- Wealden LSP Core Strategy – 2 events, Alfriston in May and the Boship Hotel in November, attended.
- Wealden Core Strategy consultation – Environmental stakeholders meeting attended.



Silver-studded Blue

*** Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Section 85 – the general duty of public bodies to have regard for the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in relation to any of their functions affecting land in an AONB.**

- Wealden Core Strategy consultation – Green Infrastructure stakeholders meeting attended.
- Mid Sussex District Council Green Infrastructure consultation – workshop attended.
- West Sussex County Council renewable and low carbon consultation – seminar attended.
- In support of wider work in West Sussex the County Council ran a series of workshops – Achieving the Sustainable Village – Unit presented its historic farmstead work.

Other

- The Unit gave an AONB presentation to the annual meeting of parish clerks for Rother District.
- Wealden District Council Tourism Strategy Review – Unit Officer a steering group member and submitted responses to consultations.

4 Adding value to our partners' wider landscape and environmental objectives within the High Weald AONB

Rationale

In addition to their statutory duties with respect to AONBs, local authorities and Natural England have wider targets and outcomes that activity in the AONB can contribute to, such as improved biodiversity; climate change adaptation planning; providing for affordable homes in rural areas; developing green infrastructure, expressed through Public Service Agreements (PSA) targets or National Indicators in Local Area agreements (LAA). Adopting the European Landscape Convention principle that all landscapes matter, the AONB will act as an innovation leader and 'work by example' where it is appropriate.

4.1 Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey *Updating the Ancient Woodland Inventory across the South East*

This long-standing project in its 6th year completed the ancient woodland survey for another large area of the AONB, Rother district. The survey methodology was improved and financial support for its expansion to other districts in the South East exemplified its value to local authorities.

Ancient Woodland Mapping of Rother and Tonbridge & Malling completed

The Ancient Woodland survey for Rother and for Tonbridge & Malling districts was completed; datasets were developed over the winter, then refined through a combination of further historical map research and targeted site visits. The generic historical map sources that are drawn on – such as Napoleonic era manuscript drafts for the first Ordnance Survey maps – were systematically reviewed for the whole inventory area and sites in rural areas where desk-based evidence sources are weak or ambiguous were visited. The priority for other site visits was the urban areas and urban-rural boundaries around Hastings and Bexhill and the Medway Valley.



Profile

Weald and Downs 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 in the High Weald to provide a robust evidence base upon which to assign ancient woodland status. It also enables mapping of adjacent areas.

Partners

High Weald JAC, Forestry Commission, The Woodland Trust, Natural England, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Sussex Biological Records Centre and local authorities (see below).

Timescale

Wealden District: completed March 2006. Mid Sussex District: completed October 2006. Tunbridge Wells Borough: completed October 2007. Ashford Borough: completed December 2008. Rother District: completed March 2009. Tonbridge & Malling Borough completed March 2009. Canterbury City Council, Sevenoaks District Council and Maidstone Borough Council – due for completion Summer 2012.

Adding value to our partners' wider landscape and environmental objectives within the High Weald AONB

	Area (ha)	% of the district	Number of woodland parcels	Average area of woodland parcel
Rother district	51,828			
All woodlands (NIWT) >2 ha	9,751	18.81	487	20.02
Original AWI (woods >2ha)	7,595	14.65	523	14.52
Revised AWI (including woods <2ha)	8,055	15.54	1324	6.08
Overall ancient woodland gain – compared to Original AWI (2000)	460	0.89	801	

The whole of **Rother district's** ancient woodland resource has been re-examined. The area of ancient woodland since the original inventory was produced has risen from 7,595 ha to 8,055 ha, a gain of 460 ha as a result of this revision. This is a net gain, representing more than 1200 ha of newly identified area which has been offset by the removal of a large area of mis-mapped, misattributed or lost woodland. Overall this represents a modest increase from 14.65% to 15.54% of the district's area designated as ancient woodland. The number of parcels of ancient woodland in the revised inventory, by contrast, is more than two and a half that of the original inventory with the gain mostly attributable to small parcels of woodland well distributed across the district.

Table 1

Summary of the woodland area and number of separate woodland parcels from the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (NIWT, Forestry Commission, 2000), the original AWI (digitized version, 2000), and the revised AWI (2010). All areas in ha.

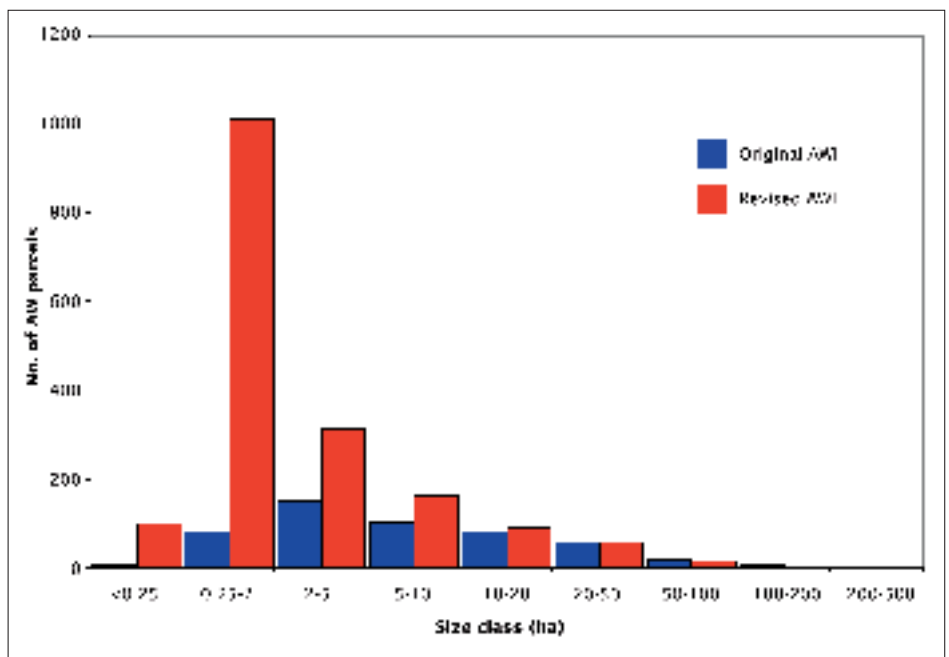


Figure 1

Histogram of the size class distribution for the original and the revised AWIs.

Ancient woodland type	Area (hectares)	% of ancient woodland area
Revised AWI – ASNW	5,559	69
Revised AWI – PAWS	2,496	31
Total:	8,055	

Table 2

Ancient woodland types (areas in hectares).

Adding value to our partners' wider landscape and environmental objectives within the High Weald AONB

	Area (ha)	% of the borough	Number of woodland parcels	Average area of woodland parcel
Tonbridge & Malling borough	24,098			
All woodlands (NIWT) >2 ha	3,338	13.85	227	14.70
Original AWI (woods >2ha)	2,560	10.62	169	15.15
Revised AWI (including woods <2ha)	2,621	10.88	470	5.58
Overall ancient woodland gain – compared to Original AWI (2000)	61	0.26	301	

Table 3

Summary of the woodland area and number of separate woodland parcels from the National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (NIWT, Forestry Commission, 2000), the original AWI (digitized version, 2000), and the revised AWI (2010). All areas in ha.

The whole of **Tonbridge & Malling borough's** ancient woodland resource has been re-examined. The number of parcels of ancient woodland recorded has increased from 169 in the original inventory to 470 in the revised inventory. Most of this additional number is attributable to small parcels of woodland well distributed across the district. The area of ancient woodland in the borough since the original inventory was produced has risen from 2,560 ha to 2,621 ha, a gain of roughly 60 ha as a result of this revision. This is a net gain, representing 400 ha of newly identified area and roughly 340 ha of loss of previously designated land. This brings the portion of the borough's area designated as ancient woodland to slightly below 11%.

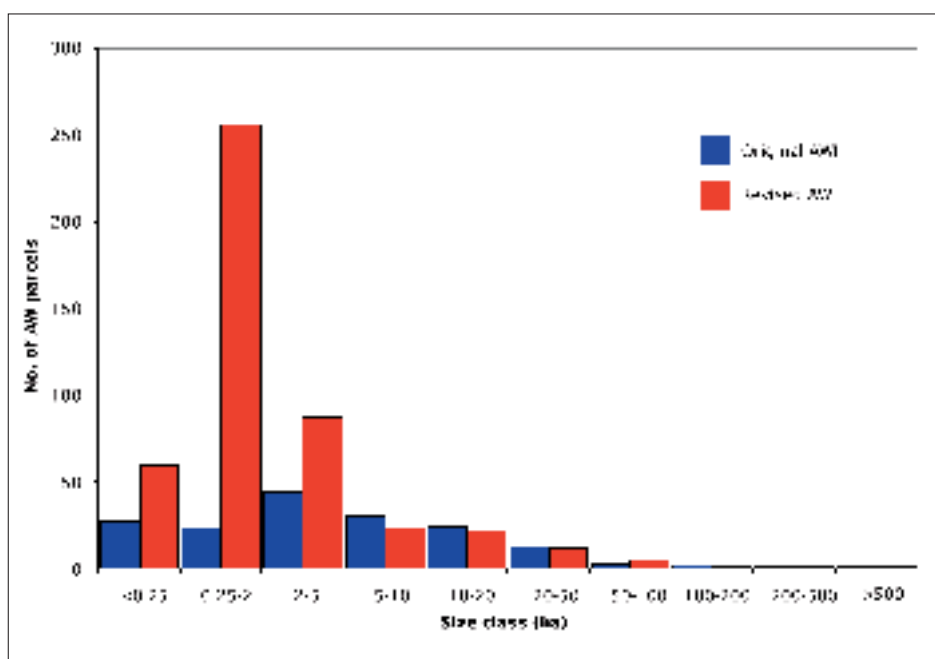


Figure 2

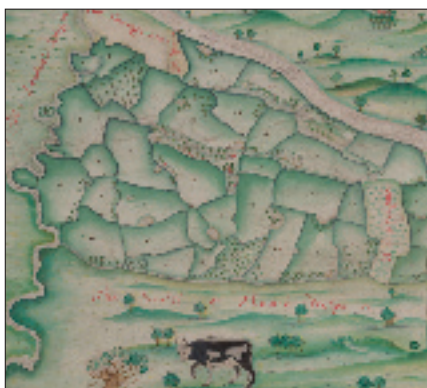
Histogram of the size class distribution for the original and the revised AWIs.

Ancient woodland type	Area (hectares)	% of ancient woodland area
Revised AWI – ASNW	2,141	78
Revised AWI – PAWS	480	22
Total:	2,061	

Table 4

Ancient woodland types (areas in hectares).

Adding value to our partners' wider landscape and environmental objectives within the High Weald AONB



Estate map

Methodology improved through georeferencing of estate maps to expand ancient woodland evidence base

Digital copies of photographs of a large number of 17th, 18th and 19th century estate maps were purchased from the East Sussex Records Office. The maps depict landholdings ranging in size from small farmsteads of a few fields to estates stretching over several parishes and entailing thousands of hectares. They are often superbly decorated and finely detailed in their depiction of field boundaries, mills, ponds, woods of various types, buildings, pits and even livestock. This information takes the cartographic record for understanding the landscape of the High Weald back 200 years before the oldest generally available published maps of the area.

The maps were 'geo-referenced' allowing them to be examined and easily compared with modern maps, such as those of the Ordnance Survey, using computer mapping software. In the short term they will be used to expand the evidence base for identifying and mapping ancient woodland. In future they will aid research on the historical development of the landscape's key components and communication of the time-depth nature of the landscape.

Expansion to include 3 more authorities in the South East

Three local authorities in Kent – Sevenoaks District Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Canterbury City Council – signed up to updating their ancient woodland inventories using the methodology first trialed by a partnership between the Unit, Wealden DC, Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust. The methodology has now been used to update woodland inventories in most of the districts and boroughs in East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey and some Kent authorities. The support of these 3 authorities will result in 40% of the South East having an updated woodland inventory by 2012. The Unit continues to assist local authorities with the survey, employing and managing the specialist staff required to deliver the project.

Rationale – Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey

Ancient woodland is a nationally important and threatened habitat, and its existence over hundreds of years has preserved irreplaceable ecological and historical features. The South East has approximately 40% of the ancient woodland in England, but this valuable resource is increasingly under threat from development pressures in this densely populated region. The Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey was set up in recognition of the increasingly important role of ancient woodlands and the deficiencies of the existing Ancient Woodland Inventory – primarily the exclusion of woodlands under 2ha in size.

The revised Inventories assist planners in making decisions about development within their areas, thus ensuring that the effects of any development proposals on ancient woodlands can be properly assessed and considered. The revised inventories will also enable a better assessment of the extent and quality of the South East's ancient woodland resource to be made, and will help identify threats to the resource, areas for improving habitat connectivity, and opportunities for the strategic management of key woodlands.

Adding value to our partners' wider landscape and environmental objectives within the High Weald AONB

4.2 Data sharing

A significant amount of time was spent supplying Unit data to external bodies to build up their AONB evidence base and as part of this process the scope for more efficient data gathering and sharing between key organisations was explored.

- Data sent to support ARCH (Assessing Regional Changes to Habitats) project for Kent County Council. ARCH is a new INTERREG funded project led by Kent County Council looking to assess changes in habitats, particularly protected habitats, since the last habitat survey was undertaken in 2003.
- Data shared with a pilot project to perform historic map regression of wetlands using HLC (Historic Landscape Characterisation) Sussex Otters & Rivers Project.
- Data shared with Highways Agency/BBMM (their consultants). Primarily the information will be used to better inform the consultants as early in the design phase as possible.
- Data sent to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to support their new Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy evidence base. The High Weald is already a landscape well connected with semi-natural habitats, and linear features, such as routeways. This information is already spatially mapped and can be shared with partners to inform them of the importance of habitats with a long history (e.g. historic field boundaries and ancient woodland), and the opportunities they can provide in terms of GI, both as a recreation resource and wildlife corridor, whilst continuing to reinforce the character of this important landscape.
- There were ongoing discussions with East Sussex County Council regarding the Heritage Environment Record (HER) data transfer – a transfer will allow new heritage and archaeology data generated by project officers working at the High Weald AONB Unit to be shared with relevant county councils and therefore considered in decision making in the future. It will also set up protocols allowing the Unit to access HER evidence to inform its own research and understanding.
- There was also a meeting with the Kent County Council HER team regarding the data we currently have and opportunities to make data sharing more straightforward. We hope to replicate this across counties/districts.
- A meeting was held with Ashford planners to highlight to them the data we have (particularly geo-referenced historic maps) and how it could be shared and used as part of their own (planning) decision making.



Section of map showing Unit's 'character component' data

4.3 Climate Change Adaptation

Woodlands and carbon storage in the High Weald AONB

As part of a programme of activities to understand more about how important our landscape is to our social and economic well being, the High Weald JAC commissioned a short report on the role of High Weald woodlands in carbon storage.

Woodlands and woodland management have a vital role to play in our response to climate change as growing trees absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere and store it as carbon both above and below ground. The preparation of a carbon account for woodlands is the first stage in providing advice to assist policy makers and land managers take decisions that reduce emissions and enhance sequestration, 'locking up', of carbon.

Adding value to our partners' wider landscape and environmental objectives within the High Weald AONB



Report concludes that High Weald woodlands 'lock up' one fifth of resident's annual carbon emissions

The reports findings show that trees growing naturally in High Weald woodlands 'lock up' equivalent to a fifth of the annual carbon emissions of each High Weald resident*. The best way to ensure this carbon stays 'locked up' for as long as possible is to use timber in buildings that have a long lifespan and where this isn't practical to utilise wood as fuel for heating as a substitute for fossil fuels.

The report will inform the JAC's approach to support for the woodland industry in its ambition to improve the utilisation of local timber in buildings.

* In the UK the average carbon emissions per person are 10 tonnes of carbon per year.

4.4 Partner Programme Support

The Unit supported the following organisations' programmes through providing comment, technical input and peer review:

- Kent County Council – development of a multifunctional land management plan and forest schools programme under INTERREG IVa MULTIFOR.
- Rother District – Local key worker definitions and policy.
- Tunbridge Wells – small settlement planning and farmstead case studies.
- Ashdown Forest – HLS programme co-ordination.
- Kent High Weald Project – steering group.
- WARR Board – Board member.
- West Kent LAG – steering group.
- Ashdown Visitor Management Partnership – steering group.
- Environment Agency Water Framework Directive Liaison Group – policy co-ordination.
- Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Management Board – scheme co-ordination.
- Knepp Castle Wildland Project – steering group.

5 Enabling the Joint Advisory Committee to be an effective champion for the High Weald

Rationale

Effective administration and organisation of the partnership and staff unit is essential to support a strong JAC.

5.1 High Weald Joint Advisory Committee and Management Board



The High Weald Joint Advisory Committee met on 19 October 2009 and 8 March 2010 to discuss and agree report recommendations relating to the forward budget; risk mitigation; Memorandum of Understanding between Natural England and the constituent local authorities; Officer's Steering Group terms of reference; and the Unit Business Strategy 2010-13. There were presentations on the Wind Energy Assessment report and the Weald Forest Ridge LiDAR project at the October meeting and a 'Looking Forward' presentation by the Unit at the March meeting.

The Management Board met three times, in June and September 2009 and in February 2010. The Management Board approved the Annual Return and Annual Governance Statement at its June meeting.

5.2 Regional, National and Local liaison

National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Conference 2009

In July the UK's 47-strong family of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty met for three days at the University of Ulster, Coleraine Campus for the 11th annual conference. The conference was also used as an opportunity to celebrate both the 60th Anniversary of the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act and the 20th Anniversary of the Causeway Coast AONB and the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site.

The conference was hosted by the AONBs of Northern Ireland and the guest speakers and 180 delegates, which included the High Weald JAC Chairman, AONB Co-Director and Research Officer, focused on the different ways of valuing and getting value from AONBs. The conference included a series of field trips to the host AONBs to see how they were dealing with the challenges and opportunities facing them.

National Association 'Buddy' visit

In 2002 the National Association's Board Members decided to "adopt" AONBs other than their own to strengthen the links between the Committee and its membership. Each Board member is given a number of AONBs to 'adopt' and maintains contact either by phone, email or face to face meetings throughout the year.

In September Richard Lloyd MBE, a Board member of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, visited the staff of the High Weald AONB Unit to learn more about the JAC partnership and to hear views from the AONB Unit on areas of work to be prioritised.



Cllr Sylvia Tidy at the AONB conference in Ireland



Enabling the Joint Advisory Committee to be an effective champion for the High Weald



Vineyard tour at South East AONB Forum

South East Protected Landscapes

South East Protected Landscape Chairmen meet with the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Chairman of each of the nine Protected Landscapes in the south east of England, accompanied by their respective directors, attended the annual meeting with the National Association for AONBs in March. Uppermost in the minds of those attending the meeting was how to reconcile the needs of the rural and protected landscapes sector with the likely future upheavals as a result of the fall-out of the banking crisis and predicted financial and personnel cuts facing the public sector. Discussions, as a result, tended to focus on the issues and opportunities now facing the sector and the need to identify ways the protected landscapes and the NAAONBs can begin to address them.

South East AONB Directors Meeting

The AONB Directors attended quarterly meetings of the South East AONB Directors Group.

Staff Forum

In October the first South East AONB staff forum, conceived and organised by the Policy Manager for the South East Protected Landscapes, was hosted by the Surrey Hills AONB and the National Association for AONBs at Denbies Wine Estate at Dorking. AONB Unit and Natural England staff from all over the region came together for a series of workshops around common issues. High Weald AONB Directors ran a session on 'Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) in the dock' to illustrate why the AONB Unit has abandoned current LCA methodology in favour of time-depth and objective analysis and characterisation.

Natural England

Visit from Andrew Wood, Executive Director of Natural England

On 10 June, Andrew Wood, Executive Director of Evidence and Policy for Natural England visited the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Natural England, a central government agency, works in collaboration with the High Weald AONB JAC to conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB and ensure public understanding and enjoyment of this protected landscape.

Mr Wood's visit followed the launch of the updated AONB Management Plan for the High Weald. He joined AONB Directors Sally Marsh and Jason Lavender on a walk around a local farm to experience first hand the High Weald's essentially medieval landscape and to discuss the Plan's 20-year vision and how the distinctive character arose from a long history of human interaction with the natural environment. Understanding how the High Weald has been created by people over time allows the High Weald JAC to draw some important conclusions of direct relevance to the management of the area today and in the future.

Following the visit Andrew Wood wrote thanking the AONB Unit for "laying on such an interesting and informative day... I came away with lots of food for thought."

In December, a similar tour was held for Sarah Taylor, responsible for Natural England's climate change adaptation policy in southern region; Richard Clarke,

Jason Lavender, High Weald AONB Unit with Andrew Wood, Natural England



Enabling the Joint Advisory Committee to be an effective champion for the High Weald

the South East's Policy Manager; and Rob Batchelor representing Buxted Park, a 500 acre estate on the edge of the High Weald AONB.

Local Partnerships

EDF Energy Power line burial

The project to install underground cables in place of overhead power lines, sponsored by EDF, saw the first scheme in the High Weald completed. Over 60 'telegraph type' poles and 4km of power lines were removed from Brightling Down, East Sussex to improve the views from one of the area's highest points.

The removal of the power lines was made possible by a special allowance given by electricity industry regulator Ofgem. Up to 2010 EDF Energy Networks had £7.7million to invest on such projects in the South East's AONBs and National Parks.

High Sheriffs Visit

In October, the HW AONB Unit hosted a visit to the AONB for Bill Shelford, the High Sheriff of East Sussex and Simon Knight, the High Sheriff of West Sussex at a farm belonging to Dr Lisbet Rausing, a High Weald Patron.

The High Sheriffs spent the day with Jason Lavender, Co-Director of the High Weald AONB Unit. They experienced first hand the High Weald's essentially medieval landscape to learn more about how its distinctive countryside arose from a long history of human interaction with the natural environment and how this understanding has allowed us to draw some important conclusions of direct relevance to the management of the area today and its potential to meet society's current and future needs.

In March, Simon Knight, the High Sheriff of West Sussex, invited Jason Lavender to represent the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee at the Judges' Service at Chichester Cathedral.

Members of Parliament

In March Jason Lavender, Co-Director, met with Gregory Barker, High Weald AONB Patron and Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Environment, to provide an update on some of the recent AONB Unit's research and to outline areas of work for the coming year. Gregory was pleased to learn more of the Unit's work to inform policy and decision makers on how the High Weald as an area can contribute a range of sustainable land use benefits and services (food, energy, education, water management, bio-diversity, 'well-being' etc.) for society.

Serena Tierney, the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Candidate for Mid-Sussex visited the offices of the High Weald AONB Unit to meet the Co-Directors Sally Marsh and Jason Lavender. Ms Tierney was keen to discuss issues associated with housing development and to learn more about the High Weald's distinctive countryside.



Overhead power line removal at Brightling

Visit from the East and West Sussex High Sheriffs



Enabling the Joint Advisory Committee to be an effective champion for the High Weald



5.3 Communications

High Weald Anvil 2010

The 11th edition of the High Weald Anvil, published in March 2010, had a print run of 85,000. Using National Letterbox Marketing, 69,500 copies were distributed with free papers to households within the AONB. A further 3,450 were distributed directly to local tourist attractions and key village and farm shops, with the balance to be distributed by the Unit and partners at events.

In addition to the regular features – News in Brief, AONB map, attraction listings and event tasters – the Anvil included articles on: dinosaurs and sandrock; deer and their management; the relationship between gardens and their landscape setting; and an A to Z of actions that help care for the area.

Illustrated maps and artwork

As part of ongoing work to develop a range of tools to communicate what is special about the High Weald a set of attractive Powerpoint slides were created to illustrate the wealth of spatial information that the Unit has developed on the distribution of High Weald character components. These will be used by staff as part of the increasing number of presentations that are being given to landowners, parish councils, community groups and local authorities. The slides can be developed to meet the needs of anyone else undertaking presentations with a High Weald.



New artwork was created

Quarterly Briefings and Annual Review 2008/09

The 36-page Annual Review was published in July and circulated to 450 stakeholders including the 99 parishes that have all or part of their area covered by the designation. The document was a comprehensive account of the work undertaken by the Unit on behalf of the JAC in 2008/09. Three electronic quarterly briefings highlighting key areas of activity undertaken by the JAC were produced and circulated to the same stakeholders.

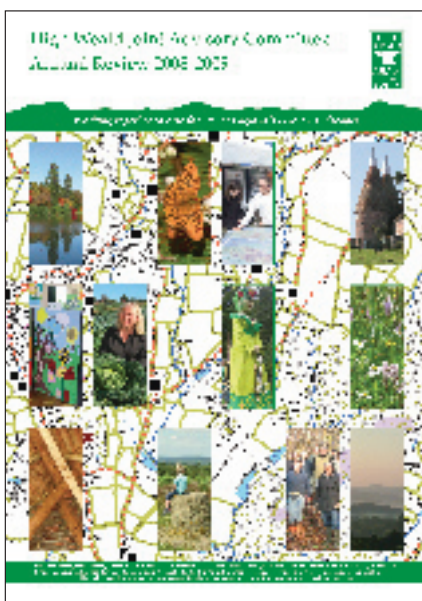
Woodfuel Seminars at WoodFair

The AONB Co-Director, Sally Marsh, chaired two Forestry Commission South East workshops focused on the challenges facing woodfuel. Speakers from across the industry promoted the value of managing woodlands and raised the issues that need to be addressed. Over 50 people attended each workshop, demonstrating the interest in exploring ways forward with this local energy source. The Chair concluded that currently the future looked bright for woodfuel, with incentives available for large operators, however special care needs be taken in the small woodlands of the High Weald which have traditionally been managed by hand.

Pilot Photography Competition in partnership with Tonbridge Camera Club

A presentation to 80 members of the Tonbridge Camera Club, one of the largest in the area, launched the Unit's pilot Photography Competition. The competition themed 'The Weald in Winter' ran until 31 March 2010 with a view to rolling out a spring/summer themed competition to other Camera Clubs in the area if successful.

The Project was inspired by the national Landscape Photographer of the Year 2009 competition and was led by Patrick Sheard, the Unit's student placement in 2009/10.



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www.highweald.org

Between the end of March 2009 and beginning of April 2010 the High Weald website received 42,000 hits with an increase of 2,000 hits on the previous year. There were 32,000 visits made to the website with 72% of those visits being made by new users. The most popular pages on the website remain within the visitor information section with the walks page being the top page viewed, followed by the About the High Weald section which includes the series of videos telling the story of the High Weald. Top level introductory page revisions were continued with a focus on encouraging visitors to view pages by subject area from across the site, ensuring longer time spent viewing the site which on average has increased from less than a minute to nearly 4 minutes per visit. New pages added in the past 12 months include a growing education resources section include map sets for all the High Weald Hero schools.

A focus of the last 3 months of the year was work to refresh the 10-year old High Weald website using open source software – Joomla. Open source software is freely available from the internet, and, as it is independent from the supplier and manufacturers it gives the Unit more control and flexibility with future development. A local firm was contracted to develop the site using Joomla, creating the style and custom programming the software where required to ensure it fully meets the Units needs.

5.4 Fundraising

Financial support secured from SEEDA for the development of sustainable tourism in the region's Finest Landscapes

The South East Protected Landscapes (SEPL) Group obtained 100% funding of £79,250 from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) to implement phase one of a two phase project to increase the profile of the South East Protected Landscapes as visitor destinations through sustainable tourism development. Phase 1 involved desk-based research to draw up visitor profiles; product development to identify the existing and new products that would appeal to the visitors; and an on-line consumer survey to establish the public's willingness to buy the type of visitor products anticipated (see page 25).

Phase 2 will seek funding to develop the products and to design and implement a 3-year marketing campaign to actively promote the products developed and improve the profitability of participating businesses.

INTERREG Funds secured for expansion of Ancient Woodland Restoration Project

Working in partnership with CRPF (the French lead partner), the Forestry Commission and Kent County Council, funds were secured for a project focused on multi-functional forest management in the face of climate change. The funding will enable more landowner visits and the establishment of a woodland events programme.

Financial support secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund for High Weald Education programme roll out

The Heritage Lottery Fund offered a £50,000 grant towards a 3-year roll out of the High Weald Heroes – the JAC's primary school education programme. The scheme, which builds on a successful pilot, aims to help schools learn about, value, access and care for the AONB. The programme is based around a



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concept, High Weald Heroes, and 5 actions: Find Out About; Explore; Take Care of; Be Proud of; and Enjoy. The actions are positive, proactive and non-prescriptive leaving teachers and pupils room for discussion and creativity in their achievement.

Funding secured from Natural England for 2010/11

The annual bid for core, project and SDF contributions was submitted and was successful.

5.5 Staff management

High Weald AONB Unit team events

A team evening took place at Tablehurst Farm, Forest Row in July. Peter, the farm manager, gave an introduction to the management of this well established biodynamic community farming enterprise whilst Tom Forward, of Sussex Wildlife Trust, who has had a long association with the farm, gave a guided tour. The barbecue was fired up to cook meat purchased in the farm shop.

To support the Weald Forest Ridge Maiden's celebration, the Unit spent a morning crafting a banner to herald the forthcoming procession of the Ashdown Forest Maiden and her followers.

Training

A training day on 'Writing for the Web' was held for all AONB Unit staff in March.

5.6 Business systems/Office accommodation/ Health and safety

Business systems

- Adobe Photoshop Elements was purchased to enable more effective management of the Unit's image library.
- A Schools database linked to the GIS was created to allow the extraction of school contact data on a geographical basis.
- The Historic Environment data was merged and smoothed for all 4 counties.
- About 350 historic maps were geo-referenced making them available in the Unit's GIS where they can be overlaid with any number of other spatial datasets and therefore analysed.
- The Unit began the process of scanning and geo-referencing 1947 aerial photography for parts of Kent High Weald (currently held as paper copies at KCC). Historic aerial photography provides another layer of evidence for land use and can help us to ascertain changes in land use in the AONB, particularly for smaller land parcels such as wildflower grasslands.
- The AONB Unit began a project to migrate to using file geodatabases for large discrete datasets in GIS (Geographic Information System) – the system was tested as part of the Routeways Pilots survey as a way to hold large quantities of data, make data entry management much more straightforward and make the data storage size smaller.

Health and safety

- Clothing and footwear was purchased for project officers undertaking site visits.
- A buddy system was established and operated to meet East Sussex County

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Council Lone Working policy requirements.

- A new office signing in/signing out system was introduced.

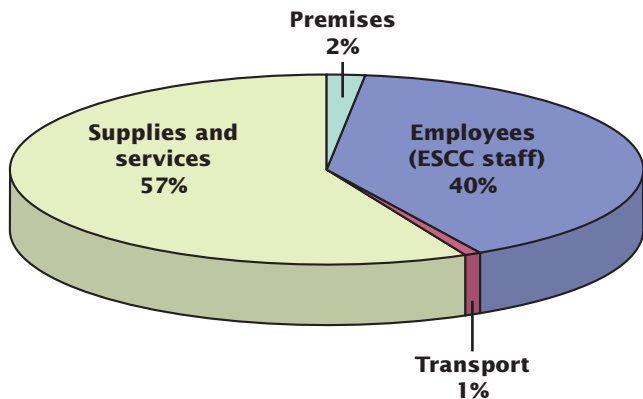
5.7 Work planning/Performance and reporting/Risk management/Financial management

- A draft 3-year business strategy was produced and consultation undertaken with the Joint Advisory Committee and Officers' Steering Group
- Annual and interim staff appraisals were undertaken to manage performance against Unit business strategy objectives.
- Progress reports and financial claims were submitted to grant-aiding bodies in line with contracts: 4 reports and 2 claims to Natural England for core, SDF and project contributions; 4 reports and 4 claims to Wealden District Council for core contributions; 1 report and 1 claim to INTERREG for Multi-functional Forests; 1 report and 1 claim to Kent County Council for High Weald Heroes and 1 report and 1 claim to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme.
- The 2008/09 Annual Return and Annual Governance Statement gave full assurance to the JAC's risk and financial management systems and the same systems continued in 2009/10 with minor audit recommendations implemented.



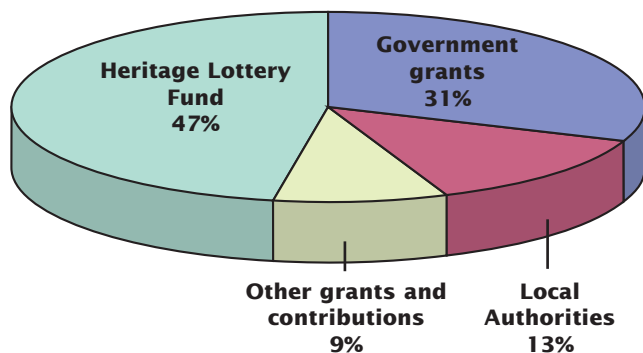
Total Expenditure

Gross expenditure £1,084,000



Total Income

Gross income £1,098,000



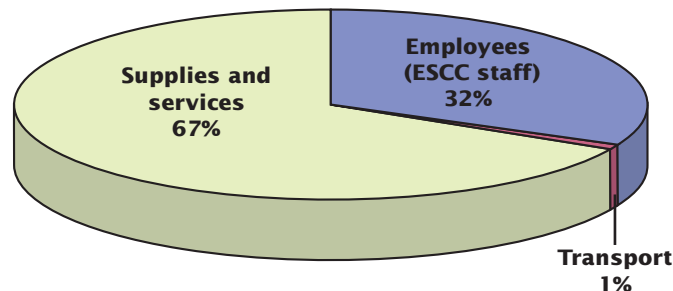
The Joint Advisory Committee received its income from Natural England, local authorities and other bodies as follows:

Natural England	£357,067
Local authority partners	£146,838
Heritage Lottery Fund	£512,141
Other bodies	£81,854

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

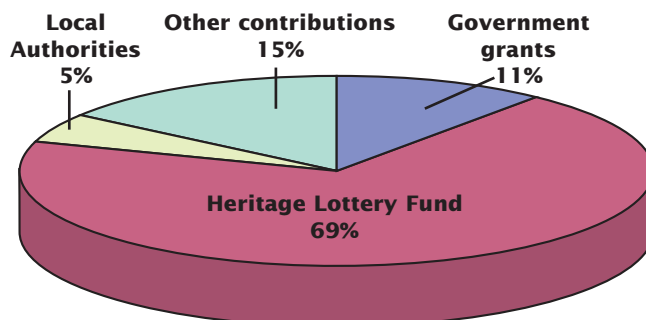
Project Expenditure

Gross expenditure £736,000



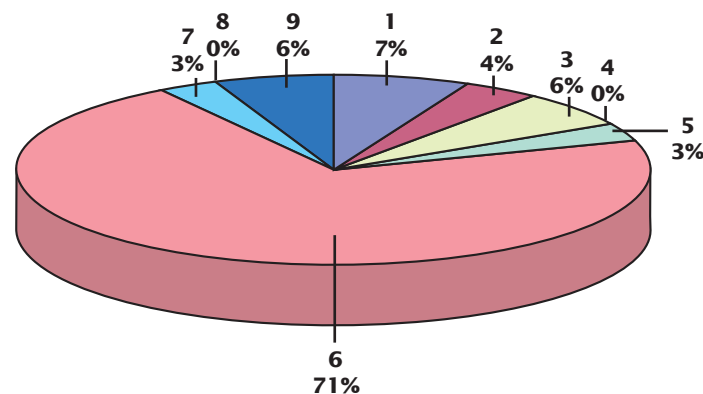
Project Income

Gross income £738,000



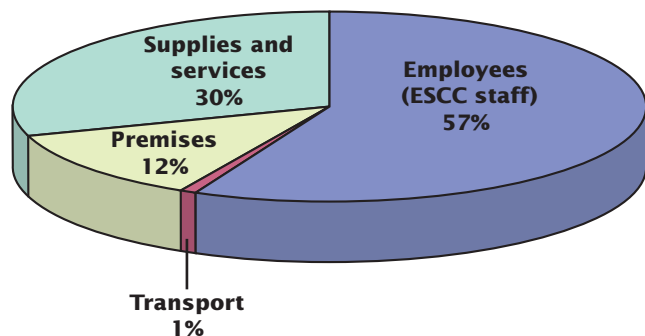
Expenditure by Project

Gross expenditure £736,000



■ Core Expenditure

Gross expenditure £351,000



Core supplies and services included:

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

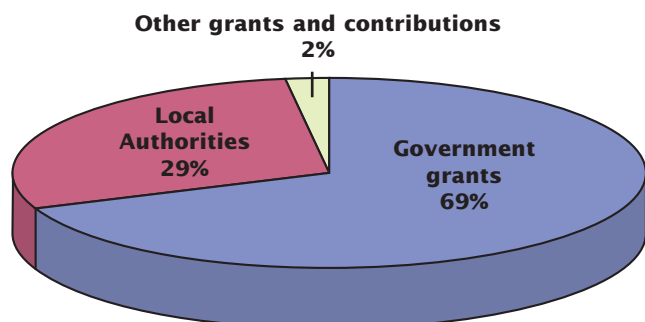
Communication costs – publication production and distribution costs (primarily for the High Weald Anvil and Annual Review), event attendance and other miscellaneous promotional expenses.

ESCC support costs – IT, personnel and finance services.

Local authority core contributions were as follows:

■ Core Income

Gross income £363,000



	£000s
East Sussex County Council*	22.1
ESCC accommodation	13.7
Kent County Council*	13.3
West Sussex County Council*	9.3
Surrey County Council	2.9
Wealden District Council*	7.1
Rother District Council*	7.1
Mid Sussex District Council*	5.6
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council***	6.6
Horsham District Council**	4.6
Sevenoaks District Council	3.6
Ashford Borough Council**	0.8
Hastings Borough Council**	1.4
Tandridge Borough Council	2.2
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**	0.3
Crawley Borough Council **	0.3

Key to Expenditure by Project:

- 1 Weald Meadows Initiative
- 2 Restoration of Ancient Woodlands Project
- 3 Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Project
- 4 Ashdown Forest Interpretation Project
- 5 High Weald Heroes
- 6 Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme
- 7 Multifunctional Forests Project
- 8 Green Living Project
- 9 Sustainable Development Fund

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; *** £1,000) to the Partnership Enabling Funding 2009/10.

The final position for the year was a reserve of £66,979 at 31 March 2010, which includes the £14,075 surplus for 2009/10.

JAC Co-optees

Recreation/Leisure

Mr A Betts,
Forestry Commission

Community/Economy

Mr J Leggett,
Action in Rural Sussex

Landowners

Mr B Underwood, Country Land
and Business Association

Farming

Mr R Froggatt,
National Farmers Union

JAC Management Board

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

Clerk to the JAC and Board

Michaela Frost, Gemma Barlow

Membership 2009-10

The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) is composed of an officer from Natural England, councillors from the 15 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. A Management Board assists the Unit with the JAC's work between JAC meetings. An Officers Steering Group advises the Management Board and JAC.

Representatives of the JAC, Management Board and OSG from 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010 were as follows:

Chair – Councillor Mrs S Tidy

Vice-chair – Councillor B Kentfield

Officers Steering Group Chair – David Phillips

Natural England

James Seymour
Joanne Spickett

East Sussex County Council

Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy
Virginia Pullan

West Sussex County Council

Councillor B Acraman (until summer 2009); Keith Blake
Jackie Lewis

Kent County Council

Councillor Roy Bullock
Kate Phillips; Elizabeth Milne

Surrey County Council

Councillor K Rimington; (until summer 2009) Councillor M Sydney
Mike Dawson

Wealden District Council

Councillor Jonica Fox
David Phillips

Rother District Council

Councillor B Kentfield
Tim Hickling; David Marlow

Hastings Borough Council

Councillor M Lock
Murray Davidson

Mid Sussex District Council

Councillor C Hersey
Alma Howell

Horsham District Council

Councillor Mrs E Kitchen
Catherine Howe; Kathryn Reeves

Crawley Borough Council

Councillor B Burgess
Tom Nutt

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Councillor E Thomas
David Scully

Sevenoaks District Council

Councillor Ms J Davison
Caroline Lingham; Sarah Lloyd

Ashford Borough Council

Councillor R Taylor
Danielle Brough; Brenda Fazzani

Tonbridge & Malling District Council

Councillor Matthew Balfour
Jenny Mentz; Jenny Knowles

Tandridge District Council

Councillor M Sydney
Paul Newdick

Purpose, Role and Functions

Purpose

The primary purpose of the JAC is to

- conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.

The JAC will also:

- increase understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the AONB
- seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the AONB.

In general terms the JAC is guided by national policies set out for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, primarily by Natural England or any successor body.

Role

The JAC is primarily an advisory body (not a planning authority or an executive body) acting as a catalyst and facilitator in making recommendations to its constituent bodies and other organisations on policies and the allocation of resources in relation to the protection and enhancement of the AONB.

The JAC prepares the AONB Management Plan for adoption by the local authorities and oversees its implementation. The JAC also plays a significant part in developing an image and sense of identity for the AONB and developing and supporting initiatives for conservation within it.

Extracted from *The High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee Constitution Adopted 13 July 2005*

Functions

On behalf of the JAC, the High Weald AONB Unit delivers the following core functions in the context of the AONB Management Plan and in accordance with a 3-year business strategy.

- Developing a vision and strategy for AONB management.
- Preparing, with constituent local authorities, an 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*

Staff 2009-10

Core staff remained constant at 5.6FTE with consultants used to support core delivery given the vacant Interpretation and Finance officer posts. Project staff fluctuated between 5.8FTE and 8FTE. Five staff joined the project team: Andrew Wright, Patricia Tiltman, James Sharpe, Matt Pitts, Laura Sweeting and Charles Winchester. Two officers left: Ruth Dawson, the Weald Forest Ridge Project Officer, to take up an administration and marketing role with Sussex Past; and Dawn Brickwood, Weald Meadows Officer to carry on the Weald Meadows Initiative but under the leadership of the High Weald Landscape Trust.

Core

Co-Directors – Sally Marsh (0.6FTE)/ Jason Lavender (0.6FTE)

Business Manager – Gerry Sherwin (0.8FTE)

Policy and Research Officer – Andrew Shaw

Research Officer – Ruth Childs

Administrator – Kerry Baldwin (0.5FTE)

Team Support Officer – Samantha Nicholas (0.8FTE)

Projects

Ancient Woodland Restoration Officer – Andrew Wright (April – August 2009 1FTE, September 2009 – March 2010 0.8FTE)

Weald Meadows Officer – Dawn Brickwood (until October 2009)

GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer – Philip Sansum

GIS Access and Habitat Mapping Officer – Matt Grose (0.4FTE)

Weald Forest Ridge Manager – Simon Aguss

Weald Forest Ridge Administrator – Patricia Tiltman (0.8FTE)

Weald Forest Ridge Project Officer – Ruth Dawson (until December 2009)

Weald Forest Ridge Project Officer – James Sharpe (from March 2010)

Cultural Heritage Adviser – Matt Pitts (from September 2009)

Education Officer – Laura Sweeting (0.8FTE from September 2009)

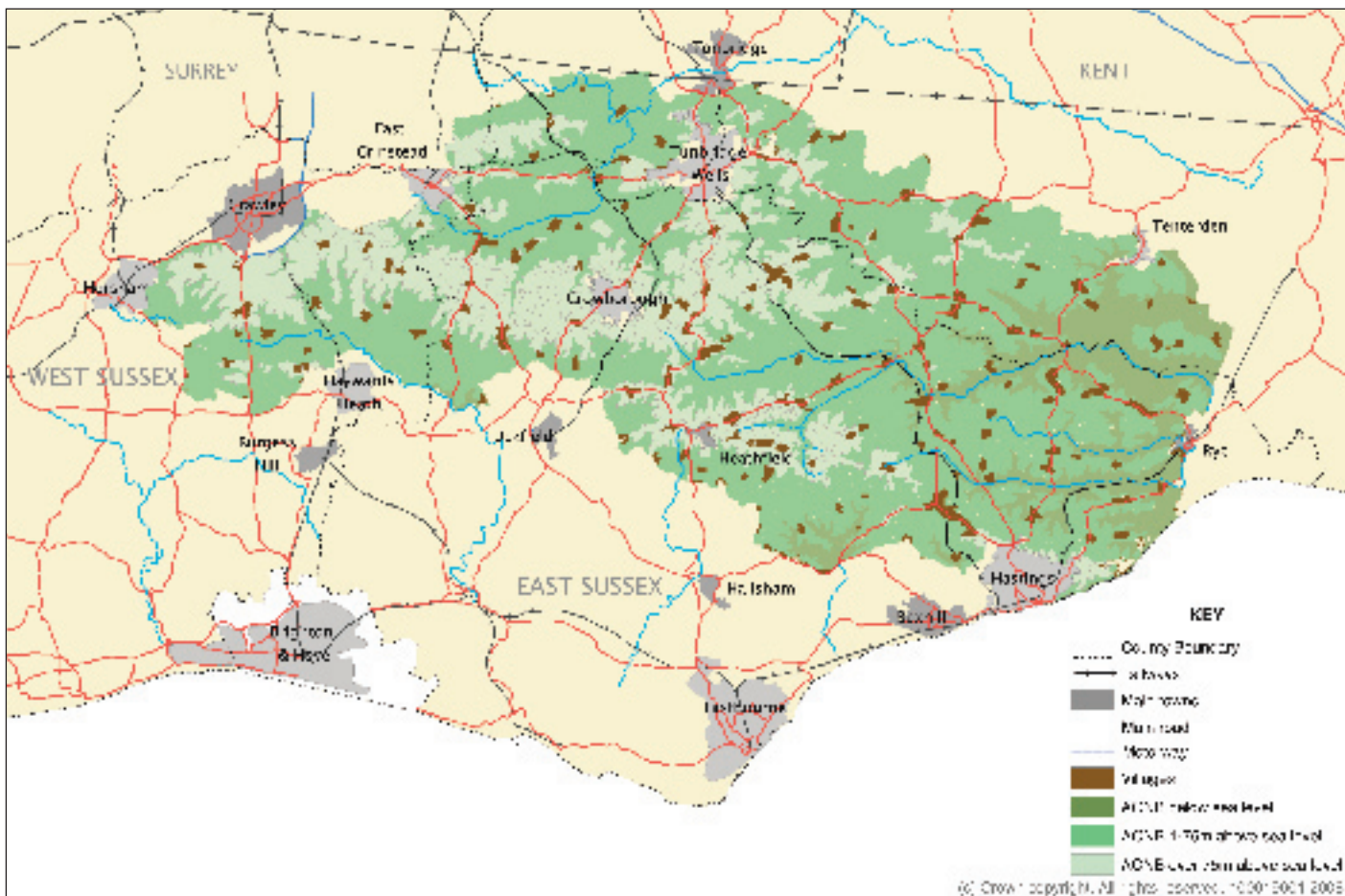
Charles Winchester – Assistant GIS Mapping Officer (from March 2010)

Patrick Sheard – Hadlow College Student Placement (September 2009 – March 2010)

High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Facts and Figures

- **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 38 AONBs in England and Wales covering about 13% of the area.
- **Administration** The designated area extends across parts of four counties (Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent), 11 districts or boroughs, and 99 parishes.
- **Population** The population of the High Weald is around 124,880 with a density of 0.85 people per hectare. 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. It is still essentially a 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.
- **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 accounting for 67.5% of the total area in 2007. Between 1990 and 2006 mean farm size declined from 45 to 35.7 hectares. In 2006 41.5% of the farm workforce was comprised of part-time farmers. Only around 4,800 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 35,905 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 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 51 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the AONB, totalling 5535.49 hectares in area. There are 198 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) totalling 10,291.8 hectares in area.
- **Archaeological and architectural value** There are 91 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the AONB and 64 conservation areas in built-up areas (containing many of the 5,174 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 2,063 kilometres.

High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



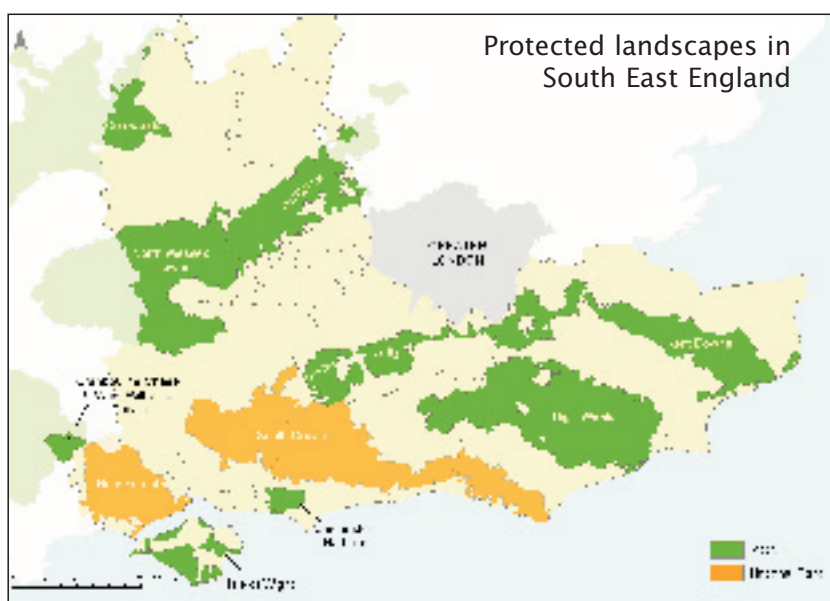
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The annual review is published by the High Weald AONB Unit on behalf of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC).



Front cover background image © Forest Research based on data collected by The Cambridge Unit for Landscape Modelling for East Sussex County Council