



# High Weald Joint Advisory Committee Annual Review 2010-2011

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

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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.

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# The 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.

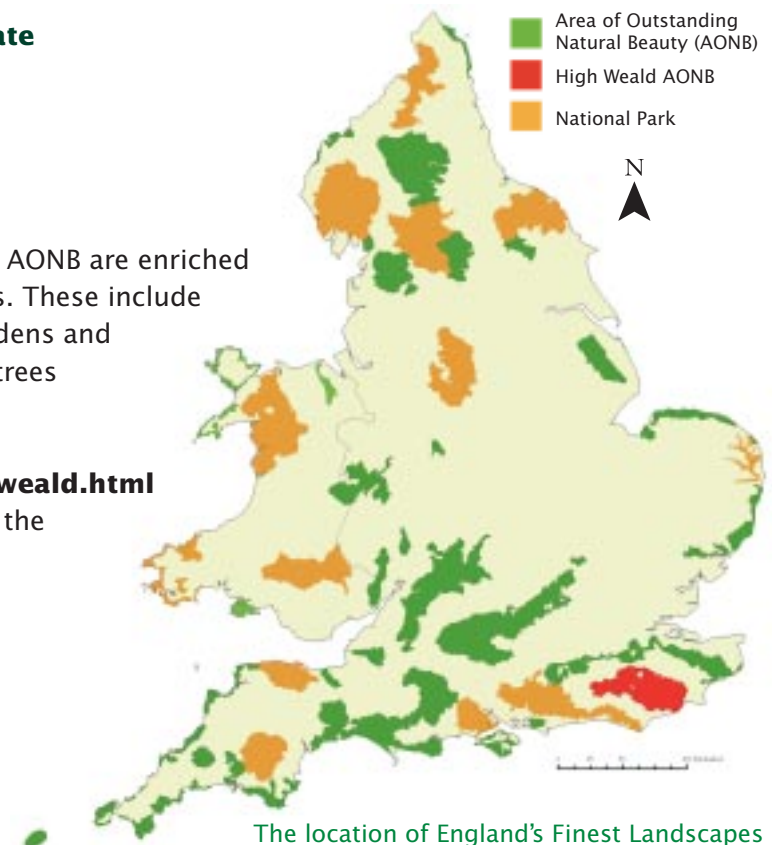
The five key components of its character are:

- Geology, Landform, Water Systems and Climate**
- Settlement**
- Routeways**
- Woodland**
- Field and Heath**



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.

Visit [www.highweald.org/learn/about-the-high-weald.html](http://www.highweald.org/learn/about-the-high-weald.html) to watch the High Weald Story and learn more about the five components.







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



## Foreword

Welcome to the High Weald AONB Partnership's Annual Review. I can't praise highly enough the many individuals and community groups who have given their time and energy this year to care for our wonderful landscape – over 1500 volunteer days spent on practical conservation work, 61 schools signed up as High Weald Heroes and active in their local landscape and 500 people trained in skills vital to maintaining it. The wealth of actions carried out with our support illustrates just how much can be achieved through working in partnership, especially in these difficult financial times.

It has been a turbulent year with cuts to public sector funding creating pressures on central and local government. Our committee members and officers have worked tirelessly to secure support for the AONB partnership, maintaining its capacity to be flexible and responsive to the inevitable future challenges.

In the High Weald we believe that landscape isn't only important for its beauty and inspiration but as our life support system. This puts people and economic processes at the forefront of our thinking. We seek to understand the landscape in order to find solutions that work and are embedded in local communities – for example this year developing multifunctional woodland management plans to reflect the importance of carbon sequestration and wood fuel; providing technical support to communities to survey and protect historic routeways and enabling the sharing of traditional woodland skills to serve modern needs through events such as coppice week held at Ashdown Forest in August.

If you haven't already, I urge you to pick up one of our new 'Eye Spy High Weald' guides and see how many of the features you can find. I have seen it clutched in the hands of many school children and it certainly opened my eyes to the extraordinary beauty and detail of our everyday landscape.



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## Foreword

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We were delighted that the Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon MP, was able to visit us in August to learn more about the partnership's work and share with us the importance the government places on protected landscapes. We look forward to working with Defra under our new government sponsorship arrangements. We also welcome the challenge set out in the Lawton Review of delivering 'more, bigger, better and joined-up' biodiversity along with government aspirations for enhanced economic activity driven by local people. Indeed our long established partnership and jointly agreed AONB Management Plan show the way forward – linking national policy with local interests and working across 15 local authority boundaries to deliver action at a landscape scale.

The activities described in the following pages illustrate this approach. All make progress towards long term objectives set by local people through the AONB Management Plan process for conserving this vibrant and inspiring area. As Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee it has been a privilege to represent the people who live in, work in and enjoy this wonderful landscape.

Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy  
Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)  
July 2011



# High Weald Joint Advisory Committee Annual Review 2010/11

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## Key achievements

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### Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the AONB Management Plan

- The JAC awarded £374,700 of grant-aid to **43** projects supporting **28** organizations, business and community groups to help achieve AONB Management Plan objectives.
- **142** landowners received advisory site visits (**88** cultural heritage advisory visits, **50** grassland management advisory visits, **4** woodland management advisory visits) and follow on advisory reports/packs.
- **61** schools participated in High Weald Heroes, the JAC's primary school education programme, which ran **150** events, involving over **6100** individual pupil sessions.
- **3** volunteer groups of local residents were trained in, and undertook, surveys of historic routeways using a Routeways Survey Toolkit developed by the JAC and the University of East Anglia.
- **7** videos were produced by visitor accommodation providers to promote their business and its landscape setting following a video production training day developed by the Unit in partnership with Acorn Consulting, a tourism consultancy.

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Summary –  
Key achievements

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Summary –  
Key achievements

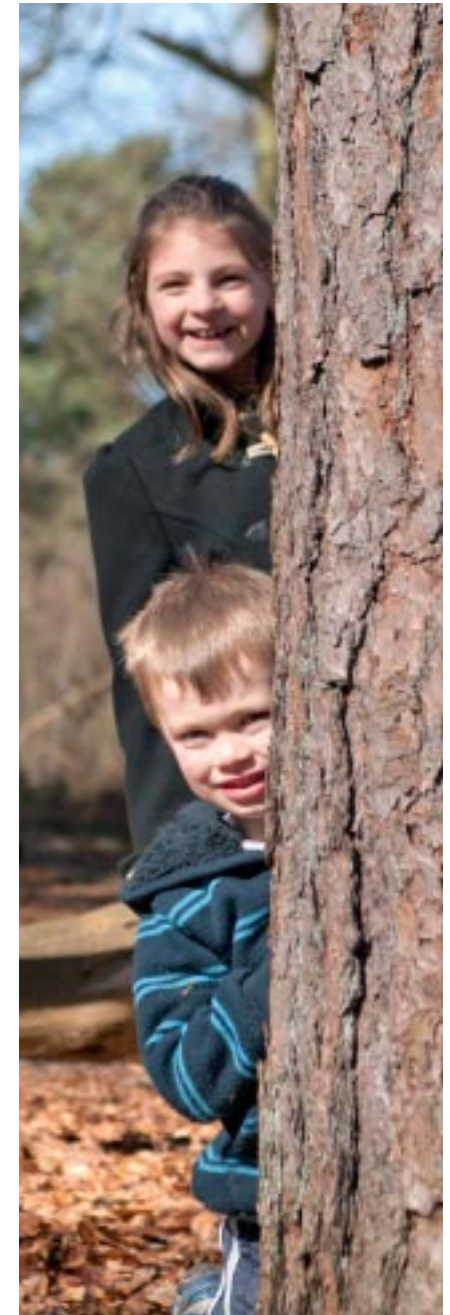
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### Championing the High Weald and AONBs

- The needs of the High Weald AONB were promoted regionally and nationally through partnership working with the National Association for AONBs and the Unit met with government ministers to discuss the role of the AONB in the coalition's agenda.
- Spring Forward! – an exciting immersive arts event, was held for the first time on Ashdown Forest, attended by nearly **200** people.
- The High Weald Anvil 2011 was published and sent to **80,000** households, and a booklet, Eye Spy High Weald, highlighting **97** distinctive features in the area, was published.
- **20** presentations about the High Weald, **3** as guided walks, were given, reaching **900** people.
- **www.highweald.org** was re-launched receiving **25,500** hits between July 2010 and March 2011.

### Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the AONB Management Plan and providing advice and guidance to our partners on CRoW, Section 85

- Advice was provided on **45** planning applications, **5** Local Development Frameworks and local policy documents and **10** national policy consultations.
- Data services were provided to **8** organisations and the JAC's GIS system was developed to meet requests for district and parish based data.
- The Rother Ancient Woodland Inventory was launched; a further **3** AONB character component datasets were developed or expanded.





# 1

## Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan

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### Rationale

The Countryside and Right 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 the following ongoing work is needed: data gathering to inform baseline information and monitoring; research to understand change and assess policy impacts; and communication of the understanding that has been developed.

*“Despite these difficult times, AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards have a fundamental role to play in meeting our environmental objectives and delivering Big Society for example, particularly with regards to the expression of local priorities. I see the AONB Management Plan as being an ideal framework by which delivery can be driven.”*

Richard Benyon MP  
Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries





# 1

## Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan

### 1.1 Management Plan

#### Parish statistics

Analysis of the High Weald AONB Management Plan key character components at parish level was undertaken. For each parish the character components were analysed in digital mapping software to calculate the area and length of key components by parish area. The process provides statistics for the areas and the proportions of key features of natural beauty at a detailed local level. A pilot was undertaken with Frant parish to explore how the AONB website could be used to allow parishes to easily access information on the location of key components and statistics on their number and extent. The information will support parish planning and village design statements by giving quantitative figures on the spread and quantity of features of natural beauty and showing what elements are most significant or rare in each area, supporting local decision-making and understanding of each area's character.



# 1

## Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan

## 1.2 Understanding character components

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### Geology, landform and climate change

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#### **Energy audit**

A small study identified the energy generation and consumption figures for the High Weald to inform climate change objectives in the Management Plan. The study, by TV Energy, analysed the comparative energy figures for generation by renewable sources and traditional carbon based sources, against the consumption of energy. It concluded that residents of the High Weald may be able to meet their electricity needs from within the landscape, but that we are not meeting demand for heating from the High Weald's resources. The report sets out the scale of the High Weald's energy needs and our ability to generate the energy we use. It informs the actions required to meet our aspirations to achieve a low carbon economy in support of meeting climate change targets.

#### **Geodiversity seminar**

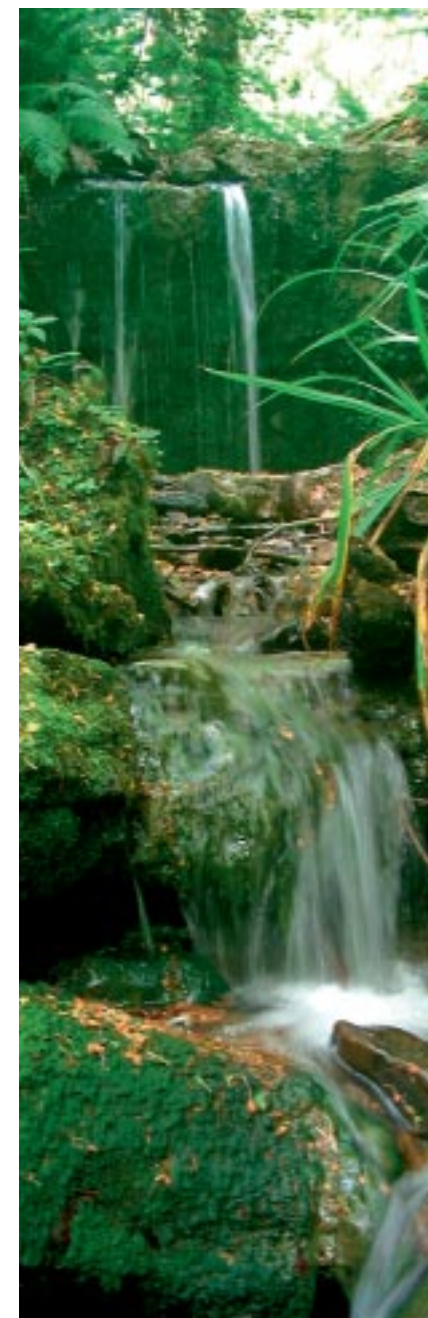
The Unit attended a geodiversity workshop & seminar, organised by Natural England. Useful contact was made with members of the BGS (British Geological Survey), Geology Trusts and RIGS (Regionally Important Geological Sites) groups. There were also opportunities to meet other Protected Landscape representatives to see how they use geology to communicate key landscape messages.

### Settlement

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#### **Small settlement research**

The history and origins of smaller settlements in the High Weald (villages and hamlets, usually below 10,000 people or as defined by Core Strategies) can support local decision making and inform Council's Core Strategies by providing additional evidence on how settlements have historically formed and grown. A small project to provide a rapid characterisation of these settlements has been under way, using historic



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## Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan

*“Having lit the fire within us, we are all still very interested and keen to continue. I think every area would benefit from doing it. Using the Routeways Toolkit is a lovely way of getting to know an area.”*  
Caroline Sharp, resident

mapping to identify periods of village development. Forum Heritage Services have been employed to provide a standard scheme for identifying these settlements into types based on how they have developed over time. The work has been piloted in Tunbridge Wells and provides simple statements by settlement, outlining their local history, how they have grown, and their character and the type identified. These are set against other Management Plan and local authority data such as Landscape Character Areas. This helps us to understand the settlements place in the landscape and its form and contribution to the AONB and helps inform the local authority and others about possible options for change in the future.

## Routeways

Routeways are one of the last of the key landscape components identified by the Management Plan that we have yet to thoroughly study. A central feature of the landscape, they are the connecting ‘threads’ that link many of the other features together and show how the landscape was worked. We need to not only map the actual routes themselves (know where they are and were) but also study how they were used, how they can be identified, and their archaeology and history.

### Routeways survey pack

A survey pack to help local communities carry out their own historic routeways surveys is now available. It has been produced as part of a wider research programme to further our understanding of the High Weald’s roads, lanes, tracks and paths, all of which make up our complex communication network.

The pack has been developed with the help of the Landscape Group at the University of East Anglia and a team of dedicated volunteers from Rolvenden parish. By tapping into the wealth of local knowledge, stories and evidence, we hope to add more detail to our existing landscape-scale view of historic routeways in the High Weald.

A routeway today can be a road, a footpath, a bridleway, or a route no longer used but still visible in the landscape. The survey encourages





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## Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan

people to survey all four types. The pack provides a step by step guide to surveying routeways in an integrated way:

- looking at their physical character
- identifying historic features along them
- carrying out archive research
- undertaking a simple ecological survey.

### **Routeways community training days**

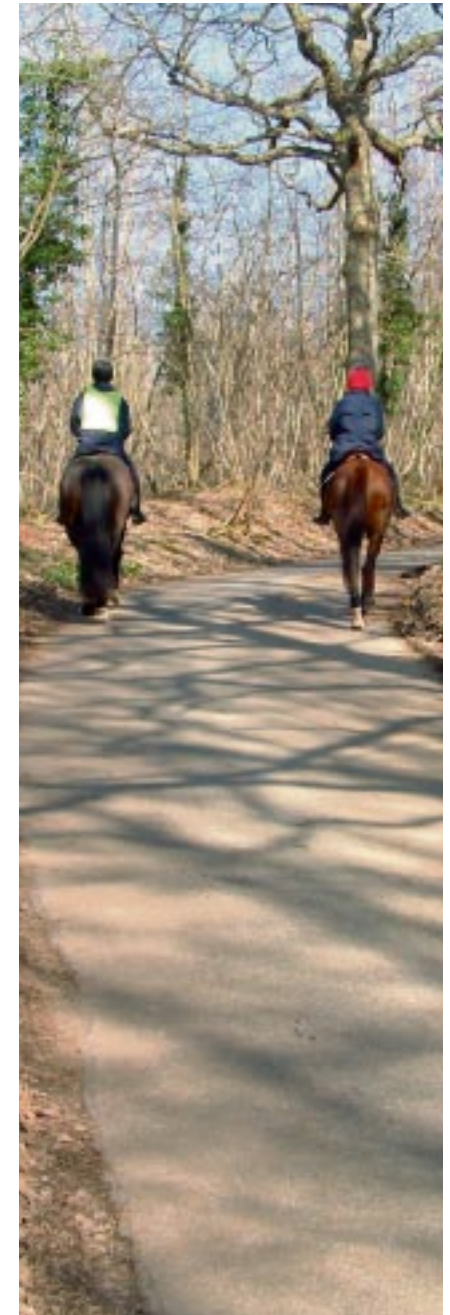
Two training days for community groups (Danehill & Chelwood Gate, and Lamberhurst) introducing how to identify historic features along routeways were provided using SDF funds. With this extra knowledge both groups will begin carrying out a Routeways Survey of their respective parishes using the High Weald AONB Routeway Survey method. Each survey, run and managed entirely by the groups, will take around a year to complete. With support from the AONB Unit all the results will be gathered and digitised, along with existing data to continue to further our understanding of routeway development and character.

### **Historic rights of way**

The majority of our current knowledge of the location of historic routeways is based largely upon our existing road network. The next step was to begin to study rights of way using historic maps to identify historic routes that survive today. A start has been made by searching the earliest set of historic first edition Ordnance Survey maps, and mapping the existing paths that are shown on these maps. The majority of the AONB in East Sussex has been mapped using the first, second and third edition historic ordnance survey maps, leaving a significant area of the AONB still to be mapped.

### **Turnpikes**

Charting the development of our communication network is one aspect of furthering our understanding of routeways. In more recent history one of the largest modifications to our road system was the Turnpike Act in the late 18th century. The Unit has commissioned the digitisation



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## Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan

of Kent and Sussex turnpikes which have subsequently been incorporated into our master routeways layer. We can now identify Roman roads, turnpiked roads, drove roads and ridgeways.

### Field and heath

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#### **Grassland**

The Unit has been using data from a variety of sources to map the AONB grassland resource, and particularly to identify those grasslands which are under some degree of management. A GIS layer for grassland under management (i.e. as a reserve, in stewardship or having received advice via WMI) has now been created. This layer will only ever be indicative as grassland sites go in and out of management so rapidly, but it will provide a vital indication as to how land managers/organisations are achieving objectives for field and heath under the AONB Management Plan.

### 1.3 Policy analysis

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Working with National Association for AONBs and 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.



# 1

## Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the statutory AONB Management Plan

### Regional and national consultations

The Unit responded to various government consultations including:

- a DECC Microgeneration Strategy.
- DCLG Review of Statutory Duties.
- Natural England's consultation 'The Shape of Natural England'.
- An English Heritage consultation on 'The setting of heritage assets: English Heritage guidance'.
- Natural England NCA 122 consultation on national character areas.
- Consultation on the Southeast Partnership Board Environmental Limits Paper.
- Consultation on Natural England Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation.
- Highways Liaison meeting with BBMD on responding to and working closer on highways consultations.
- DCLGs call for evidence for the review of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Unit contributed to a NAAONB response to a government consultation on the proposed National Planning Policy Framework. The new framework will replace the range of current planning policy guidance and the Unit response highlighted the issues for protected landscapes and options for sustainability, particularly in light of the proposed presumption in favour of sustainable development. The response was developed from work commissioned from the University of Gloucester defining a rural sustainability framework.

### Condition monitoring

The condition monitoring report for 2009 was published on the website.

### Performance monitoring

The performance monitoring report for 2009/10 was published on the website.







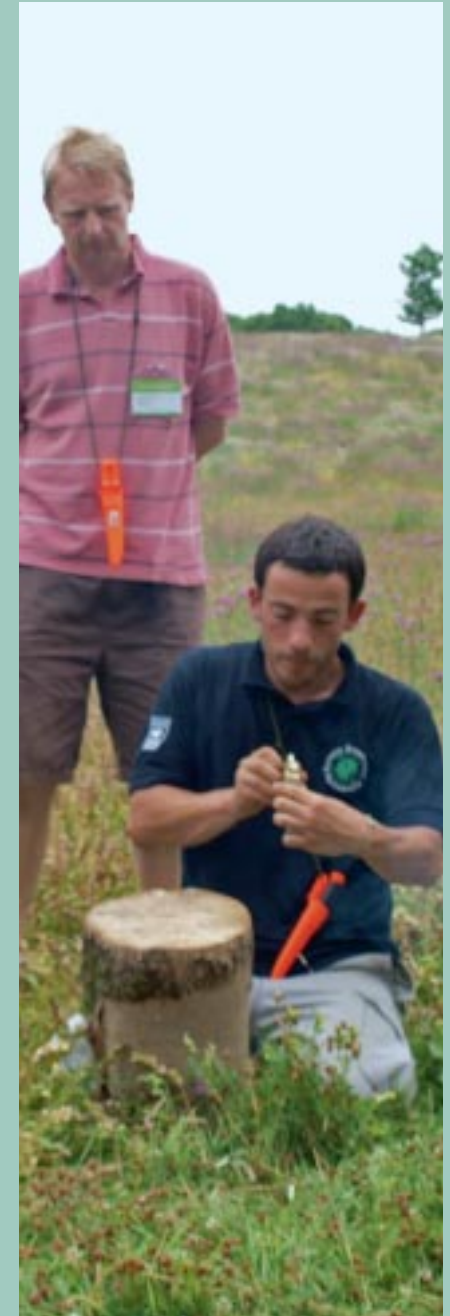
## 2

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

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#### 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

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



## 2.1 Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

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

### Profile

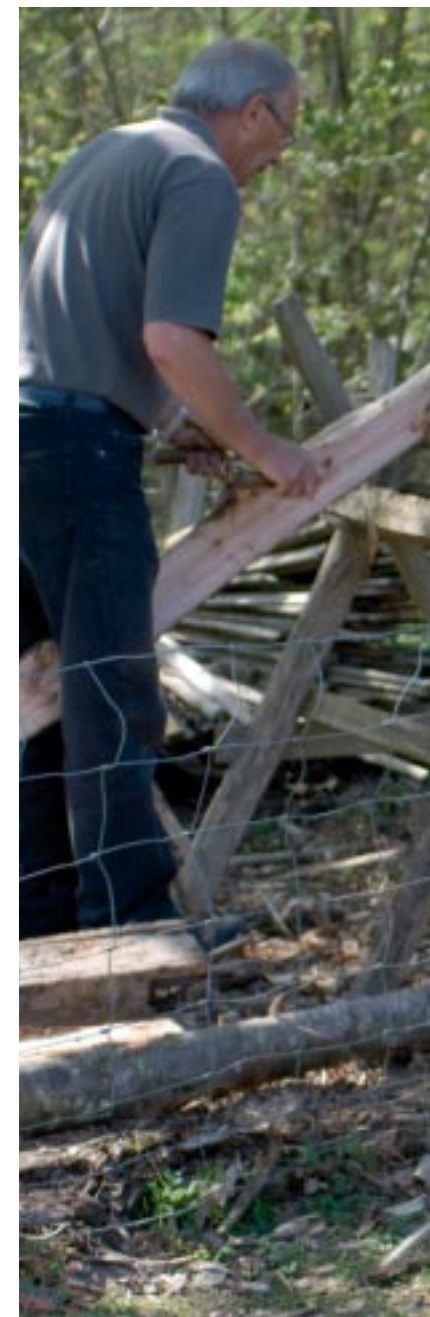
**Purpose** The Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme is a £3.2 million programme of activity, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to enrich the area's natural and cultural heritage and to enable people to understand, enjoy and care for the area.

**Delivery partners** BTCV; the Conservators of Ashdown Forest; East Sussex Archaeology and Museums Partnership; East Sussex County Council; ESUS Forestry & Woodlands Ltd; the Forestry Commission; Gatwick Greenspace Partnership; Highbrook Village Hall Management Committee; High Weald AONB Unit; Horsham District Council; Kent High Weald Partnership; Plumpton College; Root and Branch Theatre Company; RSPB; Sussex Police; Sussex Wildlife Trust; The Company; Tunbridge Wells Borough Council; Weald & Downland Open Air Museum; and the Woodland Trust. 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 January 2009 – December 2011.

**During 2010/11, the JAC's largest partnership project was in full swing with most of the 20 partners delivering their Year 2 action plans. Following the loss of four projects in the initial delivery year due to a variety of reasons, new partners and projects have been able to join the Scheme.**

An output data return was undertaken for HLF as part of a national process for monitoring the value of landscape partnership schemes. The return indicated the phenomenal amount of community involvement in



## 2

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



the Scheme in its first two years (January 2009 to December 2010).

- Over **4,800** school children have benefited from the Scheme, with **48** outreach visits to schools, and 77 schools' visits to sites.
- Over **2,600** members of the public have attended over **135** learning events, walks and talks.
- Over **7,700** people have attended open days, launch events, and a museum exhibition.
- **15** interpretation boards and **11** leaflets produced.
- Over **2,350** volunteer days undertaken within the Scheme, with a financial value of at least **£120,000**.
- Over **520** people have undertaken training and work placements organised within the Scheme.

### Spring Forward!

At the end of April, Spring Forward!, a new and exciting immersive arts event, was held for the first time on Ashdown Forest, with nearly two hundred people gathering to take part in the colourful, musical procession.

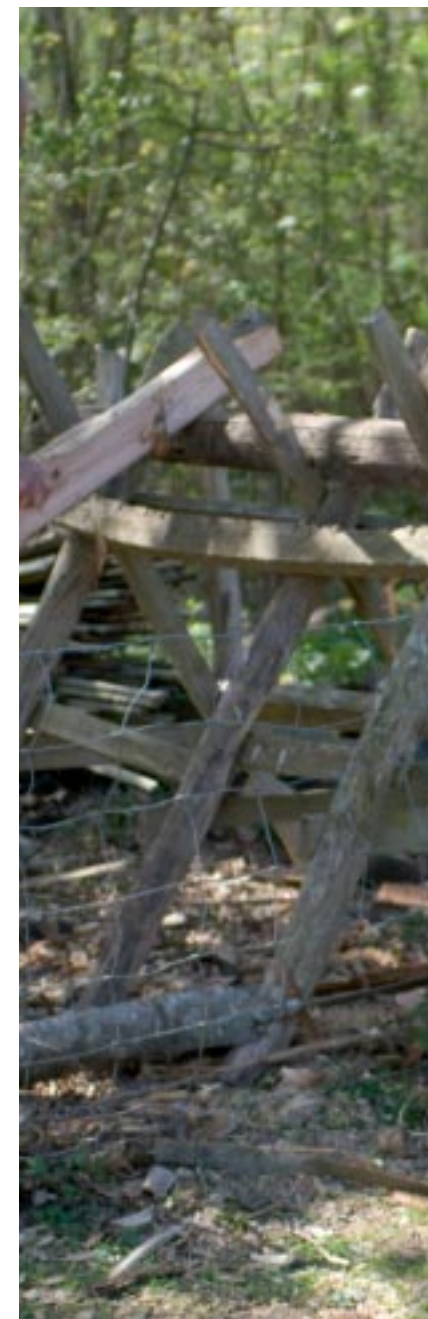
The event was delivered by Brighton-based arts group Same Sky and attended by children from local Forest schools: Nutley CEP School, St Mary the Virgin CEP School and Buxted CEP School, who were joined by enthusiastic local families from the Weald Forest Ridge area.

In the lead up to the event children took part in a series of workshops at their schools, making translucent, sculptural lanterns of bluebells, hares and cuckoos, and, on the evening itself, they made laurel wreaths and egg-shaped primrose planters.

The event culminated in a winding parade through part of the Forest ending with a gathering below three, fifteen feet high, temporary sculptures, to dance and celebrate the arrival of spring.

### Training

Training continued to be a major focus of the Scheme. As well as the many training opportunities provided by delivery partners, the Scheme Management Team also staged two, one-day courses, targeted at





## 2

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



partners, to fill important gaps in partner knowledge. The first involved a practical investigation of woodland archaeology, led by a local landscape archaeologist. The second looked at an introduction to interpretation, and was led by national expert Susan Cross of TellTale.

#### Partnership forums

The second Delivery Phase Partnership Forum was staged on 22nd October 2010 at the Ashdown Forest Centre and on site at the adjoining Broadstone Warren area of the Forest. **35** people, representing most of the delivery partners and **8** other WFR Partnership organisations, attended. As well as update and practical sessions, there was a focused workshop session on Landscape Partnership evaluation, led by consultants working for the HLF on national evaluation.

#### Promotional activity

The Scheme Management Team supported **14** of the 20 delivery partners with the promotion of their projects and the delivery of interpretation and marketing outputs. The team had significant input into:

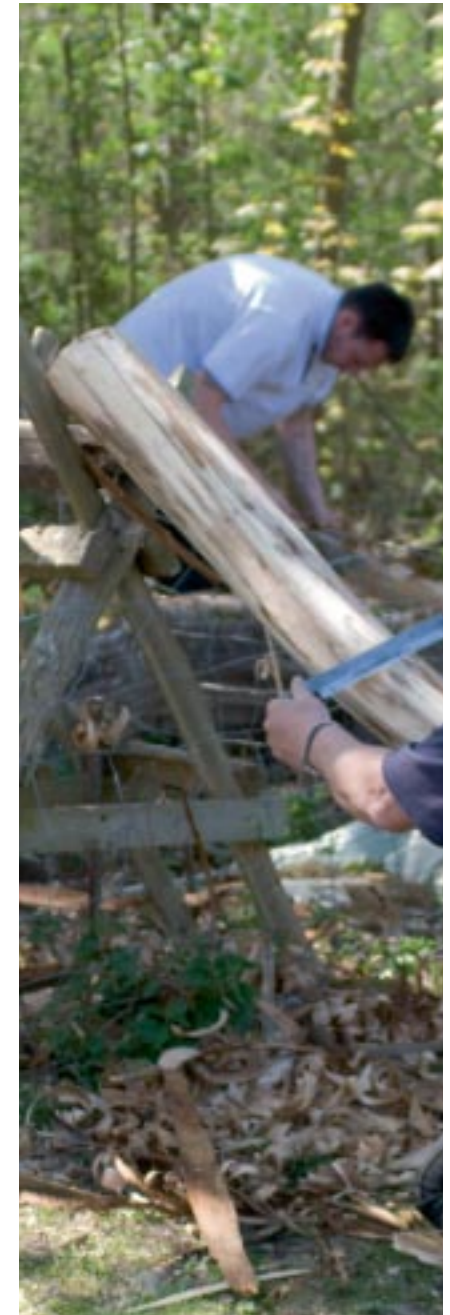
- production and distribution of media releases/editorial (over **20**)
- and of promotional material (**35** items for **14** jobs)
- briefs and design of **10** interpretative projects.

The team also identified and delivered specific two cross-project promotion; a promotional leaflet was produced and circulated to market four separate schools' delivery projects and a three-way project leaflet was produced to promote professional training opportunities available to businesses, landowners and individuals.

The Weald Forest Ridge section of [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org) was also developed to promote the Scheme's activities and Scheme outputs such as walks leaflets.

**4** e-newsletters were sent to a distribution list of **350** people.

Project Rationale [www.highweald.org/look-after/our-projects/weald-forest-ridge.html](http://www.highweald.org/look-after/our-projects/weald-forest-ridge.html)



## Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme Projects

### 2

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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
<b>Landscape Scale Connectivity (Programme 1)</b>			
<b>Holistic Enhancements (P1.1)</b>			
Forestry Commission	Forest Footsteps Across the Ridge: Sheffield Forest	Majority of works completed to create and link heathy woodland and conservation margins within the Forestry Commission-owned, publicly accessible site. Archaeological and flora and fauna surveys also undertaken, to increase knowledge of site's heritage and shape future management.	£5,604
Forestry Commission	Forest Footsteps across the Ridge: St Leonards Forest	Archaeological survey undertaken in winter 2010/11 to increase knowledge of site's heritage and shape future management. Large-scale rhododendron control carried out, including to SSSI within site. All improvement works to car park and site access tracks completed to upgrade pedestrian facilities within the Forestry Commission-owned, publicly accessible site.	£32,219
Forestry Commission	Forest Footsteps across the Ridge: Tilgate Forest	Archaeological survey and access track upgrades delayed from 2009/10 – due to slippage of site harvesting programme – undertaken in 2010/11. Remaining works of habitat enhancements, flora and fauna survey, and site interpretation to be undertaken within 2011/12, as well as additional rhododendron control.	£10,655
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 have included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction of 13 sculptures/interpretation features by professional artists and pupils from 2 local secondary schools, to form a Sculpture Trail around the site.</li> </ul> <i>continued</i>	£34,171

## 2

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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Launch of the Sculpture Trail at a community arts event in October 2010, attended by over 300 local residents, in the presence of HW JAC members, the Deputy Leader of Horsham DC and the Heritage Lottery Fund.</li> <li>▪ Installation of numerous steps and boardwalks around the site to enhance visitor access, including signage and waymarked trails.</li> <li>▪ Continued clearance of invasive heathland plants, such as birch and rhododendron by volunteers, including the Horsham Green Gym.</li> <li>▪ Continuation of heathland conservation grazing following further stock fencing installation, and including the purchase of Hebridean sheep and llamas as a grazing flock.</li> <li>▪ A diverse programme of public guided walks and children's events also delivered.</li> </ul>	
RSPB	Broadwater Warren restoration	<p>Following final agreement of the Environmental Impact Assessment in December 2009, major habitat works were able to commence in 2010/11 on this regionally important heathland restoration project. Main outputs undertaken in 2010/11 have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continued rhododendron removal from the ancient woodland on site.</li> <li>▪ 13ha of young conifers removed in a fell and mulch operation using specialist machinery.</li> <li>▪ First tranches of stockproof fencing installed to enable future grazing.</li> <li>▪ History trail researched, developed and launched, including production of a History Trail leaflet and 3 interpretation boards.</li> <li>▪ Ongoing programmes of site walks and events undertaken, including several led by volunteers.</li> <li>▪ A one-day demonstration and advocacy event was staged in November, in partnership with the Woodland</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued</i></p>	£48,346



## 2

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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
		Trust, for 25 professional site managers and advisors to study the ecological and archaeological issues encountered in the restoration of Broadwater Warren. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ecological surveying and recording being undertaken by both contractors and volunteers.</li> <li>A 30% increase in visitor numbers recorded for the winter 2010/11 period, compared to the corresponding period in 2009/10.</li> </ul>	
<b>Habitat Enhancements (P1.2)</b>			
Sussex Wildlife Trust	Eridge Rocks habitat enhancements	Most site works now completed, with further rhododendron removal undertaken from the sandrock exposures and ride widening undertaken in early 2011.	£1,305
Sussex Wildlife Trust	Old Lodge habitat enhancements	Further bracken spraying carried out in summer 2010 on this important heathland nature reserve site within Ashdown Forest, along with a 1.2ha bracken scrape, to encourage heather regeneration. Some budget savings from these works will be utilised in 2011 to enable some additional heathland tree removal works to be undertaken.	£2,030
Sussex Police	Kingstanding habitat enhancements	Further rhododendron/invasive scrub clearance, and scrapes to remove invasive bracken, undertaken on this important heathland site within Ashdown Forest.	£2,214
<b>Visitor Enhancements (P1.3)</b>			
East Sussex County Council	Pathways to Natural Heritage: Weir Wood LNR	With the capital-intensive footpath enhancements completed – in partnership with West Sussex County Council – in 2009/10, the focus for 2010/11 shifted to habitat management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hedgelaying, and additional hedge planting, undertaken as part of a conservation training initiative.</li> <li>Scrub management undertaken at the Admirals Lane car park and the Millennium picnic site.</li> </ul> All of this conservation work undertaken by volunteers, <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued</i></p>	£10,044

## 2

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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
		who contributed almost 270 days of volunteer time to the site in 2010/11, valued at over £13,000. Additionally, a Public Open Day and celebration of the refurbishment of the public footpath on the north side of the Reservoir was held in July 2010.	
Forestry Commission	Pathways to Tudor heritage: Birchden Woods	Habitat enhancement works – of coppicing and bracken spraying – undertaken, along with planning of some remedial works to the all-ability trail installed in 2009/10.	£2,238
<b>Archaeology &amp; Special Features (Programme 2)</b>			
<b>Archaeological Engagement (P2.1)</b>			
ESAMP	Archaeological awareness activities	Eight activity sessions delivered to end March 2011, out of a total of 18 to be delivered by the end of 2011. Several more sessions planned for early 2011/12 in partnership with other WFR projects.	£1,648
The Company	Living history activities	The delivery mechanism for this project was revised early in the Scheme through the engagement of a specialist local theatre company – The Company – which specialises in scripting and bringing theatre to rural communities in Kent and Sussex. First of 5 theatrical activities delivered at Buchan Park in September 2010, with 73 attendees at 2 performances of “Ostrich Feathers”: a play about a former Victorian owner of the Park’s site who farmed ostriches for hat feathers.	£2,810
<b>Archaeological Awareness (P2.2)</b>			
East Sussex County Council	Historic environment awareness	A wide range of activities 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:  <i>continued</i>	£29,348

## 2

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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Receipt of the final LiDAR images for the state of the art, laser aerial survey carried out over the whole of the WFR area in 2009/10. These images have been passed on to innumerable local landowners (both public and private), as well as individual and community groups involved in ground-truthing them on many sites within the WFR. Ways to make them available through websites have been investigated.</li> <li>▪ The three toolkits – to identify, survey and record archaeological features in woodland using LiDAR; to identify archaeological features; and to research woodland site history – tested by up to eight community groups throughout the year, and are now being finalised for publication in 2011/12.</li> <li>- Development and testing of “cab cards” to help woodland workers identify and safeguard woodland archaeological features; led by the South East Woodlands Archaeology Forum (SEWAF).</li> <li>▪ An “Archaeology of Wooded Landscapes” one-day conference staged in February 2011, in conjunction with the Sussex Archaeological Society, with a maximum attendance of 200 achieved.</li> <li>▪ Over 100 days of volunteer time input to the project over the year.</li> <li>▪ Three month extension of Project Officer’s contract negotiated with HLF, along with an increase in part-time hours up to four days/week, reflecting workload demands on Officer and success of the project at engaging with local communities.</li> <li>▪ Project Officer has continued to undertake a wide range of talks and walks for interested groups.</li> </ul>	
High Weald AONB Unit	Heritage advisory visits	Additional project added to the Scheme in 2010/11, to replace project unable to be delivered by FWAG. Delivery of the advisory visits will commence in 2011/12.	0



## 2

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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
<b>Built Heritage (P2.3)</b>			
Highbrook Village Hall Committee	Highbrook Smokery restoration	Official opening of the restoration of this non-listed historic building in the hamlet of Highbrook, nr West Hoathly – undertaken by the local Village Hall Management Committee – held in May 2011.	0
<b>Learning &amp; Celebrating Heritage (Programme 3)</b>			
<b>Community Engagement (P3.1)</b>			
Conservators of Ashdown Forest	Discovering the magic of Ashdown Forest	<p>Several areas of work have been progressed to enhance the public's experiences of Ashdown Forest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Designs produced for new interpretive display at the Ashdown Forest Visitor Centre, with installation programmed for summer 2011. Connections made with the Historic Environment Awareness Project (Programme 2) to incorporate historic mapping into the exhibition.</li> <li>▪ Consultant appointed to produce remote interpretation for the Forest, utilising new technology to enable access to walks and other information from car parks through mobile phone "apps".</li> <li>▪ The minutes from all meetings of the Ashdown Forest Conservators – from their inception in 1887 to the modern era – have been transcribed and made available in a searchable, online resource on <a href="http://www.ashdownforest.org">www.ashdownforest.org</a>.</li> </ul> <p>Very good progress made in creating online access to the historical records of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest, dating back to 1885. The records will go online in 2010/11.</p>	£3,469
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Family safaris	49 people attended four nature walks delivered in summer 2010 at Hargate Forest, Broadwater Warren, Newbars Wood and Brakeybank Wood (the latter two both part of the Tudeley Woods complex), led by Ian Beavis of the Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery.	£135

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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
Woodland Trust	Developing the community at Hargate Forest	<p>Project 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. Achievements in 2010/11 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extensive community consultation undertaken and a community steering group established.</li> <li>▪ A conservation volunteering group established on site in conjunction with BTCV's Inspiring People, Improving Places project (Programme 4).</li> <li>▪ Literature and site-based archaeological survey undertaken by a local consultant, including a presentation to the community steering group.</li> <li>▪ A wide range of schools', families' and public events staged throughout the year, with almost 1,000 children and adults visiting the site on organised events.</li> </ul>	£11,075
Kent High Weald Partnership	Family fun – parent and toddler	<p>Project 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. Achievements in 2010/11 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Several parent and toddler or nursery groups were engaged in the project and consulted on proposals.</li> <li>▪ Eight accessible countryside sites in and around Tunbridge Wells were identified as suitable for the mapping and promotion of a buggy- or toddler-friendly walk, with four of these being enhancement sites within the WFR Scheme, managed by WFR delivery partners (Broadwater Warren, Eridge Rocks, Birchden Wood and Hargate Forest).</li> <li>▪ Utilising the skills and experience of Explore Kent, web-based and hard copy materials developed to publicise and promote the eight sites, with completion and launch of this element planned for early in 2011/12.</li> </ul>	0



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

“Well that was a welcome diversion for a Monday morning and shame my children are grown up. The Eye Spy looks fantastic and is a brilliant production.”  
Vivian Blandford

Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
ESAMP	Young peoples' heritage project	Project 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. Just over half of the project's target 18 sessions were delivered in 2010/11, including two in conjunction with the Ashdown Forest Visitor Centre based around the ongoing construction of a replica Mesolithic Hut.	£1,890
High Weald AONB Unit	Open Your Eyes to the Weald Forest Ridge	Project added to the Scheme in spring 2010, to partially replace three other projects in the Learning and Celebrating Heritage Programme that unfortunately proved to be undeliverable. Achievements in 2010/11 were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Delivery contractors appointed in autumn 2010 to work with schools to engage children with the heritage of the WFR through both drama and the arts.</li> <li>▪ Considerable target delivery achieved through to end March 2011.</li> <li>▪ A suite of eight heritage illustrations commissioned, to portray the changing historical landscape of the High Weald.</li> <li>▪ A “High Weald Eye-Spy” booklet designed and published (10,000 print run), containing 97 features characteristic of the High Weald landscape for children to “spy”.</li> </ul>	£13,910
High Weald AONB Unit	The Weald Wood Kits Project	Project added to the Scheme in spring 2010, to partially replace three other projects in the Learning and Celebrating Heritage Programme that unfortunately proved to be undeliverable. Project Enabler appointed in February 2011, to commence identification of suitable material for use in potential wood kit products.	£1,025



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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
<b>Schools Education (P3.2)</b>			
Gatwick Greenspace Partnership/Sussex Wildlife Trust	Forest Schools' focus for the Weald Forest Ridge	<p>Using the principles and practices of the Forest School Initiative, this project raises awareness and facilitates engagement with the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of the WFR. Achievements in 2010/11 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Forest School delivery with 9 primary schools, 2 secondary schools, plus pupils from the West Sussex CC Pupil Enrichment Scheme: all focused on the Crawley and Horsham areas.</li> <li>▪ Delivery also with the "non-school" sector, through the Home School Network and the Crawley Child-minding Group.</li> <li>▪ Level 2 or 3 Forest Schools training delivered to 15 trainees.</li> <li>▪ 6 family and 22 children's bushcraft events staged, engaging with over 200 children and 30 adults.</li> <li>▪ A cluster group of Forest School practitioners, interested teachers, etc established, with mentoring being undertaken to establish a sustainable legacy for the project.</li> </ul>	£25,150
Conservators of Ashdown Forest	Educational resources at Ashdown Forest	<p>Delivery of project undertaken by the High Weald Education Officer on behalf of Conservators of Ashdown Forest.</p> <p>Schools' Creative Art Day delivered as part of the Spring Forward! celebrations in April 2010, with 4 schools local to Ashdown Forest engaged in classroom and on-site activities.</p> <p>First Education Fair delivered in October 2010, again with 4 schools local to Ashdown Forest engaged in classroom and on-site activities, plus two other WFR delivery partners assisting with delivery (Gatwick Greenspace Partnership and ESAMP).</p> <p>Two successful teacher twilight sessions delivered, showcasing the delivery options available to schools using Ashdown Forest for curriculum-based teaching.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued</i></p>	£5,367

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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
		A total of 25 Activity Cards produced and uploaded to High Weald and Ashdown Forest websites; giving a wide suite of activity ideas for teachers to use with their pupils – all linked to the High Weald Heroes programme and containing High Weald teaching points.	
ESAMP	Schools' archaeological activities	Nine school delivery sessions undertaken in 2010/11, out of a total of 18 to be delivered by the end of 2011. Several of these undertaken through partnership working with other WFR projects, or have arisen through schools engagement with the Education Resources at Ashdown Forest project (Programme 3).	£1,343
Root and Branch Theatre Company	Dragon Tails (or Tales of Dragons and Woodland Wyrms!)	Project 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. Project completed in 2010/11, with performances of the Dragon Tails play, plus associated drama workshops, delivered in the remaining five schools out of the programmed 10. Dragon Tails is a folk-arts theatre production for children, written by the Artistic Director of Root and Branch Theatre Company. It explores how dragons play a major part in the folklore of Sussex, particularly with reference to the St Leonards Dragon.	£1,812
<b>Reconnecting People &amp; Place (Programme 4)</b>			
<b>Skills Creation (P4.1)</b>			
Esus Forestry & Woodlands Ltd	Working woodlands in the Weald Forest Ridge	Delivery of woodland management-themed training courses, delivered to local landowners and land management workers in the WFR, focused on two main areas in 2010/11: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chainsaw competency training courses were delivered to over 20 trainees, including formal LANTRA-recognised</li> </ul> <i>continued</i>	£7,363

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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
		<p>qualifications to CS 30, 31 or 32, and a specialist course focusing on coppice harvesting efficiency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Almost all other training delivered through a concentrated week of dedicated courses staged at Ashdown Forest in August 2010: called Coppice Week. Coppice Week focused around a traditional charcoal earthburn – reckoned to be the largest earthburn carried out in England in the past 15 years and producing almost 2 tonnes of charcoal, which was subsequently marketed and sold locally with specific Coppice Week labelling.</li> </ul>	
Weald and Downland Open Air Museum	Local distinctiveness and buildings heritage	<p>Three one-day training and two two-day courses delivered in September and October 2010, to a total of 21 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"> <li>▪ An introduction to the conservation of weather-boarded and tile-hung buildings.</li> <li>▪ An introduction to timber-framed buildings and their conservation.</li> <li>▪ Conservation of ironwork.</li> <li>▪ Repairs to historic brickwork.</li> <li>▪ Practical scarf repairs.</li> </ul>	£3,312
ESAMP	Archaeological training placements	Six training placements delivered in 2010/11. The placements gained considerable skills and knowledge across the whole archaeological and museums' heritage sector, with much overlap into other WFR projects, especially the ESAMP work with schools and public activities.	£1,647
Plumpton Agricultural College	Sustaining farming and landscape	<p>Project delivery only commenced in 2010/11, due to structural changes at the Netherfield Centre for Sustainable Food and Farming, the specialist arm of Plumpton College leading the project.</p> <p><i>continued</i></p>	£1,096



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



Delivery partner	Project Name	Description of work done/outputs	Value of grant to partner
		Initial take-up of training course offers was slow, but bookings increased in early 2011, reflecting dedicated and targeted marketing. Good contact has now been established with certain key organisations, such as the Bluebell Railway, with several course bookings for the 2011/12 year already taken.	
<b>Volunteer and Skills Development (P4.2)</b>			
BTCV	Inspiring People, Improving Places	<p>The wide range of activities undertaken to increase residents' understanding and practical involvement in the care of the Weald Forest Ridge is now narrowing down to the establishment of at least four conservation volunteering groups, which the project will set up as self-sustaining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First group successfully established at Horsted Keynes – the Horsted Keynes Hackers – with 27 active members who undertook 20 volunteering tasks in 2010/11.</li> <li>▪ Second group also successfully established at Hargate Forest in conjunction with site owners The Woodland Trust (see Programme 3). 15 active members undertook 12 monthly tasks in 2010/11.</li> <li>▪ Third group developed at Forest Row, with focus on setting up a forest garden permanent site. 23 active members took part in 2010/11</li> <li>▪ Two further groups in initial stages of development at Slaugham and East Grinstead.</li> </ul> <p>Additionally, 19 days of skills development training delivered throughout the year, including innovative work with other Scheme partners; in particular a link with the RSPB at Broadwater Warren and Tudeley Woods that built and installed benches, bridges and gates from chestnut coppiced from the latter site.</p> <p>Extensive NVQ training also delivered to Levels 1 and 2 to students from in and adjacent to the WFR area.</p>	£61,457
		<b>Sum of Grant to partners</b>	<b>£322,683</b>

## 2

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



## 2.2 Sustainable Development Fund

### Profile

**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.

During 2010/2011 the Sustainable Development Fund supported **12** projects with total project costs of £52,000, £12,000 of which were grants awarded by the Sustainable Development Fund to external organisations. **41** new partnerships were established and over **25** local producers were promoted through literature and websites. **17** local businesses supplied the projects and **7** community groups were involved. Over **250** children learnt about the High Weald and its heritage. Funds were also used to add to the Unit's Community Toolkit, primarily reference books and species survey equipment.

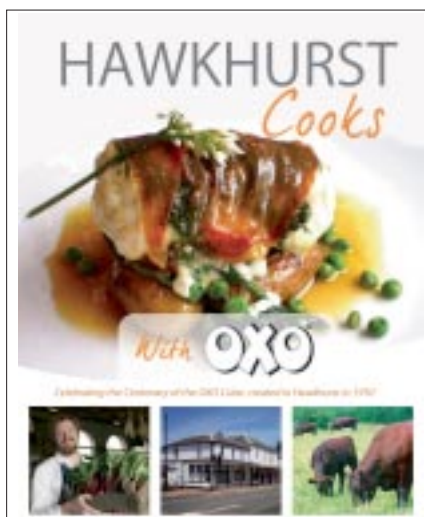
The projects included: one sustainable energy project within the High Weald with **4** primary schools and over **120** children participating; **3** habitat conservation projects with local landowners; **3** projects promoting local produce for local communities; **2** interpreting the local landscape projects and **3** projects inspiring local communities to learn about their landscape heritage.





## 2

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



Project title	Project managers	SDF grant offer	Project summary
High Weald Energy Story	High Weald/ Ashdown Forest Conservators	£1125	The first High Weald Sustainable Energy Day was held at Ashdown Forest Centre on 21 October 2010. Four primary schools and 120 children (a class from each) were involved with Past, Present and Future activities focusing on renewable energy resources. The event was supported by a secondary school – The Skinners School – and partners Ashdown Forest Conservators, ESAMP, Sussex Wildlife, Forest Schools and the WFR Landscape Partnership Scheme.
Beefing It Up	Hawkhurst Community Partnership	£2000	A local cookbook – Hawkhurst Cooks – was produced as part of a wider programme to celebrate the centenary of the OXO cube which was created in Hawkhurst. The book had a High Weald AONB section and local producers featured both in the book and on the new website <a href="http://www.visithawkhurst.org.uk">www.visithawkhurst.org.uk</a> . A new farmers market has also been encouraged through this project.
Visit Cranbrook and Beyond Leaflet	Cranbrook & Weald Tourism and Economic Forum	£2000	The Cranbrook & Beyond leaflet was reprinted to encourage people to explore the attractions and local producers around Cranbrook, including areas of Rother and Ashford Districts. It included information on the High Weald and was made available on <a href="http://www.cranbrook.org">www.cranbrook.org</a>
Interactive interpretation for Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve	Hastings Borough Council	£1000	Interpretation mentoring service from a nationally renowned consultant to help develop proposals for the development of the interpretation material for the Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve Visitors Centre.
Hedge Laying	Adrienne Norbury	£500	Land management work including hedge planting along historic boundaries that had been removed. The project arose from a visit from the Cultural Landscape Adviser.

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



Project title	Project managers	SDF grant offer	Project summary
Medieval Hedges	Jon Bray	£1000	Land management work including hedge planting along historic boundaries that had been removed. The project arose from a visit from the Cultural Landscape Adviser.
Restoration of Meadow	Fiona and Guy Daggers	£1000	Restoration of Five Acres Meadow which was in danger of becoming too overgrown to save. Work included hand clearance of the meadow and introduction of grazing. The project arose from a visit from the Cultural Landscape Adviser.
Historic Routeways Pilot	Lamberhurst PC & Horsted Keynes/ Daneshill Historic Soc.	£207	A project within the wider Unit led pilot study for Historic Routeways. It tested the Routeways tool kit and methodology, and existing and lost routeways were mapped.
Inspiring people about Broadwater Warren heritage	RSPB	£1000	Production of a Heritage Trail to highlight the archaeological heritage of Broadwater Warren. The funds provided wooden trail markers and supported the design of the walk leaflet.
Forge Community Orchard & Standens Orchard	Kent High Weald Partnership	£1115	Forge Community Orchard & Standens Orchards jointly purchased an apple press and crusher to be used as part of community open days. The Kent High Weald Partnership provided training in using the equipment and developed a community communication plan.
Natural Food	Pestalozzi International Village Trust	£500	A natural orchard was planted as an addition to their organic vegetable garden and Sussex Barn workshop.
Interpreting Our View	Oakley Secondary School	£1000	A sensory interpretation board was produced for children of mixed abilities focusing on key High Weald landscape features, in particular, ponds.



“Thanks so much for today – the kids have been talking about it all day, they’re so excited. Everyone said they thought both the assembly and workshop were fab – good work!”

KJ, Tenterden Junior School

## 2

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



## 2.3 High Weald Heroes

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

### Profile

**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

**It was a very successful year for the Joint Advisory Committee's education programme to help primary schools value, access and care for the area. The landscape-focused package of activities was welcomed by schools and the education officer delivered: events – assemblies, plays, workshops and teacher training sessions; resources – lesson plans, activity cards, map packs and newsletters; and opportunities to explore the local countryside – Welly Walks and site exploration packs.**

### School recruitment, induction and networking

Recruitment of new schools continued during the year, involving assemblies, staff training and the provision of school-specific resources. Letters and fliers targeted at specific schools/areas, were sent as required to generate an interest in the scheme but most of the interest was generated by word of mouth, signposting by other projects and events.



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



**17** new schools registered bringing the total involved in the scheme to **61**. Under the new project the following became High Weald Heroes schools pledging to Find Out, Take Care Of, Enjoy, Explore and Be Proud of the High Weald: St Thomas' Winchelsea; Five Ashes; Bishops Down; High Hurstwood; Buxted; St Michael's Withyham; Nutley; Wadhurst; Northiam; The Meads East Grinstead; St Mark's Hadlow Down; St Mary's Crowborough; Blackthorns; Blackwell; Parkside; St Peter's East Grinstead; and Beckley. Following circulation of media releases **7** articles promoted school involvement in the scheme.

- **18** whole school High Weald Hero assemblies were delivered. (reaching approx **2500** children) and **17** High Weald Hero plaques awarded.
- **23** school-specific map sets were produced
- **9** staff training sessions were delivered.
- **3** newsletters were circulated electronically and as hard copies to the HWH partnership and between 100 and 200 other schools in the area.

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. In particular the project worked with Great Dixter to develop a creative partnership with local schools that will achieve greater use of the property and the surrounding High Weald countryside for educational activities.

### School workshops

#### New art workshops developed

A new educational activity 'High Weald art workshops' was developed in partnership with Same Sky, a community arts group, and promotion began in March. For a small fee of £100 Same Sky will run 4 workshops focusing on the art medium of interest to the schools. The mediums that have been developed draw on the High Weald's landscape, natural materials and local products for inspiration. They include:







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- The Great Charcoal Experiment
- The Fabulous Felt Illusion
- The Clay Campaign
- The Watercolour Explorers Guide.

Feedback from the first few workshops indicates a high level of satisfaction.

### **Drama workshops continued**

The High Weald drama workshop that was developed in 2009/10 in partnership with Bigfoot Arts Education continues in 2011/12.

**11** primary schools in the High Weald received a free whole school assembly and **4** themed workshops – reaching over **1400** children. The interactive assembly gave a historical overview of the area while Key Stage 1 and 2 workshops delivered engaging activities on the themes of Tudors, Romans, droving and the Environmental Story of the High Weald.

### **High Weald Sustainable Energy Programme delivered**

- **8** schools were engaged in learning about the High Weald Energy Story and hiring the energy story equipment, for example the renewable energy kit and borrowing solar car kits from Skinners School.
- **4** schools took part in a Sustainable Energy Day based for the first time at Ashdown Forest. It 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.
- **1** teacher training session was delivered for staff in the 4 schools involved. They were provided with information and resources on running a classroom lesson themed on High Weald/local sustainable energy sources as well as information on relevant organisations and funding opportunities etc. to help their schools be more eco-friendly!
- A new resource – an energy day video – was produced and promoted via the website.





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



The programme was organised by the High Weald AONB Unit and supported by ESAMP, SWAT, Ashdown Forest Conservators and Skinner's School.

### Welly Walks

**11** Welly Walks were produced and **8** Welly Walk whole school assemblies delivered.

Welly Walks continued to be a very popular choice for schools. 11 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.

**2** field trips – Landscape Walks with **2** schools (different to Welly Walks).

### Themed school workshops delivered

- **23** school based workshops were delivered on a variety of themes e.g. Welly Walks (12), farming (1), meadows (1), habitats (0), woodland (0), landscape (0), mapping (6), Romans (3) engaging just over **600** children.
- New workshop, Romans, was developed to help teachers/pupils to understand how Romans had influenced the High Weald landscape
- New lesson plans/activity sheets were produced to supplement existing workshops, equipping teachers to easily deliver sessions on various history and geography curriculum areas including butterfly surveying.

In collaboration with other local education providers the project ran High Weald-focused educational activities at the 'Connect with the Countryside' day: an annual forum that brings **2000** children together with countryside education providers in the area. Also attended





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



extended services meeting with **1** school, working with **18** other local childcare providers.

**1** after-school club programme was developed and a school identified to pilot the programme.

#### **Learning Zone developed and launched**

The School Learning Zone was redeveloped as part of a relaunch of [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org). The pages were updated regularly. Significant improvements were:

- The addition of all school map sets and other school specific relevant resources, e.g. Welly Walks, to the website enabling them to be download as required.
- A new section encouraging schools to explore their local countryside including pages on Welly Walks; an interactive field trip map and Out and About in the High Weald.
- A new section promoting other education providers that can help schools deliver their High Weald Heroes programmes: Who Else Can Help?
- Significant expansion of the education resources section.

The top 5 most popular web pages (assessed by number of hits) were: HWH Partnership Schools (752); Education Resources (596); Learning Zone 'Home' page (526); HWH Actions (214); Becoming a HWH School (140).

The most popular downloads were: Energy Story Lesson Plan (311); Meadows Play KS2 Script (318); Farming Story Information Pack (325); HWH Promotional Flier (268); HWH Newsletter, Winter 2009 (262); Nature versus Nurture Debate Pack (210); Wonderful Woodlands Outdoor Activity Pack (202).

Project Rationale [www.highweald.org/look-after/our-projects/high-weald-heroes.html](http://www.highweald.org/look-after/our-projects/high-weald-heroes.html)



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



## 2.4 Weald Meadows Initiative

### Profile

**Purpose** To ensure the long term survival of the irreplaceable species-rich grassland of the Weald and secure their productive and economic use.

**Lead** High Weald Landscape Trust

**Partners** The Nineveh Charitable Trust, Wills Trust, Royal Botanic Garden Kew, High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd and Natural England.

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

**Led by the High Weald Landscape Trust, the meadows officer, Dawn Brickwood, continued to deliver the project. WMI advice and visits during this period benefited 664ha of meadow and grassland.**

### Site visits

**50** site visits (some meadows experienced multiple visits) were undertaken to provide advice on management, harvesting, enhancement and creation with resulting flora surveys, WMI grassland reports, Farm Environment Plans and Environmental Stewardship applications.

### Weald Native Origin Seed (WNOS) Programme

- **174kg** of seed was 'wild harvested' across **11** meadows totalling **5.5ha**.
- **35** sites were supplied with seed; **140kg** of seed was sown resulting in **32ha** of restored or created meadows.
- **12** meadows were created (**1ha**) and **23** meadows were enhanced (**31ha**).



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- **62%** of seed purchases were by private landowners. The remaining purchases were equally divided between organisations and Environmental Stewardship projects.
- Additional **4.3ha** of meadow were harvested for whole-crop, green hay and WMI combined material from the Beech Estate, for use on **5** new meadows (**3.52ha**) including the trials in Bloomers Valley at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew at Wakehurst.

### Advice

**202** landowners were given verbal or email advice on meadow management, enhancement, creation, research, surveys, grants and details of other support services.

### Events

In June 2010 two events were hosted by the Beech Estate with support from the WMI. They involved the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex, Vice Lord Lieutenant and Deputy Lieutenants representing both Kent and Sussex and key organisations. With **16** people (across the **2** events) in attendance, the work of the HWLT-WMI in research and project development was illustrated with best practice wildflower grassland creation on the Beech Estate. 'The Meadows Paper' was subsequently written for publication as a result of these events.

**12 June 2010 Bee Magical** – a special event organised by Clare Whistler (HWLT-artist in residence) with performance, writing, film and music focused around the historical significance and ecological importance of bees – attended by **48** people.

**26-27 June 2010 High Beeches Wildflower Weekend** – attended by the WMI, with the Vanishing Meadows Exhibition Panels in situ as part on the tour of the South East. Set in fabulous SNCI meadows, High Beeches Wildflower weekend was attended by a number of grassland related organisations (including Buglife, RSPB, SBRS) who provided support and advice for around **200** members of the public.





## 2

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



### Research Projects

WMI assisted **7** organisations with research including The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew at Wakehurst; Centre for Development, Environment and Policy, Aberystwyth College – Bio-Renewables & Environmental Change Division; Centre for Agricultural & Environmental Research – Reading University; Lewes Castle College; UHI; the Grassland; and Saving our Magnificent Meadows.

### Project Development

Over the course of the year WMI worked with a range of partners (including the High Weald AONB Unit and others listed above) to deliver the targets for WMI and the Biodiversity Action Plan for Lowland Meadows.

Meetings with Great Dixter and other partners over the year continued the campaign for meadows locally and nationally with valuable information fed to National Charities such as The Grassland Trust and Plantlife. Work continued in partnership with RGB Kew-Wakehurst to develop a Memorandum of Collaboration to seal the partnership, which was formally signed in late April 2011.

### Acknowledgements

The HWLT-WMI would like to thank all of the projects funders and supporters which have facilitated this phase currently operational until October 2011, with a special mention for the ongoing support of The Nineveh Charitable Trust and High Weald Joint Advisory Committee Project Enabling Fund.

Project Rationale [www.highweald.org/look-after/our-projects/weald-meadows-initiative.html](http://www.highweald.org/look-after/our-projects/weald-meadows-initiative.html)





## 2

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



## 2.5 Ancient Woodland Restoration Project

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

### Profile

**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.

**The 0.8FTE project officer took up a position with a forestry consultancy at the end of August. In the five months of 2009 during which the project operated activities were divided between the High Weald (HW) and the South Downs (SD). In the High Weald the focus was on facilitating ongoing management of woodland sites through training events. Outputs were as follows:**

- Woodland management reports were provided for **4** High Weald sites
- The Crowhurst Woodfuel case study was produced
- A presentation on targeting sites for multifunctional management was produced
- A Game Management Workshop was held at Brightling Park attended by **25** woodland owners, managers and contractors.
- Two Flexible Forestry workshops which focused on the impact of climate change were delivered involving **60** participants
- A new woodland management section was created on [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org)

Project Rationale [www.highweald.org/look-after/our-projects/ancient-woodland-restoration-project.html](http://www.highweald.org/look-after/our-projects/ancient-woodland-restoration-project.html)



## 2

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

“Many thanks indeed for a very worthwhile evening. The feedback gives a unanimous thumbs up and includes many references to your most excellent presentation ‘style’. Delighted you felt it successful too – just hope that further villages take up the offer.”  
Kit, Stonegate

High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

## 2.6 Cultural Heritage Initiative

### Profile

**Purpose** To inform and enthuse those responsible for undertaking site assessments (and making decisions based on those assessments) about the AONB’s special features, helping them to understand the historical development of the features and their value. Landowners and managers (particularly those new to the area) are a key audience for the project but visits/talks to parish councils, community groups and officers of organisations involved in site assessments will also be offered.

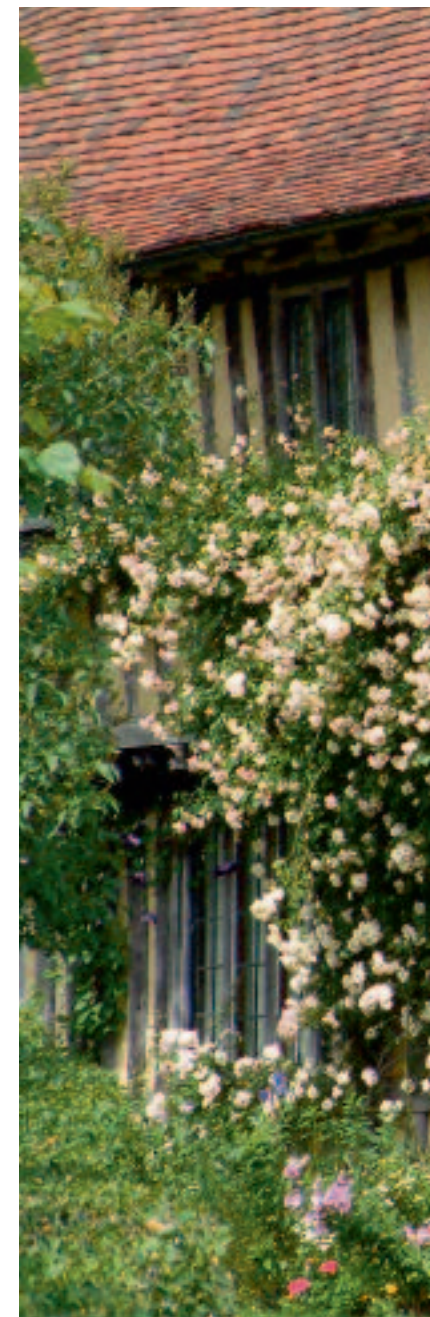
**Partners** Defra, Natural England, JAC

**Timescale** September 2009 to March 2012

The project continued to deliver free advisory visits to anyone living in the High Weald AONB with 1 acre or more. Landowners providing visitor accommodation were a particular target for visits and as a result of this focus a new project – the High Weald Accommodation Video Project was developed and implemented. Presentations to local interest groups continued to be popular and extremely well received.

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** visits).

The historical development of the area’s heritage features continued to be the key interest to those contacting the project. A video introducing the High Weald’s archaeology was produced to enable a wider audience to access information.





## 2

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



### Presentations to local interest groups

The table below is a summary of the 'Making of the High Weald' illustrated talks that have been carried out to a wide range of interest groups.

Parish Council talks	Number attended	Community Group talks	Number attended
Lamberhurst	30	Edenbridge Rotary Club	60
West Hoathley	30	Nutley Conservation Group	50
Cuckfield	20	West Sussex Access Forum	20
Sedlescombe	100	National Folk Life Conference	100
Benenden	50	Hadlow Down Horticultural Society	80
Mountfield	20	Stonegate Community Talks x 2	160
Westfield	30	Friends of Hasting Country Park	35
Whatlington	20	Natural England hedgerows	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum	45
		<b>Total</b>	<b>542</b>

Over 80 people braved snow and ice to listen to the talk on the history of the High Weald at Stonegate on 1 December. The talk was organised by local residents to help raise money for Stonegate Primary School. The first talk was so popular that another date was hastily arranged for the people unable to attend because of the snow.

Outcomes of these talks have included: a guided walk around the village of Stonegate, where residents were able to see the special features of the High Weald within a context they knew. Other spin offs have mainly been in the form of new contacts for site visits from interested landowners that have attended talks. The talks have also been an opportunity to publicise other unit work, such as the historic routeways survey and High Weald Hero education programme. As a result several new schools have become involved and more routeways survey volunteers have been recruited.



“Thank you so much for your visit and the maps file which I downloaded. Your visit was very interesting and very useful. It made us change our plans so that we can look after the ancient woodland by the stream in a better way.”

Pamela, Buxted

## 2

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



### Site visits

**88** sites visits were undertaken – the visits providing landowners with the opportunity to explore maps showing the historical development of their property, learn more about the property’s special landscape, archaeology and wildlife features; and find out about specialist’s who can help with heritage management.

**88** interactive digital presentations etc were produced. These presentations have evolved and are constantly being updated with links to the most current relevant web content. The additions of new illustrations of the geological history have helped landowners to visualise the past environment of the High Weald.

### High Weald accommodation video project

B&B owners from the across the High Weald attended a pilot workshop aimed at helping them understand the process of filming and editing a short 2 minute promotional video for their property using cheap handheld cameras. The project was initiated by Acorn Tourism Consulting Ltd who had identified that

- the quality of promotional videos within the UK were generally poor and rarely reflected their setting – often a key selling point.
- That internet video is one of the fastest growing and most effective ways of improved online presence and therefore videos will soon become an essential marketing tool.

As a starting point the Unit’s Cultural Heritage Adviser worked with a willing B&B owner – Jane Howard of Coopers Farm – to pilot the video production process. The aim of the pilot was to test available technology, the ease of production for people with limited video or IT experience, and the scope to build-in content that promoted not just the property but the special qualities of the area around it. The pilot video was then used as a case study for the workshop.

The workshop was organised by Acorn Tourism Consulting Ltd and delivered by the Cultural Heritage Advisor with input from Jane. **10** B&B owners (**7** businesses in total) attended, almost all of which came to the





“We have already acquired the camera which was recommended and are starting to learn (the hard way). The friendliness of the tutors and their patience and understanding with us elderly novices was very much appreciated.”

## 2

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

follow up session which brought the businesses together to present their videos and share their experiences of production.

Project evaluation indicated that the businesses were extremely happy with the workshop and funding is now being sought to run further workshops.

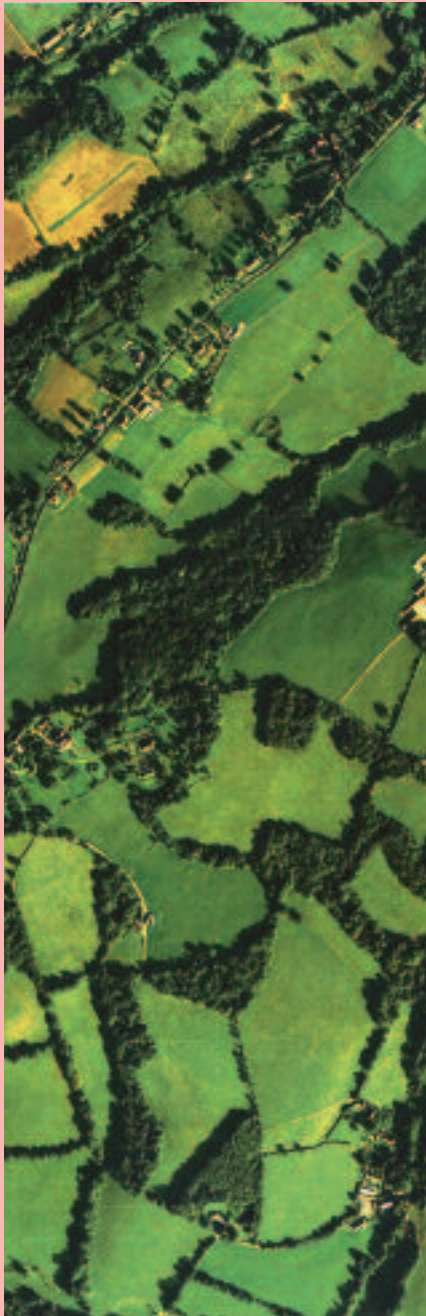
### **High Weald archaeology project video**

During the spring of 2011 landscape archaeologist Nicola Bannister was filmed showing a group of countryside professionals around the woodland archaeology. This has been combined with more footage of woodland archaeology filmed around the High Weald to produce a series of short video clips. The video clips are aimed at anyone wanting to identify archaeology in woodland. They describe some of the more common archaeology you would expect to find in the woods of the High Weald. This includes sawpits, charcoal platforms, pond bays and hollow ways. The video clips will be added to the woodland archaeology section of the High Weald website and will be an extra resource to supplement the archaeology toolkits being developed for the historic environment awareness project.

### **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 to be added to the Historic Environment Records (HER) of all the counties in the AONB. Site visits have given us the opportunity to ground truth the historic farmstead dataset generated from the joint mapping project undertaken with English Heritage, testing the accuracy of this dataset and feeding back to English Heritage. In addition site visits have also given the opportunity to continue collecting woodland archaeology using hand held GPS, which will ultimately be added to the Historic Environment Record (HER). Site visits across the Weald Forest Ridge have also allowed the ground-truthing and interpretation for LiDAR landowners.





# 3

## Providing advice and guidance to our partners on CRow\*, Section 85

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### 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.

\* The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000





# 3

Providing advice and guidance to our partners on CRow, Section 85

## 3.1 Technical advice

### Planning consultations

The Unit responded to **45** planning related consultations and issues. In East Sussex 12 applications were responded to (Rother – 3, Wealden – 8, Hastings – 1), West Sussex 18 (Mid Sussex – 9, Horsham – 5, WSCC – 4) and Kent 5 (Sevenoaks – 1, Ashford – 2, KCC – 2) and 4 from Tandridge plus 3 from South East Water, the rail and highways authorities.

The Unit input into the following significant planning matters:

- A major flood alleviations scheme at Worth Lodge/Clays Lake in West Sussex.
- New housing at Bylanes Close, Cuckfield, appearing at the planning inquiry in support of the District Council.
- An 'eco' campsite at Rolvenden.
- New housing at Ghyll Road, Heathfield.
- Bunding and other works at Goodsoal Farm, Burwash.
- Affordable housing at Upper Platts, Ticehurst.
- Contentious agricultural development at Cleavers Lane, Cuckfield.
- Small dwelling at Theobolds Lane, Heathfield.
- Industrial plant at Ardingly.
- New water pipeline at Maytham.

### Local development frameworks

- Wealden's Core Strategy submission document.
- Responded to consultation on Tunbridge Wells BC Green Infrastructure Plan.
- Consultation on ESCC LTP3 Strategy.
- Consultation on Kent County Council's Local Transport Plan.
- Consultation on the Kent Environment Strategy 2010.





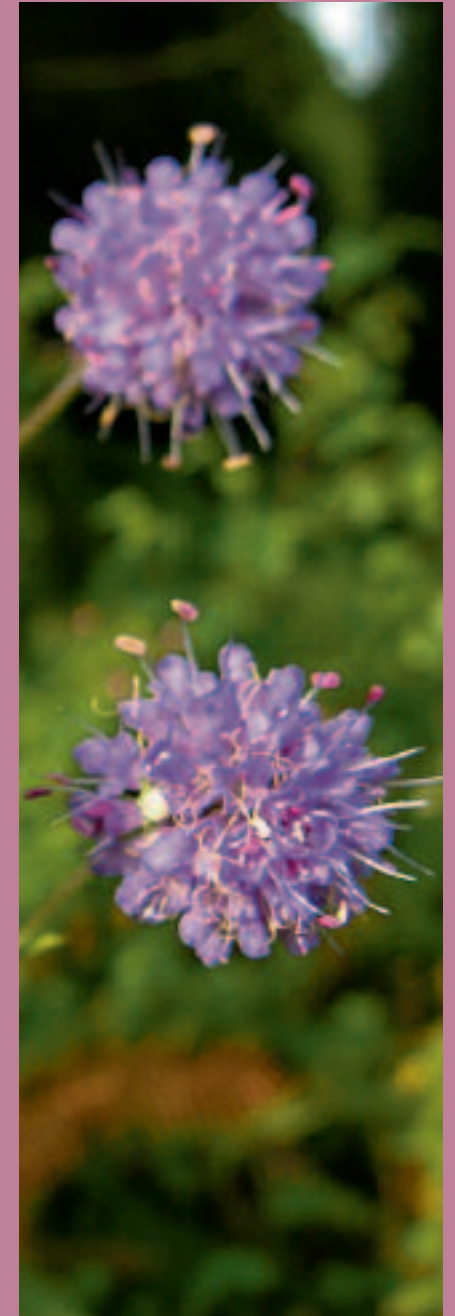
# 4

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

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### 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

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

## 4.1 Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey

*Updating the Ancient Woodland Inventory across the South East*

### Profile

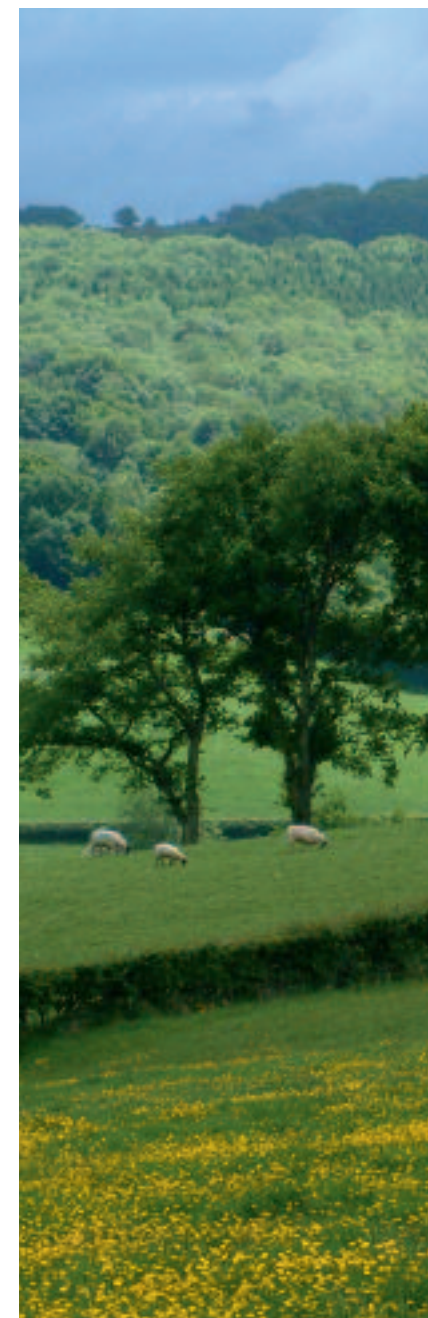
**Purpose** To update and enhance the existing Ancient Woodland Inventory including woodlands under two hectares. The project aims to map and document all ancient woodland in the High Weald to provide a robust evidence base upon which to assign ancient woodland status.

**Partners** High Weald JAC, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre, The Woodland Trust, Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre and local authorities (see below).

**Timescale** Wealden District: completed March 2006. Mid Sussex District: completed October 2006.

**This long-standing project, in its seventh year, has started work on the last area of the AONB still to be surveyed – Sevenoaks district – as well as other areas within the South East.**

This year has seen the start of a new phase of work revising the ancient woodland inventory for three large local authority areas in Kent hosted by the AONB Unit and continuing to follow the methodology developed in the project over the last six years. The need for improved information on ancient woodland in the heavily wooded district of Sevenoaks was a driving force in the establishment of this new partnership. The three areas involved all also share in the Kent Downs AONB designation thus linking two well-wooded AONBs in the production of this data resource to a common standard and methodology.



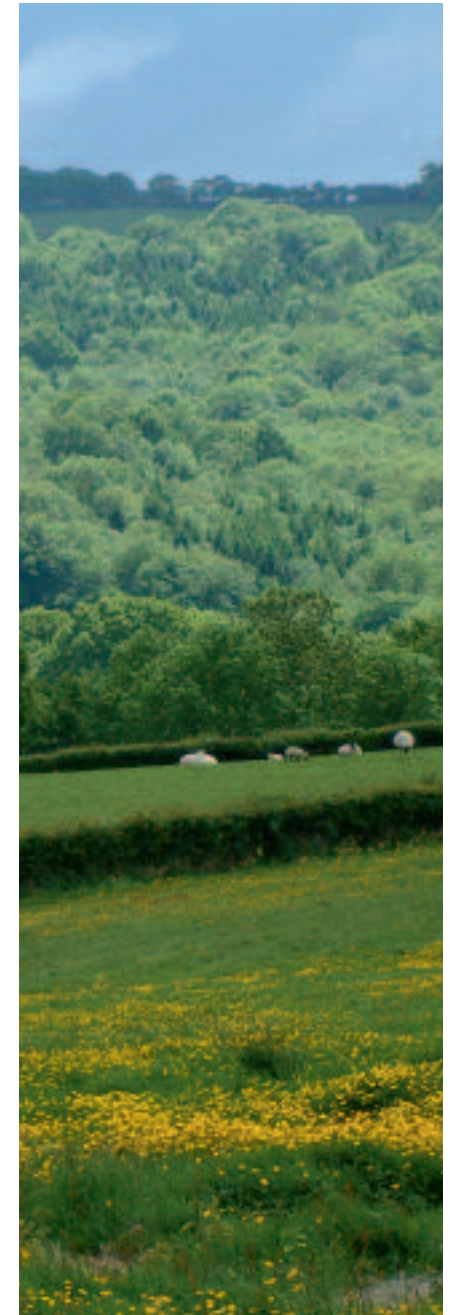
## 4

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

With the completion of a revised ancient woodland inventory for Surrey (produced by a partnership hosted at Surrey Wildlife Trust and employing the methodology previously developed at the High Weald AONB Unit) launched this June at Surrey County Hall, the survey of Sevenoaks district will mean the achievement of a significant long term goal – to serve the Management Plan with a fine resolution and up-to-date dataset on ancient woodland covering the entire AONB.

The first phase of mapping work for Sevenoaks was completed in January and has captured – using accurate computer mapping techniques – the wealth of small previously unrecorded but potentially ancient woods across the district. Within the High Weald AONB portion of the district alone there are some 400 such sites amounting to more than 350 hectares of land. These generally are small woods and shaws up to two hectares in area. They are often linked together in complex spatial networks and form a very significant resource. As part of this process also, an existing ancient woodland designation of approximately 500 hectares in the High Weald part of the district has been reviewed and re-mapped to current Ordnance Survey digital standards.

On the 7th October the revised ancient woodland inventory for Rother district, East Sussex (results presented in 2009 – 2010 annual review) was officially launched at Bexhill Town Hall. The event was chaired by Cllr Tony Ganley of RDC, lead member for the environment, and attended by councillors, parish councillors and planning officers to whom copies of the project final report and maps were presented. Slide presentations were made on behalf of the Forestry Commission and Natural England by Patrick McKernan and by Philip Sansum, the High Weald AONB Unit project officer, on the ancient woodland inventory; and by Tony Whitbread of Sussex Wildlife Trust on ancient woodland management and conservation. The revised inventory for Rother comprises more than 1300 discrete areas of ancient woodland which collectively cover about 15% of the district area. This makes Rother a stronghold for ancient woodland habitats within the AONB, in the region and beyond.



# 4

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

A revised ancient woodland inventory for the borough of Hastings was produced concurrently with the work on neighbouring Rother district and a final project report and maps detailing this work have been delivered to Hastings Borough Council.

In February a presentation and training session on the revised ancient woodland inventory for Tonbridge & Malling borough (results presented in 2009 – 2010 annual review) was given by the project officer to the council's development control staff at Kings Hill.

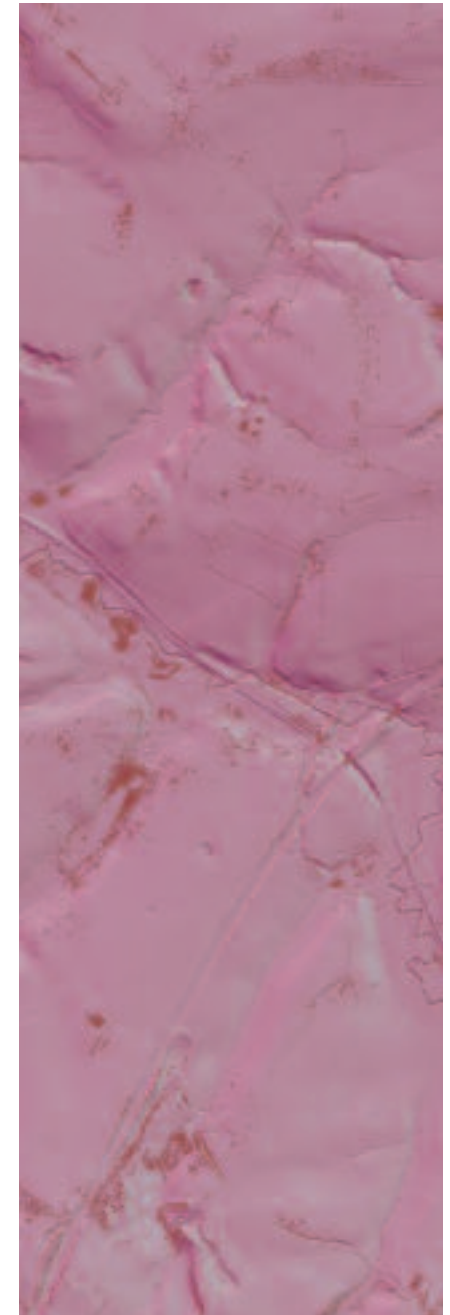
## 4.2 Data production and sharing

A significant amount of time is spent supplying Unit data to external bodies to build up their AONB evidence base. During the year the scope for more efficient data sharing between key organisations was explored.

### **High Weald heat-map tool**

In order to allow a greater degree of data comparison across different data types for the whole AONB, the Unit commissioned a small GIS plug-in to be built. This produces a density map of datasets for any given area and allows the comparison of different datasets, for example routeways and farmsteads, across the whole landscape. The tool will allow further exploration of the relationships between different features, for example it will allow comparison of the intensity of woodland and heathland across the landscape. It also means that multiple datasets can be compared at any one time, by displaying them in a statistical way that compares them equally, allowing comparisons to be made.

Importantly this tool is the first step to enabling us to consider social data alongside landscape features, offering us a much more holistic understanding of the landscape.





# 4

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

## Data production

New GIS models, enabling automatic rather than manual querying of data were developed, dramatically improving the AONB Unit's ability to respond effectively and efficiently to organisations seeking facts and figures about particular areas of the AONB.

The models were developed in recognition of the fact that the Unit's data is often queried in a similar way or a query repeated over and over again. Both simple and complex models were therefore written telling the GIS to undertake a set of processes to answer common queries. The models are powerful tools – allowing monitoring of trends and the quick generation of statistics – which can be repeated year on year. The ability to do this means statistics are produced following the same method each time – making them more robust.

## Data sharing

During the year access to the East Sussex County Council's live Historic Environment Record (HER) was enabled. This means the Unit can view and query live data and the Unit can supply information directly to the HER. This has been a significant step forward in ensuring key evidence from the High Weald is incorporated into the county record, making it easily available to planners and decision-makers across East Sussex.

The following data requests were met:

- Request for data in support of BAP 10-year reporting for IYB, Sussex Biodiversity Partnership.
- HER21 project development (East Sussex County Council).
- HER21 project development (Kent County Council).
- South East England Partnership Board – Renewable and De-Centralised Energy Assessment: Consultation Events.
- Lathes rapes and hundreds. Kent lathe maps and Sussex rape maps digitised.
- Data shared with ESCC PRoW team to inform footpath diversion requests and other path management work the team undertakes: Historic Farmsteads, Historic Routeways.



# 4

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

- Data shared with Highways Agency BB:MM: All Character Components
- Data shared with the ARCH Project, Kent County Council: Weald Meadows Initiative meadows and Weald Heathland Initiative heathlands.

## 4.3 Partner Programme Support

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

- Ashdown Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme – advisory panel member
- Kent High Weald Partnership – steering group member
- Wealden and Rother Rural Partnership Leader Project – board member
- West Kent Leader Project – steering group member
- Ashdown Visitor Management Partnership – steering group member
- Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Management Board – board member
- Knepp Castle Wildland Project – steering group member
- West Sussex Environment and Climate Change Board – Environment Quality Group member
- Environment Strategy for East Sussex – provided comment and peer review
- Nicola Bannister, local consultant – technical GIS training support to further HLC work.





# 5

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

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### Rationale

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

*“The contribution that AONBs make to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is fully recognized by this Government. I believe AONBs are managed remarkably well by the AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards and provide good value for money.”*

Richard Benyon MP  
Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries





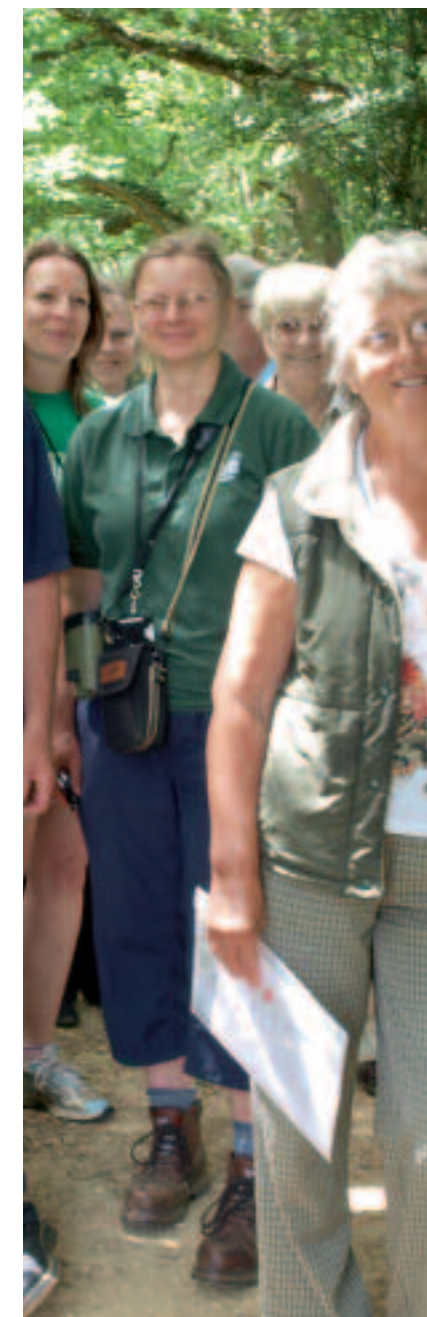
# 5

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

## 5.1 High Weald Joint Advisory Committee and Management Board

The High Weald Joint Advisory Committee met on 1 November 2010 and 11 March 2011 to discuss and agree report recommendations relating to, for example, the budget for the year 2011/2012; the implications of the cuts to this budget; the identification and mitigation of risks to the work of the AONB Unit; the partnership agreement between Natural England and the constituent local authorities; and consultations on the such issues as Natural England's guidance for assessing landscapes for designation and Making Space for Nature, which was used to inform the Government's Natural Environment White Paper published in the summer of 2011.

The Management Board met three times, on the 28 June and 11 October 2010 and the 25 January 2011 to provide more detailed advice and guidance to the AONB Unit on particular matters. The Management Board approved the Annual Return and Annual Governance Statement at the June meeting.



# 5

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



## 5.2 National, regional and local liaison

### Parliamentary liaison

Richard Benyon MP, Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries and Gregory Barker MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy and a High Weald AONB patron, met on the 31st August and the 15th October respectively with the High Weald AONB Unit at Flimwell to learn more of the Partnership's work and its distinctive approach to landscape issues.

The ministers' visits built on a number of earlier meetings with the AONB Unit and given that part of the AONB Partnership's role is to examine a wide range of contemporary rural matters relevant to the AONB, to highlight areas that may become important in the coming years, the ministerial visits provided an excellent opportunity to outline local-scale and innovative ideas and actions to improve public land-use and landscape policy.

Both ministers acknowledged that AONB Partnerships provide mutual benefits by pooling together knowledge and resources to meet the need for a positive, relevant, and integrated approach for the management of an AONB and also represent good value for money.

In March, the High Weald JAC was invited to contribute a paper on behalf of the National Association for AONBs to the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) on how protected landscapes can provide a framework for an integrated approach to the management of landscapes for inclusion in the forthcoming issue 'Landscapes of the Future.'

POST publish briefing notes known as POSTNOTES on a regular basis, which are sent to all parliamentarians and other interested parties. These briefings draw on the expertise of a wide range of organizations from industry, NGOs, academics, regulators and government and aim to provide MPs and peers with independent and balanced analysis of policy issues that have a basis in science and technology.



# 5

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



## Defra and Natural England

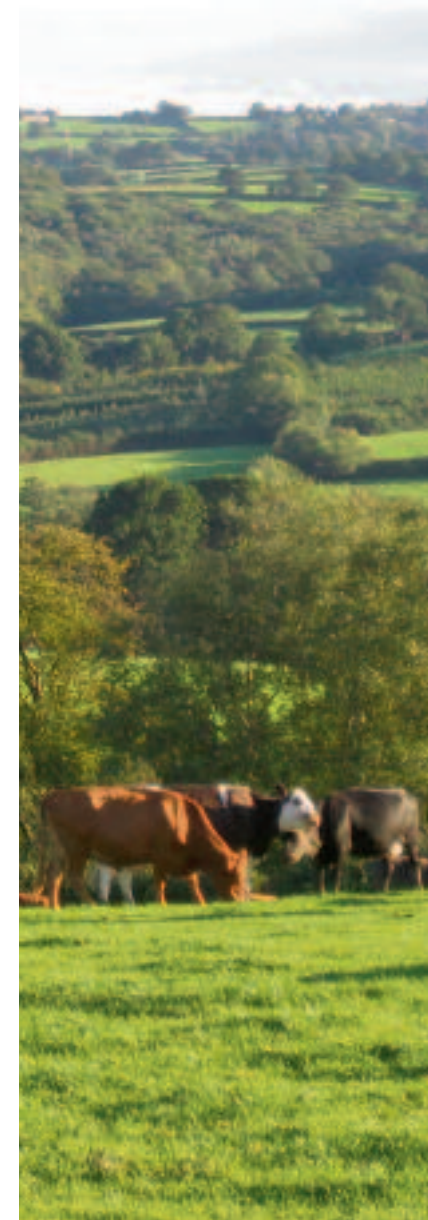
Richard Benyon MP, Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries announced in November his decision that from 1 April 2011 the resources and responsibility for funding and strategic oversight of the English AONB Joint Advisory Committees, the two AONB Conservation Boards and the National Association for AONBs will transfer from Natural England to Defra. The minister, among other things, wishes to see AONBs thrive and prosper with the appropriate support from central government and minimal interference.

By making this decision the minister has strongly endorsed the value of the work that AONB Partnerships are delivering at a local level and he has recognised they have a fundamental role in meeting the coalition government's environmental objectives. This is a clear recognition of the excellent work that each AONB Partnership has carried out and is continuing to carry out despite the difficulties imposed by the current financial crisis.

The financial year 2011/2012 will see a managed transition of arrangements from Natural England to Defra. Natural England will be given the resources to continue to provide advice and support at the local level and to deliver their own statutory role with respect to AONBs.

## National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Conference 2010

The 12th National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Annual Conference in July was hosted by the Kent Downs, High Weald and Surrey Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and was held at Hythe in Kent. The conference was supported by 2 Seas INTERREG IV A Programme; Produced In Kent; Kent County Council; Federation des Parcs Naturels Regionaux; and the Parc Naturel Regional des Caps et Marais d'Opale.





# 5

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



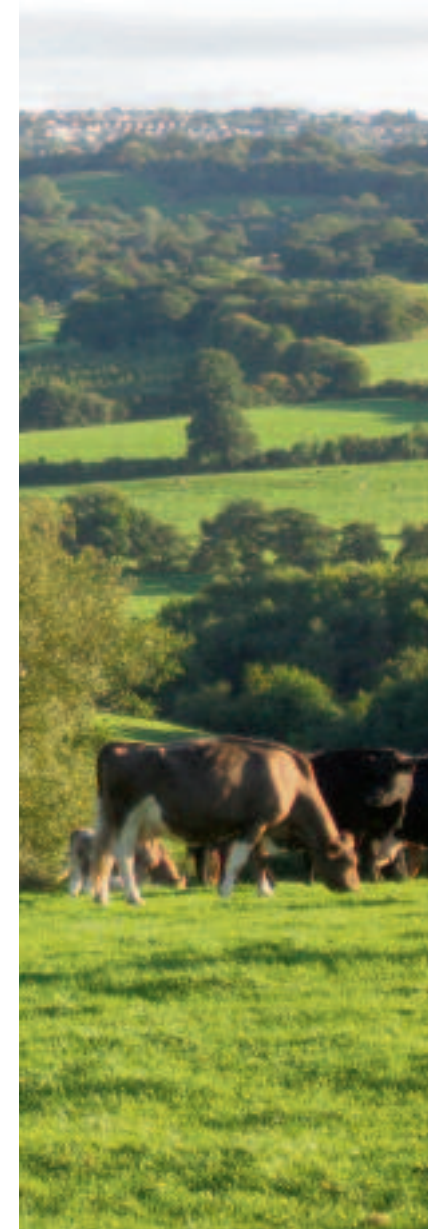
The conference brought together representatives from the AONBs of England, Wales and Northern Ireland and many other organizations under the theme of “Landscape and Nature for All” and gave the delegates an opportunity to hear presentations from a range of internationally and nationally recognized land-use specialists and attend a number of field trips to English and French protected landscapes to learn of a wide range of initiatives and projects.

The High Weald AONB Unit led a field trip, hosted in part by High Weald AONB Patron Dr Lisbet Rausing, at Rolf’s Farm and Wadhurst Park Estate. The day illustrated how successive generations of people have collaborated with nature to create the distinctive High Weald landscape, changing it from the unpopulated area it was 10,000 years ago to the very human and cultural landscape we see today. The delegates learnt, among other things, how a landscape approach is a viable framework for integrated decision making, to ensure people and communities are able to find ways of sustaining a range of benefits and services from a given area.

### South East Protected Landscapes

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 January. As in the previous year, the meeting focused on the needs of the rural and protected landscapes sector and the future uncertainty resulting from the financial and personnel cuts facing the public sector caused by the banking crisis. Discussions centred on the opportunities now facing the sector and the need to identify ways the protected landscapes and the NAAONBs can make the most of them during this particularly difficult time.

In October the second South East AONB staff forum, conceived and organised by the Policy Manager for the South East Protected Landscapes, was held at Hythe in Kent and hosted by National Association for AONBs. AONB Unit and Natural England staff from across



# 5

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



the region came together for a series of workshops around common issues. High Weald AONB staff ran a session on 'outreach' education in protected landscapes using High Weald Heroes as a case study.

The AONB directors have attended throughout the year quarterly meetings of the South East and East of England Protected Landscapes Directors Group.

## Local groups

The Unit's co-director led a number of guided walks for a variety of community and interest groups such as Sussex Wildlife Trust, High Weald Network, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Ashplatts Conservation Group. Each group experienced first-hand the High Weald's essentially medieval landscape of dispersed settlement, ancient routeways, abundant ancient woodland, gills and shaws, and small, irregular-shaped and productive fields. The focus of discussions on the walks were:

- how the High Weald's distinctive countryside has arisen from a long history of human interaction with the natural environment, and
- how using an understanding of how the High Weald has been created by people over time allows 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.

## 5.3 Communications

### Eye Spy High Weald

A booklet with 97 features to spot in the countryside of Kent, Sussex and Surrey was published at the end of March. The booklet highlights the old and the new, the familiar and the rare. It includes the area's natural resources and the many features that have arisen from people's use of those resources.



*“It really is a super publication, full of interest and packed with information that I’m sure will inspire so many people to take a closer and more informed look at this part of the world.”*

Simon Kerr,  
Tourist Information Officer

## 5

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



The booklet is in the style of the original I-Spy guides with a points system based on how easy or otherwise it is to spot the feature. Once 1000 points have been scored users can send off for a High Weald Eye Spy certificate. The booklet is being distributed through schools under the High Weald Heroes Education Programme and through organisations and businesses that run countryside events in the area.

### High Weald Anvil 2011

The 11th edition of the High Weald Anvil was published in March and 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 3450 were distributed directly to local tourist attractions and 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 ‘change themed’ Anvil included articles on:

- Eye Spy the High Weald – What makes our area special.
- Changing Landscapes – interviews with the ‘oil baron’, forest guardian, flying shepherd – just some of the people who live and work on the land.
- Teatime in the country – delicious delights on the teashop trail in the High Weald.
- You can’t leave the High Weald without... a list of activities you must do to truly appreciate the area.

### Historic landscape illustrations

The Unit commissioned an artist to depict the landscape in 11 different time periods: Mesolithic; Neolithic; Bronze Age; Iron Age; Roman; Early Medieval; Medieval; Post Medieval; Victorian; and Modern. The artwork, which focuses on the same location, highlights how the area’s natural resources have been used through time to create the landscape that we see today. The artwork will be a resource to support the Unit’s educational work with primary school and other audiences and will complement existing artwork.





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## High Weald Stories – William & Walter

The Unit commissioned two historic stories designed to pull together research themes and knowledge we have about land ownership, farmsteads and routeways. These stories follow the fortunes of two real historic characters – William of Cassingham and Walter Chudham. Both lived and worked in the High Weald and their stories are uncovered in a way which helps the reader understand the historic development of both the High Weald's natural and man-made features and to appreciate how similar the landscape is now to back then.

## High Weald Landscape Trail online guidebook

A new online guide to the High Weald Landscape Trail was produced to replace the original guidebook which is out of print. The existing route guides content (maps, text and images) was updated by the Unit. Design based on an existing template for online walk guides was undertaken by Explore Kent with financial contributions from East Sussex and West Sussex County Council.

## Website relaunch

The new website was launched at the beginning of July 2010, the culmination of a six month project to replace the 10-year old site with a new management system giving the Unit more control over the site's function and future development. The site has received many favourable comments and from its launch date to the end of March 2010 **17,000** visitors made **25,500** visits to the website. The most popular pages on the website were the interactive map, walking and cycling pages and publications.

The Explore section remains the most popular, its pages all scoring highly for visits, followed by the Learn About section which includes the High Weald Story and the School Learning Zone. A website management priority is to encourage visitors to spend longer viewing the site and the refreshed site, combined with new content, led to the average time spent on the site reaching over 4 minutes.

Unit staff worked hard to ensure the site was up-to-date, topical and newsy, to encourage repeat visits.



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## Quarterly briefings and Annual Review 2009/10

The 47 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 2009/10. Three electronic quarterly briefings highlighting key areas of activity undertaken by the JAC were produced and circulated to the same stakeholders.

## 5.4 Fundraising

### Living Woods Project

**Purpose** To enable community involvement in the High Weald's ancient woodlands

**Partners** Woodland Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund, Natural England

**Timescale** 2011–2014

**Rationale** Ancient woodland sites in the AONB cover around 22,000 hectares or approximately 15% of the total land area. The High Weald therefore contains almost 6.5% of the total ancient woodland area in England. Past projects have demonstrated a huge interest from the public in activities that will help them discover more about their woodland's story.

A bid for £50,000 towards the Living Woods Project was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund under their Your Heritage programme. If successful the funds will allow appointment of a community woodland officer.

The Unit offered a letter of support for a Woodland Trust's bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The trust is seeking funds to support a community woodland archaeology project based at Brede High Woods in East Sussex. The project, if successful, will help to deliver a number of AONB targets, as their own project objectives complement the AONB Management Plan.





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## 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

**Rationale** Over 35% of the South East region is designated protected landscape and is of very high amenity value. And yet, the rural south east has a low public profile as a visitor destination in comparison with other rural areas in the country. 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 visitor numbers where there is capacity, extending the average length of stay for visitors, encouraging a higher rate of return and recommendation, and increasing the average visitor spend in the rural economy.

Following a SEEDA-funded research phase as stage 1 of the project in 2009/10, the focus for 2010/11 was development and submission of a stage 2 bid. In November 2010 a 100% grant of £990,000 was secured by South East Protected Landscapes from SEEDA to implement the project. The grant will fund a project team (project coordinator and p/t administrator/finance officer), product development costs, marketing, including the development of a sophisticated web platform, and monitoring.

### Funding secured from Natural England for 2011/12

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





# 5

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

## 5.5 Staff development

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Staff development for the Unit as a whole was focused on two areas:

- the development of IT skills – particularly in the use of GIS software, design software and the interpretation of LiDAR maps to enable more efficient working and to increase the scope of the IT work that can be undertaken internally.
- the sharing of best practice and ideas amongst protected landscape colleagues.

## 5.6 Business systems, office accommodation, health and safety

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- In January 2011 the caretaking of the Woodland Enterprise Centre, and the surrounding land and buildings, were transferred from Woodland Enterprises Limited to Plumpton College. The Unit assisted with the transfer.
- The Unit's 12-year-old Microsoft access contacts database was replaced with an online database linked to the website, enabling Unit staff to access information from home and providing scope for other permitted users to maintain their contact details.
- Online booking forms and consultations via the website were trialled resulting in administrative efficiencies and an increase in user customer feedback.
- The Unit completed 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.



# 5

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

## 5.7 Work planning, performance and reporting, risk management, financial management

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- An annual work programme was produced within the context of the 3-year business strategy agreed by the Joint Advisory Committee.
- 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; and 2 reports and 2 claims to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme.
- The 2009/10 Annual Return and Annual Governance Statement gave full assurance to the JAC's risk and financial management systems and the same systems continued in 2010/11 with minor audit recommendations implemented.



# Financial summary

1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011

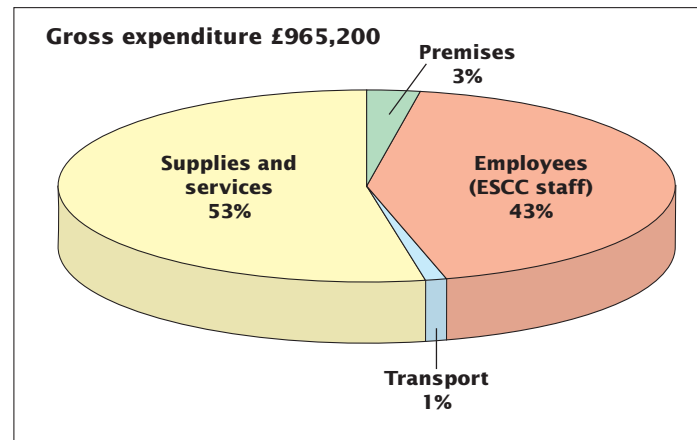
## Financial summary

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

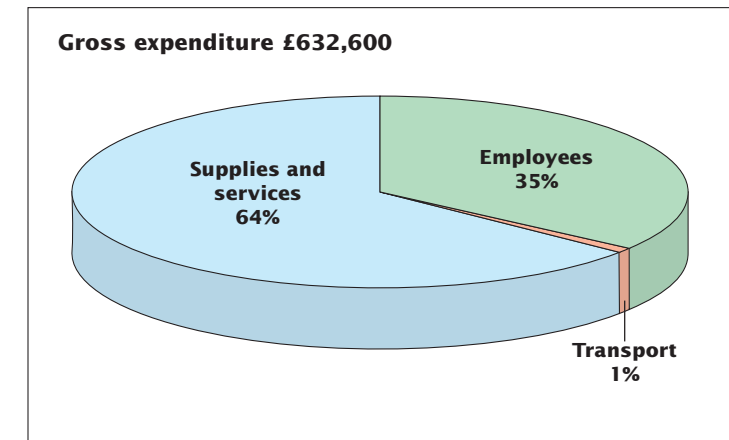
Natural England	£329,700
Local authority partners	£110,054
Heritage Lottery Fund	£466,924
Other bodies	£74,844

Other bodies included Interreg, English Heritage, the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust.

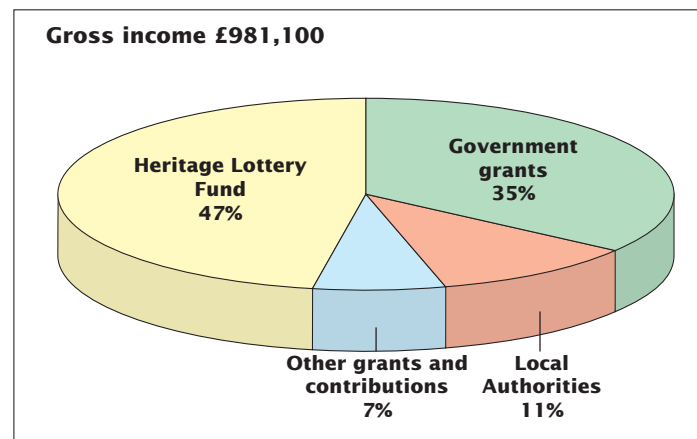
### Total expenditure



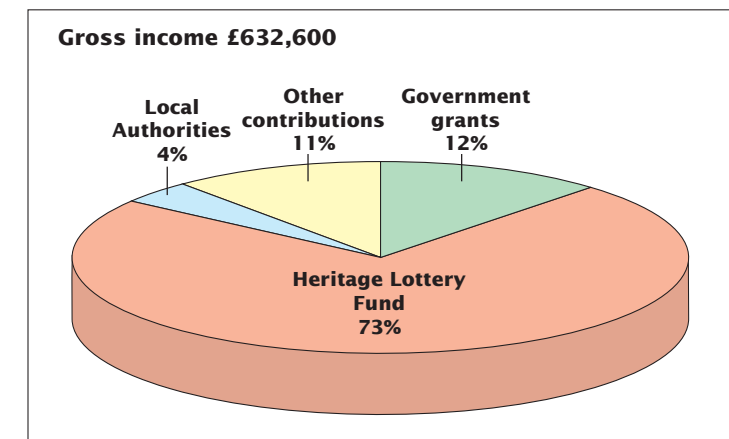
### Project expenditure



### Total income



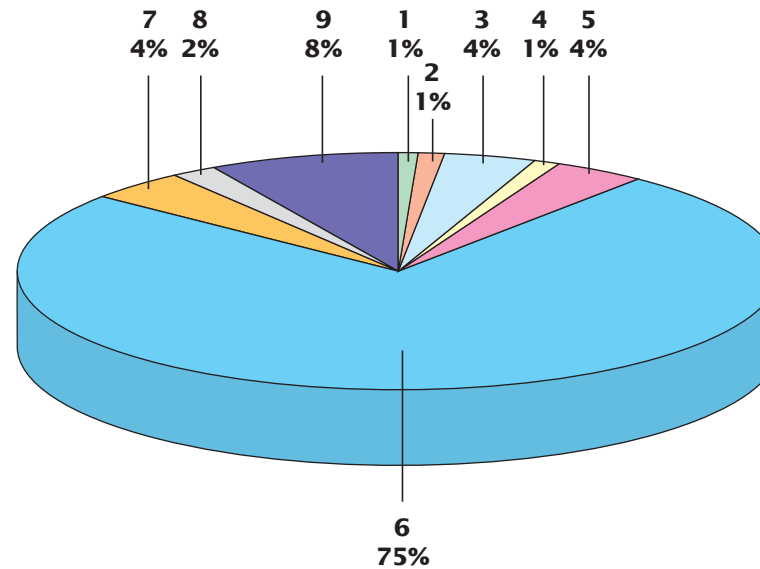
### Project income





## Expenditure by project

**Project expenditure £632,600**

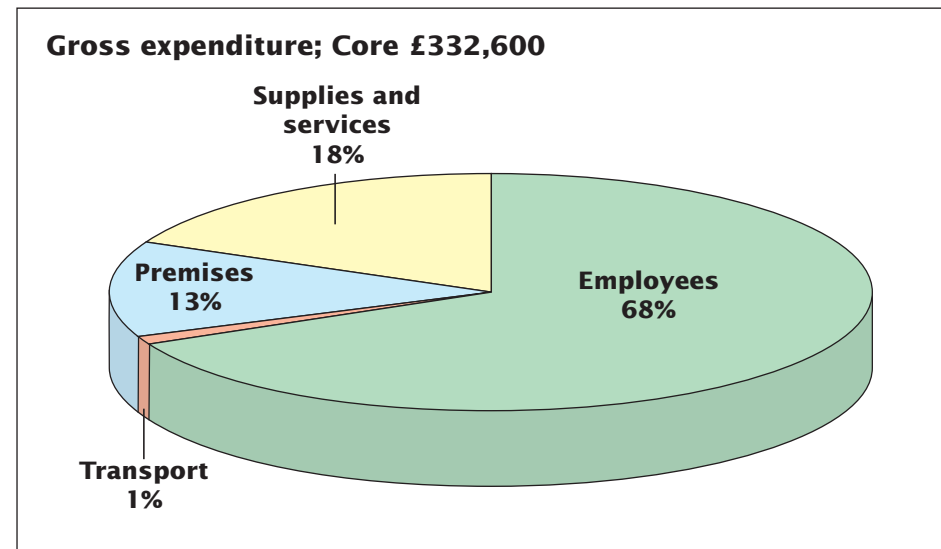


Financial summary

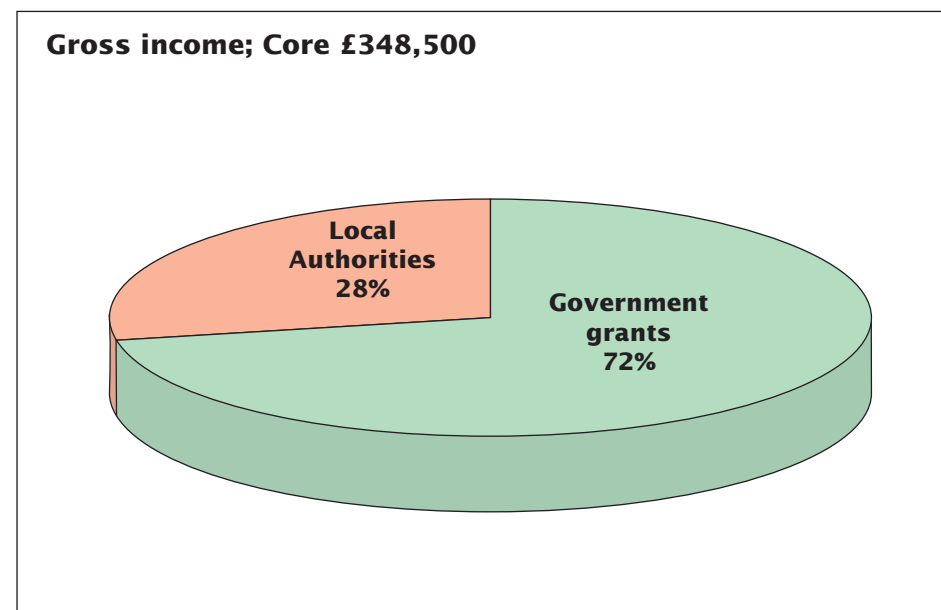
### Key:

- 1** Weald Meadows Initiative
- 2** Plantation on 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
- 8** Open Your Eyes Interpretation Project
- 9** Sustainable Development Fund

## Core expenditure



## Core income



## Core supplies and services included:

Office costs – rent, rates, utility bills, office equipment including IT purchases, stationery, photocopying, postage, website development and management and telephones. Communication costs – publication production and distribution costs (primarily for the High Weald Anvil and annual review), event attendance and other miscellaneous promotional expenses. ESCC support costs – IT, personnel and finance services. Local authority core contributions were as follows:

	£000s
East Sussex County Council*	22.4
ESCC accommodation	13.9
Kent County Council	13.3
West Sussex County Council*	9.3
Surrey County Council	2.9
Wealden District Council*	7.2
Rother District Council*	7.2
Mid Sussex District Council*	5.6
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	6.7
Horsham District Council**	4.7
Sevenoaks District Council	3.6
Ashford Borough Council***	0.8
Hastings Borough Council**	1.5
Tandridge Borough Council**	2.2
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**	0.3
Crawley Borough Council **	0.3

The local authority contributions reflect the balance of their land area within the AONB. Those marked with \* also made a contribution of £2,000 (\*\* £300; \*\*\* £200) to the Partnership Enabling Funding 2010/11

**The final position for the year was a reserve of £82,887, at 31 March 2011, which includes the £15,908 surplus for 2010/11.**

# High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

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

## Membership 2010/11

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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 2010 – 31 March 2011 were as follows:

### **Chair**

Councillor Mrs S Tidy

### **Vice-chair**

Councillor B Kentfield

### **Officers Steering Group Chair**

David Phillips (until May 2010) Paul Newdick

### **Natural England**

Joanne Spickett (until summer 2010) Janet Whitman

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High Weald  
Joint Advisory Committee

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**East Sussex County Council**

Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy  
Virginia Pullan

**West Sussex County Council**

Councillor Keith Blake  
Jackie Lewis

**Kent County Council**

Councillor Roy Bullock  
Kate Phillips; Elizabeth Milne

**Surrey County Council**

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 (until June 2010)  
Councillor S Blake  
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  
Brenda Fazzani

**Tonbridge & Malling District Council**

Councillor Matthew Balfour  
Jenny Mentz; Jenny Knowles

**Tandridge District Council**

Councillor M Sydney  
Paul Newdick

**JAC Co-optees**

**Recreation/Leisure**

Mr A Betts,  
Forestry Commission

**Community/Economy**

Mr J Leggett,  
Action in Rural Sussex

**Landowners**

Mr T Broomhead,  
Country Land and Business Association

**Farming**

Mr R Froggatt,  
National Farmers Union

**JAC Management Board**

Councillor Mrs Sylvia Tidy  
Councillor B Kentfield  
Councillor Ms J Davison  
Councillor Mrs E Kitchen  
Councillor C Hersey  
Councillor J Fox  
Natural England representatives

**Clerk to the JAC and Board**

Michaela Frost (until summer 2010)  
Simon Bailey

# Purpose, role and functions

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## 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*

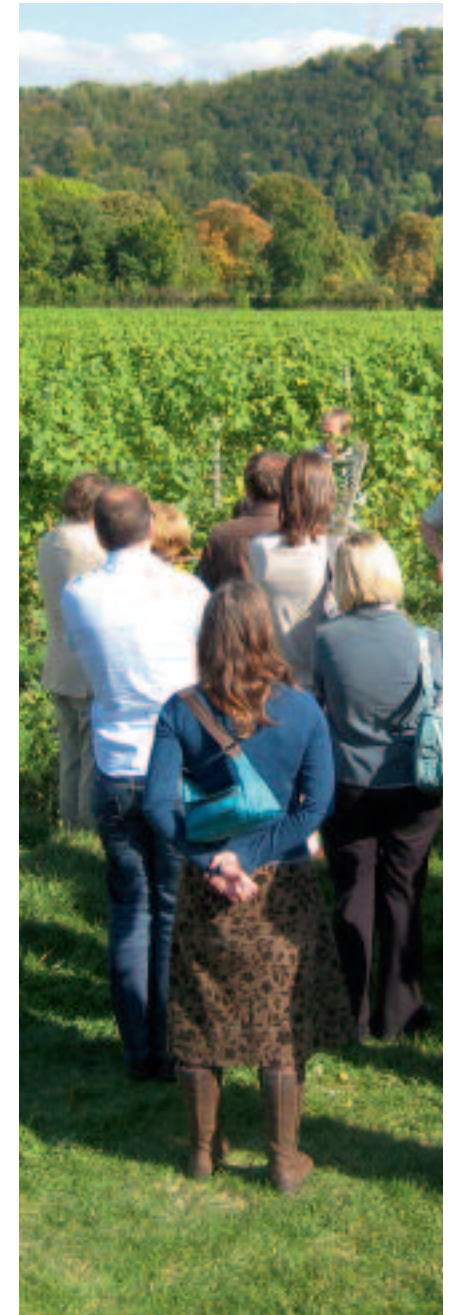
## Functions

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 three-year business strategy:

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High Weald  
Joint Advisory Committee

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## High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

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- Developing a vision and strategy for AONB management.
- Preparing, with constituent local authorities, a AONB Management plan as required by the CroW Act.
- In the early stages of AONB development, promoting the vision and strategy to distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside.
- Implementing, and co-ordinating implementation by others, the Management Plan.
- Co-ordinating or advising on local authority services in the AONB, to go beyond the normal level of countryside management.
- Monitoring and reporting on progress against Management Plan targets.
- Accessing resources for undertaking management activities, including external financing, project development and proposals and providing matching funding for special projects.
- Tapping into advice and liaison with AONBs at a national level.
- Providing an internal management role to coordinate AONB protection.
- Promoting the value of the AONB to the community.
- Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB.
- Providing planning advice and related activities.
- Seeking additional funds to assist with delivery of management activity.

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





# High Weald AONB Unit

*Advising on the management of one of England's Finest Landscapes*

## Staff 2010/11

Core staff remained constant at 5.6FTE with consultants used to support core delivery given the loss of the Interpretation and Finance officer posts. Project staff fluctuated between 5.8FTE and 8FTE. Three officers left; Andrew Wright, the Ancient Woodland Restoration Officer, Matt Grose, a GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer and Charles Winchester, Assistant GIS Mapping Officer.

## Core

Co-Directors – Sally Marsh (0.62FTE)/Jason Lavender (0.62FTE)

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 0.8FTE  
(until September 2010)

GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer – Philip Sansum 0.6FTE

GIS Access and Habitat Mapping Officer – Matt Grose 0.4FTE  
(until December 2010)

Weald Forest Ridge Manager – Simon Aguss

Weald Forest Ridge Administrator – Patricia Tiltman 0.8FTE

Weald Forest Ridge Project Officer – James Sharpe

Cultural Heritage Adviser – Matt Pitts

Education Officer – Laura Sweeting 0.8FTE April-June 2010,  
FTE July 2010

Charles Winchester – Assistant GIS Mapping Officer  
(until July 2011)

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High Weald  
Joint Advisory Committee

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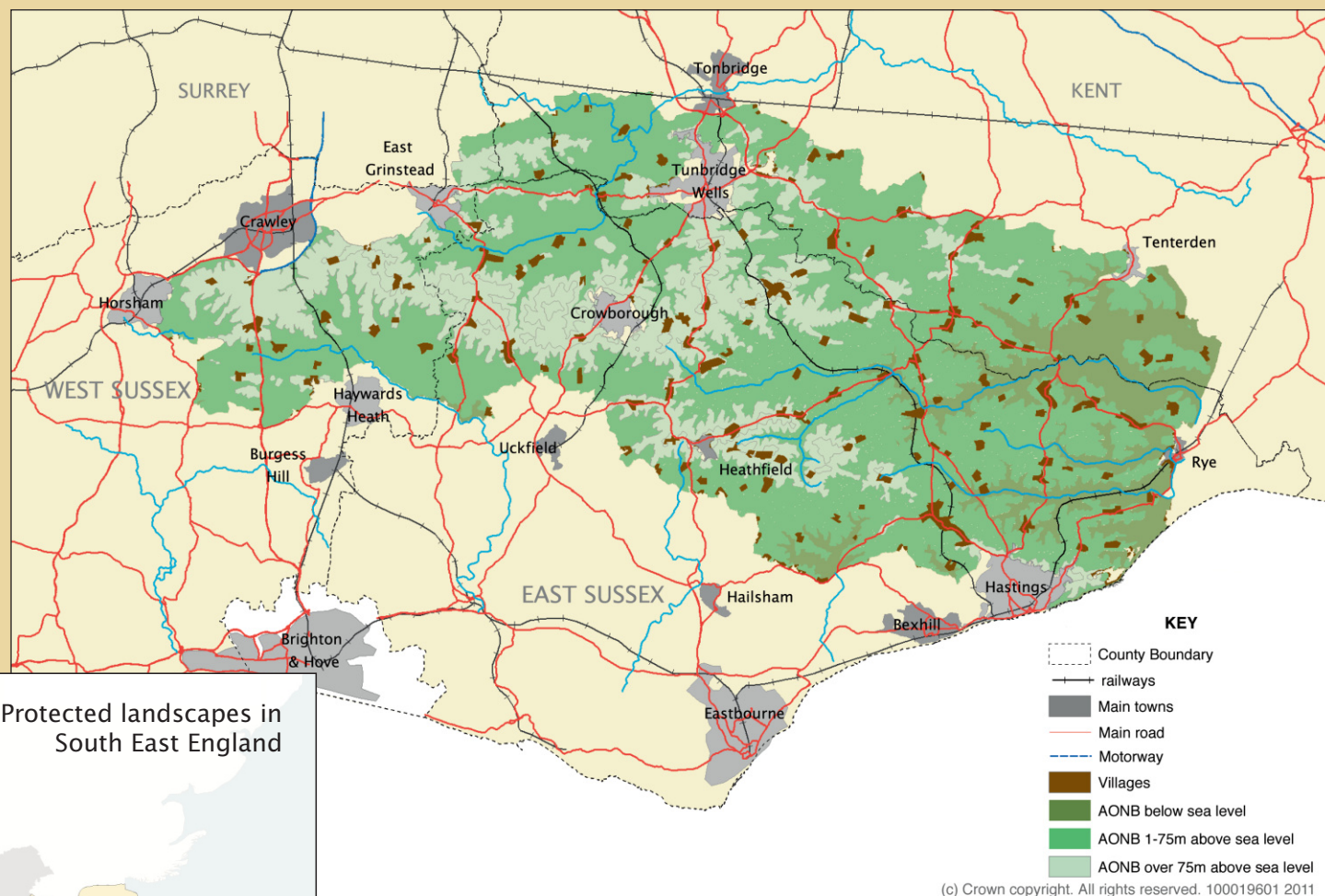




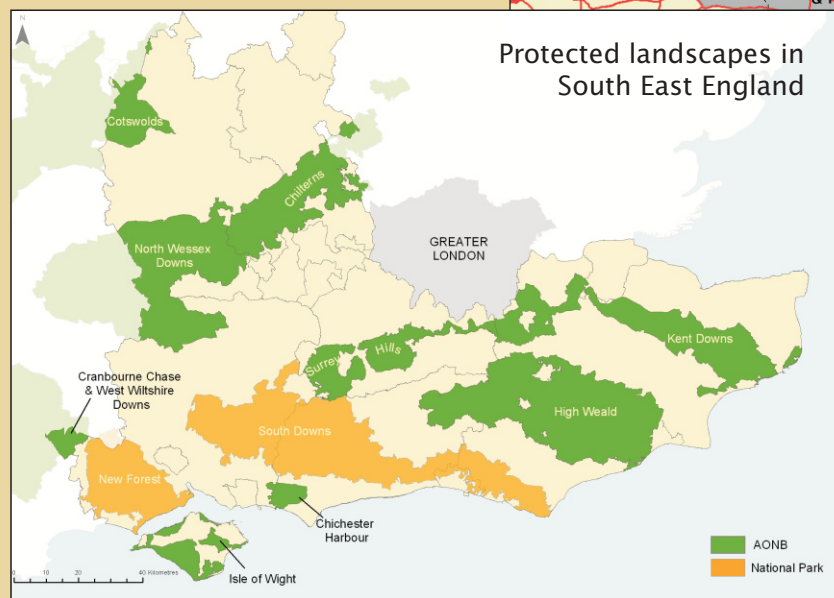
## High Weald AONB Unit

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F: 01580 879499  
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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).



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Facts and figures about the High Weald can be found at  
[www.highweald.org/home/about-aonbs/512-facts-and-figures.html](http://www.highweald.org/home/about-aonbs/512-facts-and-figures.html)