



High Weald Joint Advisory Committee Annual Review 2011-2012

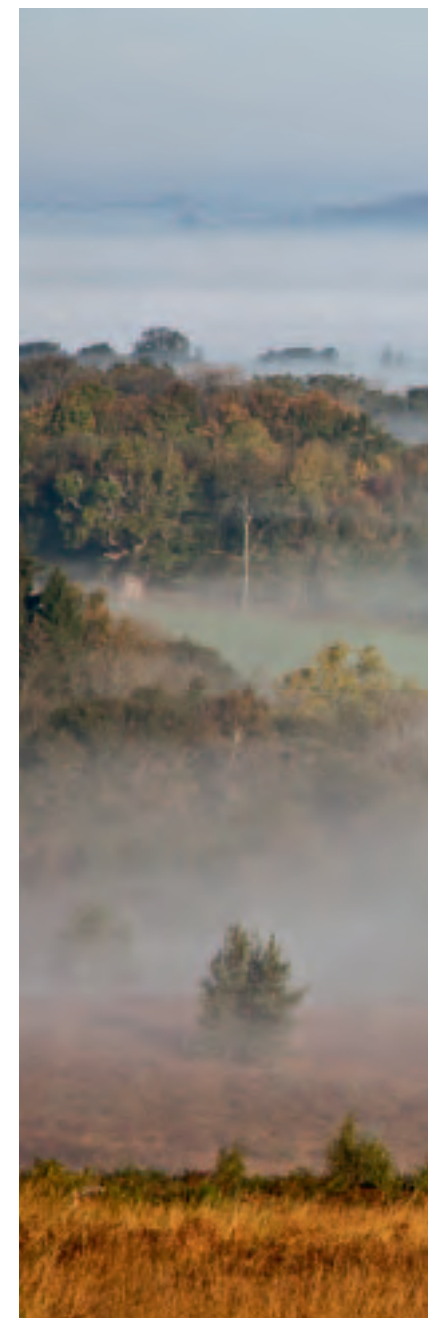
*Working together to care
for one of England's
Finest Landscapes*



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

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Councillor Brian Kentfield,
Chairman of the High Weald
Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)



Foreword

Welcome to the High Weald AONB partnership's annual review. Despite the on-going turbulence created by the financial crisis, I am sure you will agree that this review encapsulates yet another full and very successful year for the AONB Partnership. The following pages provide many highlights showing how the Partnership is delivering real value for money and working with others at both a local and national level for the benefit of the High Weald and those that live, work and visit this unique landscape. And I am proud that this work has been enthusiastically supported by a wide range of individuals, community and interest groups, local and national organizations and, of course, our Committee Members and their officers – my thanks to you all.

The High Weald is a wonderful place cherished by many people and it is rightly celebrated for its breathtaking scenery. But we must remember that landscapes are much more than just the view. Our distinctive landscapes are the result of a close collaboration between people and nature over many generations and it is a relationship underpinned by land-based activities such as agriculture, woodland management, field sports and industry. Working landscapes harbouring responsible land-based activities are vital for the continued management and evolution of our landscapes, for the sustainable provision of our essential needs – food, water, energy, employment, residential and business development – and for the long-term vibrancy of our rural economies.

Like so much of rural England, the High Weald is facing a heady mix of issues – low farm incomes, a decline in the agricultural and woodland workforce, a lack of affordable housing for key land based workers, high land and housing values, a scarcity of yard and workspace for low profit rural businesses, residential



conversion of farm buildings, limited markets for local land based products and services, an increase in non-productive land management, limited public transport services, and a general inability to retain young workers and secure agricultural and forestry employment opportunities for them.

Finding solutions to these issues is a daunting task not made any easier by a widespread and deep-seated misconception that the environment is both unrelated to and at odds with economic prosperity. But if society continues to ignore these problems we not only threaten the unique combination of qualities that make this landscape such a special place but also our ability to harness appropriate social and economic activity to provide our essential needs. Whether you live in or visit the High Weald I invite you to look at the range of work undertaken by the High Weald AONB Partnership this year shows that our glorious English landscapes are, quite literally, our life support systems providing our essential needs, contributing to our national and local identity and inspiring residents and visitors to learn and experience more of what the High Weald has to offer.

Councillor Brian Kentfield

Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)
July 2012





Interpretative sculpture

1

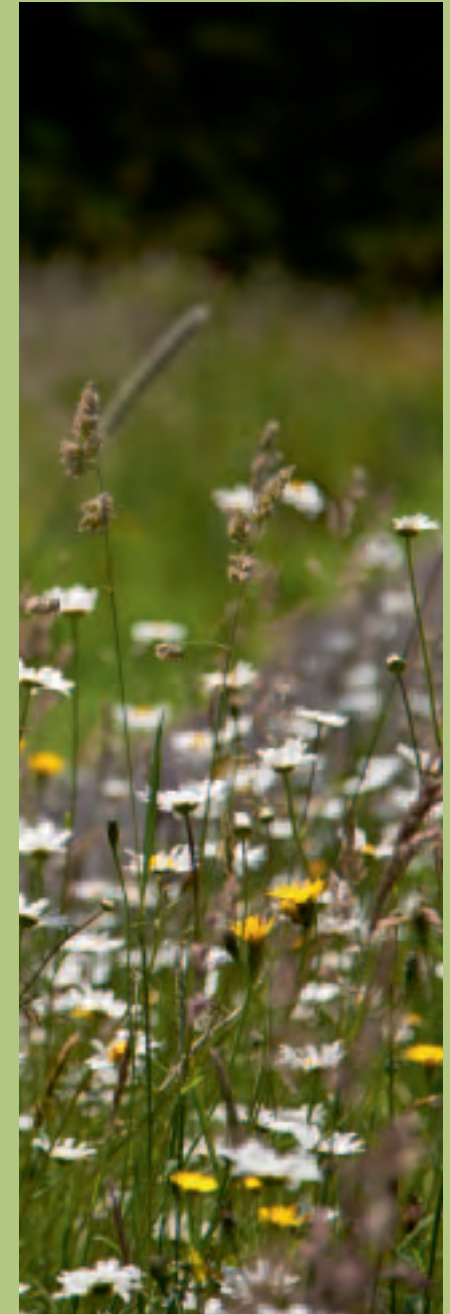
Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the AONB Management Plan

The JAC awarded £496,130 of grant-aid (the majority through the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme) to 35 projects supporting 24 organisations, business and community groups to help achieve AONB Management Plan objectives.

Project highlights included:

- Four new **site-specific heritage plays** created and delivered by The Company: “Warren Broadwater: Man of Mystery” at the RSPB’s Broadwater Warren site; “The Jigsaw Puzzle” at West Hoathly; “Where Be Dragons” at St Leonard’s Forest and “Up in Smoke” on the Spa Valley Railway. All were sold out with over 1134 participants.
- **Ashdown Coppice Week**, which brought together professional and amateur woodland workers to learn more about coppice crafts.
- Launch of **community archaeology resources**: Research, Identification and Survey Toolkits; Cab Cards and the South East Woodland Archaeology Forum website.
- New **interpretations boards and interpretive chainsaw sculptures** for the Forestry Commission’s four Weald Forest Ridge sites.

Woodland archaeology cab cards





Site-specific heritage play

1

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

Coppice Week



- New **archaeology-themed leaflet, video and self-guided walks** for Ashdown Forest, as well as general walks leaflets and interpretation boards.
- **Access, conservation and interpretation projects** at the Woodland Trust's Hargate Forest, celebrated with a public event attended by 200 people.
- A **community volunteer survey** of Rolvenden village's built heritage.
- **Student taster days** to promote the Small Woods Association's 'Work in the Woods' Apprenticeship Scheme.
- Support for a **trainee warden** to manage and interpret Kent Wildlife Trust sites.
- **Clearance** of 15ha of conifer at the RSPB's Broadwater Warren site as part of their heathland restoration programme.

115 landowners received advisory site visits: 79 cultural heritage visits with follow on advisory reports/packs and 36 grassland advisory visits through the High Weald Landscape Trust/Grassland Trust's Weald Meadows Initiative supported by the JAC.

73 schools participated in High Weald Heroes, the JAC's primary school education programme, which ran 168 events, involving over 19,000 pupil sessions.

Project highlights included:

- A further **15 High Weald Hero schools recruited**, bringing the total number of High Weald Heroes schools to 76.
- Production of **15 'Welly Walks'** bringing the total number of school Welly Walks to 46.
- **High Weald Creative Workshop Programme completed** – over 10,000 High Weald themed art, music and drama pupil sessions delivered in 2011/12.
- **School Art Day** involving 100 children in willow weaving, knitting and natural face paints.





Creative art workshop

1

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

- Delivery of the **4th and 5th School Energy Days** involving 8 schools and 240 pupils; the 4th at Ashdown Forest and the 5th hosted for the first time by Buchan Country Park in West Sussex.
- **2,000 children visiting the High Weald stand** to make origami pigs, handle artefacts and put together map jigsaws as part of the South of England Agricultural Society's Connect with the Countryside event.
- **'Twilight' teacher training sessions** held for 31 teachers from 21 schools to promote outdoor learning opportunities at the Ashdown Forest Centre and across the wider High Weald AONB.
- A primary school **exchange visit to France** focused on 'Exploring and Enjoying Local Woodlands'.
- Development and piloting of a **High Weald After-school Club**.

Teacher training





Independent Forestry Panel

2 Championing the High Weald and AONBs

The needs of the High Weald AONB and AONBs were promoted nationally and regionally working with the National Association for AONBs, South East Regional AONB Co-ordinator, the South East region AONB chairs and leaders.

Key activities included:

- Hosting of the **Independent Forestry Panel** visit to the Kent High Weald in September – involving an evening workshop and all day woodland tour.
- Attendance of the **Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) seminar** in support of the NAAONB.
- Meeting with a senior official from DCLG to discuss neighbourhood plans.
- Attendance at the **Game Fair** in support of the NAAONB.
- Attendance of the **NAAONB's annual conference** in Cornwall.

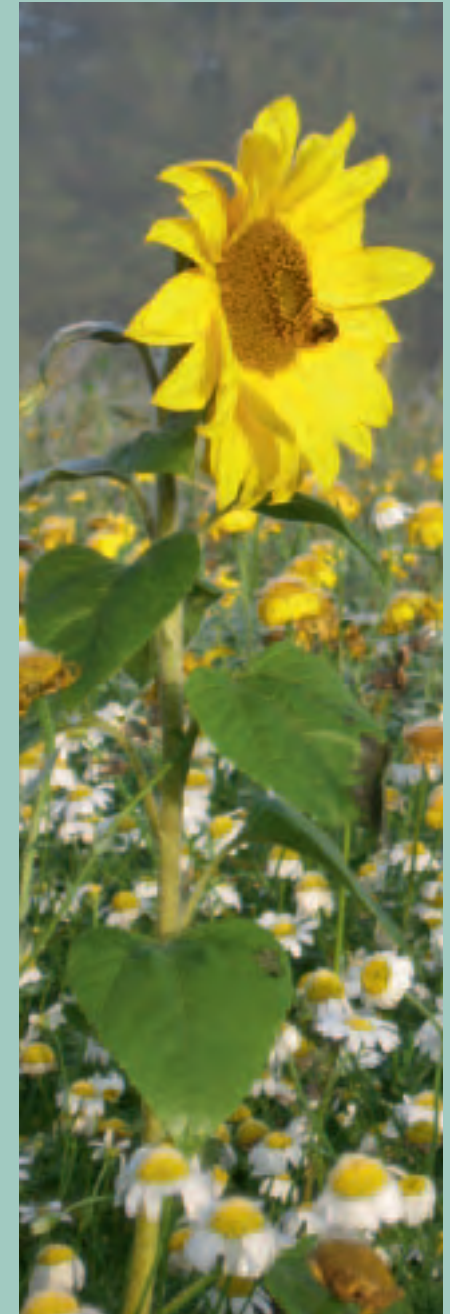
A new regional sustainable tourism project **“Our Land”** was launched.

Highlights included:

- **Project launch** by TV presenter Kate Humble, Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt MP and CEO of Visit England, James Berresford.
- **Recruitment of 28 High Weald businesses** to the Project through partnership working with local tourism consultancy, Acorn Tourism and local online travel agency, Responsible Travel.



“Our Land” project launch





Historical Happenings

2

Championing the High Weald and AONBs

I-Spy High Weald



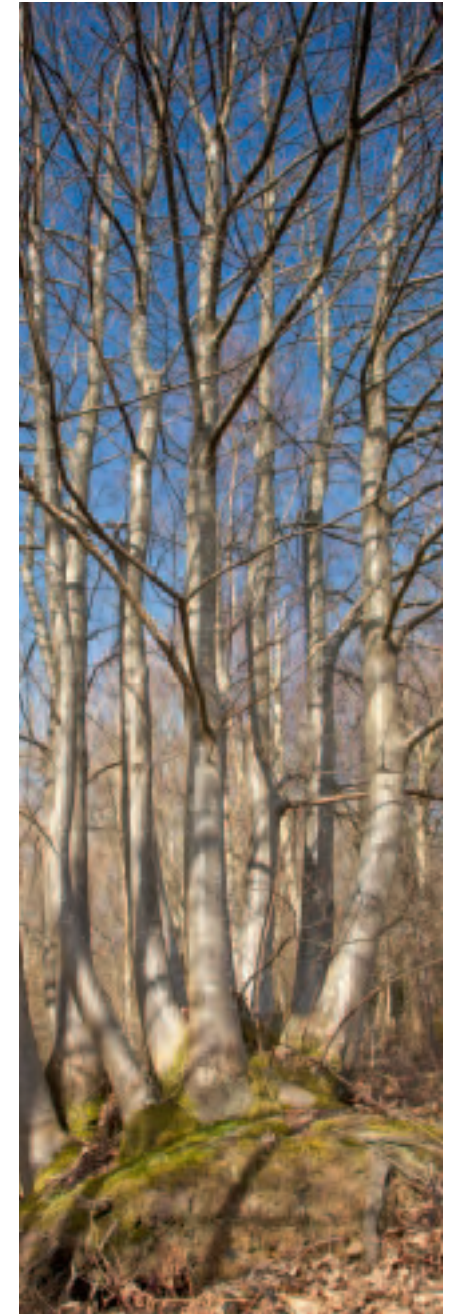
- The **'Love our Land'** campaign encouraging people to post on twitter and facebook what they love – in words, pictures or film – about the South East's Protected Landscapes.
- Delivery of a second **High Weald video workshop** to help accommodation providers produce low cost videos that promote their property and its landscape setting.

5 publications were produced and promoted.

They were:

- **I-Spy High Weald** – the 50th booklet in Michelin's new series of I-Spy booklets, written, edited and illustrated by the High Weald JAC and published through a partnership with Michelin*.
- **"Historical Happenings in the High Weald – From Stone Age to Space Age"** a new booklet primarily aimed at children*.
- An updated and downloadable free **route guide for the High Weald Landscape Trail** to replace the original High Weald Landscape Trail Guidebook published by the JAC in May 1999*.
- A new High Weald **historical character video – Edmund, a Victorian Garden Owner** published on www.highweald.org.
- A downloadable **JAC Annual Review 2010-2011** and printed summary, promoted to 750 people.
- **5** promotional fliers, **3** school newsletters and **4** E-news.
- **5** articles about High Weald projects were published in the media – a highlight was Radio 4's Making History featuring the Weald Forest Ridge Scheme's Historic Environment Awareness Project*.

* *Part-funded by the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme.*





Weald Woodkits

2

Championing the High Weald and AONBs

Ashfest



www.highweald.org was maintained and developed receiving 48,820 visits from 36,000 visitors with an average time on site of 2.36 minutes. Developments included:

- Publication/amendment of 160 pages including **27 news articles**.
- Creation of an interactive **LIDAR map** and guidance to enable easy access to LiDAR images.
- Publication of **2 new local artist interviews** highlighting the landscape as an inspirational source.

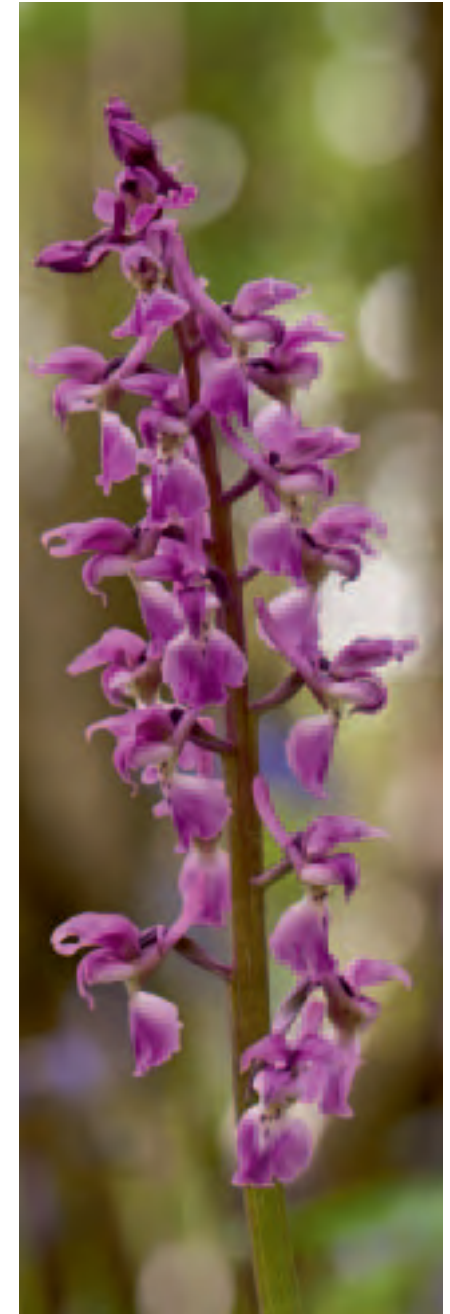
The most popular section was the Out and About section and the top pages were: walking and cycling; High Weald boundary; interactive map; publications section; High Weald Landscape Trail; and the High Weald story.

15 presentations about the High Weald were given, **3** as guided walks and **3** as tours. Audiences included:

- Sustainable Sussex Forum members; CPRE members; a South Downs Board Member; students and tutors from the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology at the University of Kent; Benenden School pupils; Weald Forest Ridge Board members; Heritage Lottery Fund monitors; and Parish Councils.

4 major events were delivered.

- **“Ashfest”** – a colourful, creative and educational festival developed by the JAC, in collaboration with the Conservators of Ashdown Forest, to celebrate the Ashdown Forest which was attended by **400** people.
- **“Weald Woodkits”** – a three-day display at Weald Woodfair stand showcasing local designers’ individual approaches to the manufacture of utilitarian items from local and often undervalued timbers. Log sheds, hen houses, smokers and garden canopies were on display and the event was used to seek feedback from the public on the aesthetics, practicalities and costs of the items.





Councillor Sylvia Tidy attending a Weald Forest Ridge event

2

Championing the High Weald and AONBs



- **“Discovering Sandrock”** – a one day workshop for a diverse audience of **26** people exploring the use of combined surveys – geological; ecological and heritage – to inform sandrock management advice and plans.
- A **Weald Forest Ridge Partnership Forum** bringing together **35** individuals involved in the Landscape Partnership Scheme to review joint working and project delivery experiences.

2 Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) meetings, **3** JAC Management Board meetings, **3** Officers Steering Group meetings and **2** Sustainable Development Fund panel meetings were held. Key outcomes were:

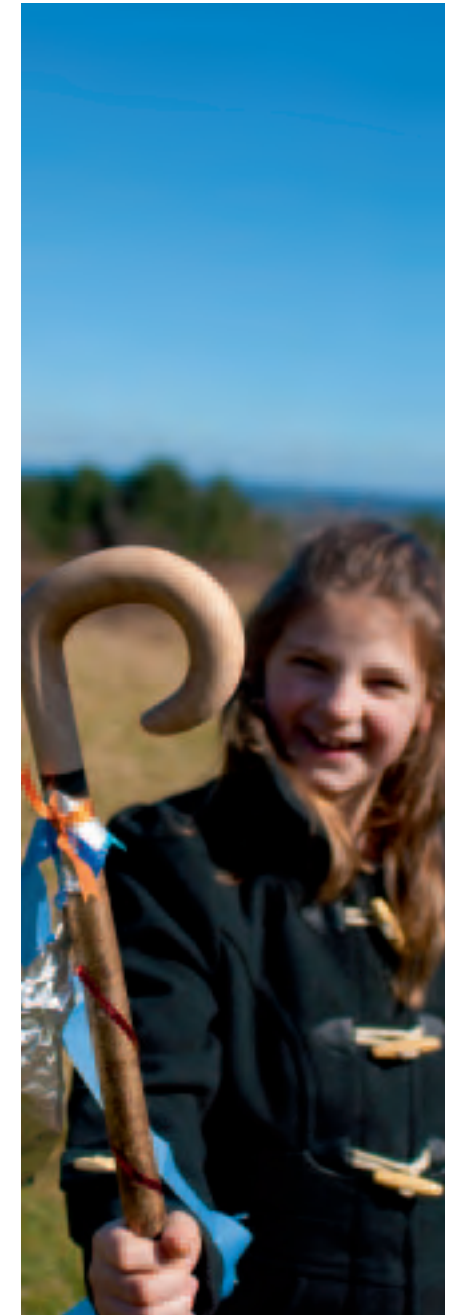
- Election of **Brian Kentfield, Rother District Councillor, as new Chair of the High Weald JAC** and Christopher Hersey, Mid Sussex District Councillor as Vice Chair.
- Agreement to the approach and timetable for the High Weald AONB Management Plan Review.
- Agreement to **savings of £28,700** to balance the JAC’s 2012/13 budget.

3 bids were submitted to support landscape-scale partnership working following consultation with **67** organisations. Bids were made to:

- The Local Nature Partnership Fund
- The Nature Improvement Area Fund and the
- Heritage Lottery Fund’s Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Year 3 delivery of the £3.3 million Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme was successfully co-ordinated by the JAC.

A grant offer of **£50,000** was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the **Living Woods Project**; a 3-year project to engage landowners and communities with their woodlands.





Single-storey dwelling

3

Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the AONB Management Plan

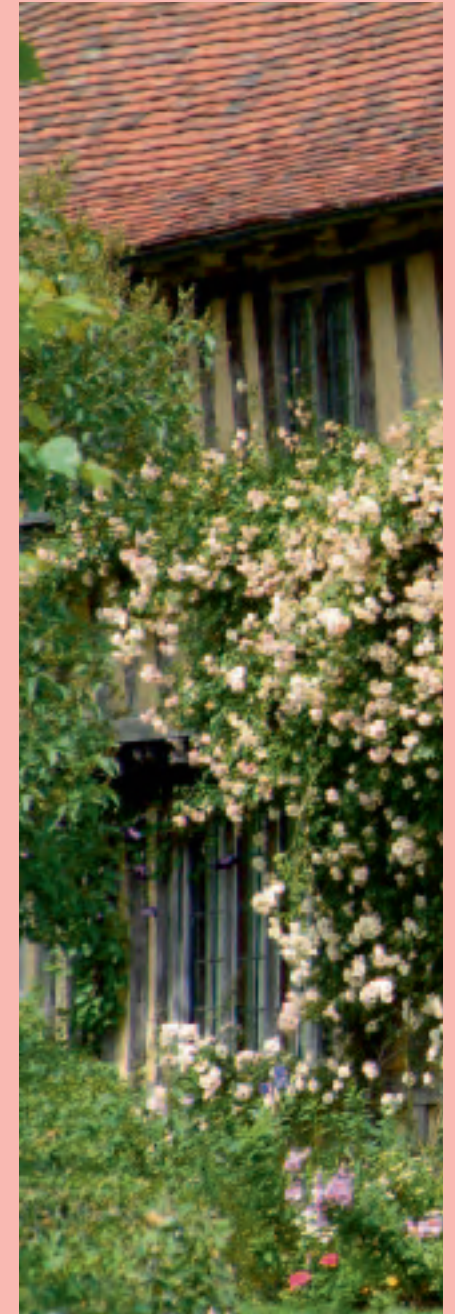
Review of the AONB Management Plan began. Expanded character information and the addition of opportunity maps were identified as areas for improvement.

4 new research reports were produced to provide an evidence base for the AONB Management Plan. The reports were:

- A Summary of **Historic Settlement Development in the High Weald.**
- A Summary of the **High Weald's Historic Commons and Greens.**
- A report on the **High Weald's Geodiversity** – the culmination of a 3-month sabbatical for a geomorphology PhD student.
- A report on **Single Storey, Twentieth-Century Dwellings in the High Weald:** a preliminary investigation of their importance based on the eastern High Weald.

1 pilot research project was initiated: a sandrock research project to explore the value of combined surveys; geological, ecological and heritage.

Harrison's Rocks





Proposed footpath diversion

4

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

Advice was provided to **80** organisations and **10** local partnerships.

Of particular note was:

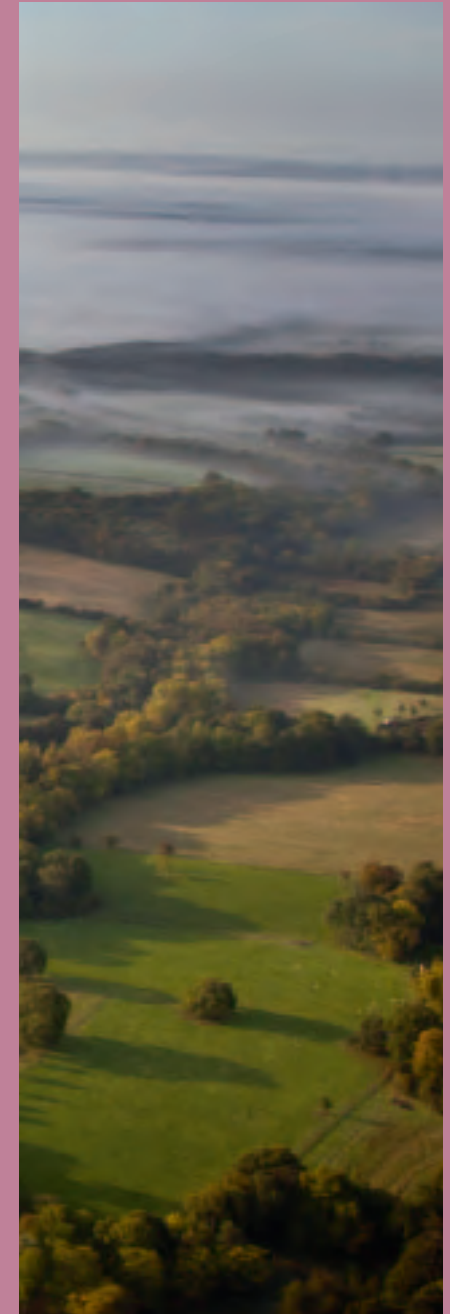
- The Initiation of a RoW project to enable High Weald character assessment to be built into routeway/footpath diversion decisions within East Sussex – advice provided for **5** diversions.
- Discussion with **67** organisations and **112** individuals to identify priorities for landscape-scale projects that deliver AONB Management Plan objectives.

Advice was provided on **62** planning applications, **9** Local Development Frameworks, local policy documents and national policy consultations.

A key area of activity was submitting comments to the NAAONB and Government on:

- National Planning Policy Framework consultation
- Defra's Rural Growth Review
- AONB boundary reviews
- AONB monitoring
- Higher Level Stewardship Targeting and
- National Character Area Statements.

Archaeology survey





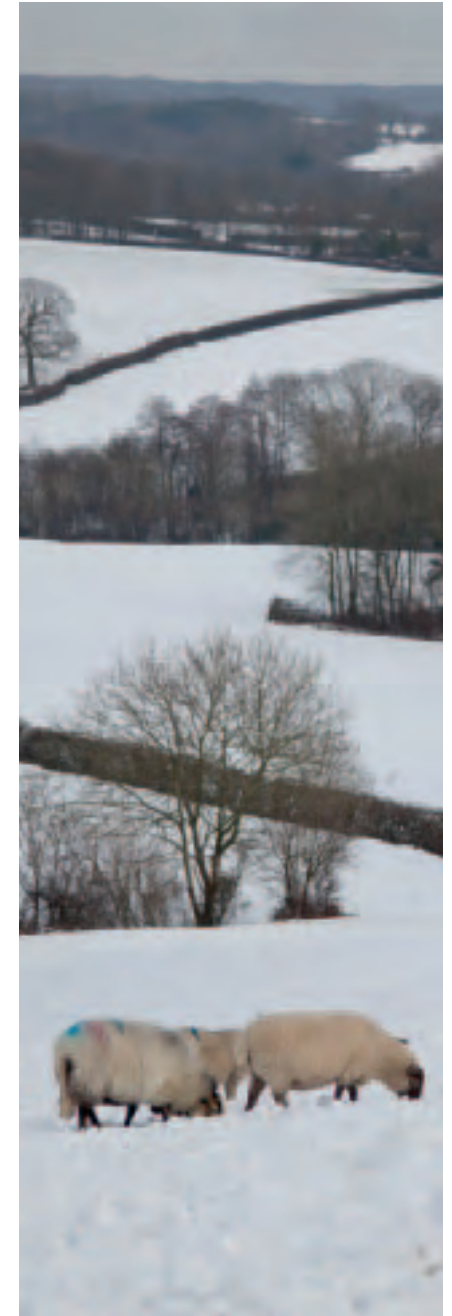
Eco-campsite

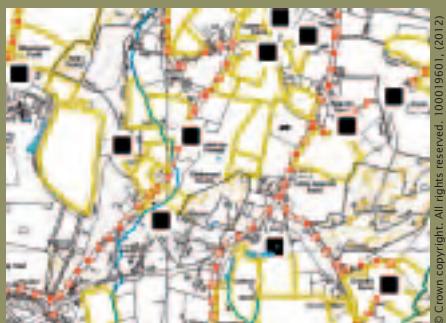
4

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

Significant planning issues, for which advice was provided, were:

- Appeals at Parkgate Farm, Cuckfield, refused partly on AONB grounds
- Significant rural exception site at Forge Field, Penshurst
- Two large housing sites at Ardingly, Standgrove Field and Butchers Field
- Wylands international fishing centre, near Battle
- Eco-camping proposal at Glottenham Castle, Mountfield
- Mole Valley Flood alleviation scheme
- New leisure centre at Heathfield
- Rural exception site at Brenchley
- Tobias School of Art, East Grinstead
- Crowborough Common redevelopment
- Evidence to the Wealden Core Strategy re Heathfield strategic development area.





Character component data

5

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

Data services were provided to **4** organisations. Key activities were:

- Provision of High Weald **character component datasets** to Wealden District Council and Sevenoaks to support Green Infrastructure Strategies.
- The **geo-referencing of all High Weald tithe maps** and supply to Kent County Council's heritage and planning teams.
- Provision of **historic extraction sites** to East Sussex County Council, Kent County Council and Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre.

The JAC's GIS system was developed to meet requests for AONB district and parish data and AONB character component datasets were developed or expanded, in particular:

- A Historic **extraction sites dataset** was created as part of understanding the area's geology character component and the
- Historic **rights of way dataset was expanded.**

The **Ancient Woodland Inventory** for the Surrey area of the High Weald was launched. Work on updating the Inventory for a further 3 districts in Kent began, managed by the JAC.

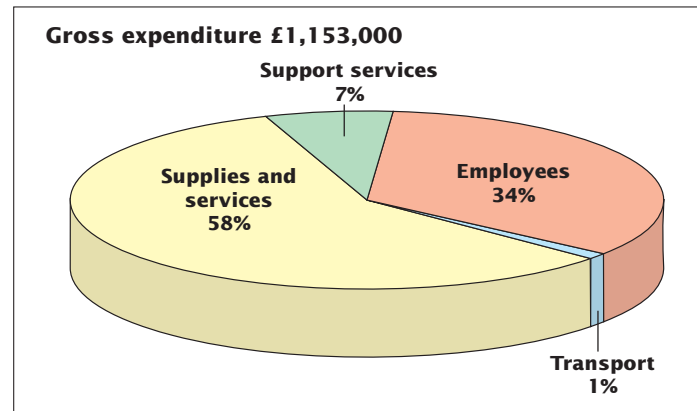
Tithe map



Financial summary

1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012

Total gross expenditure

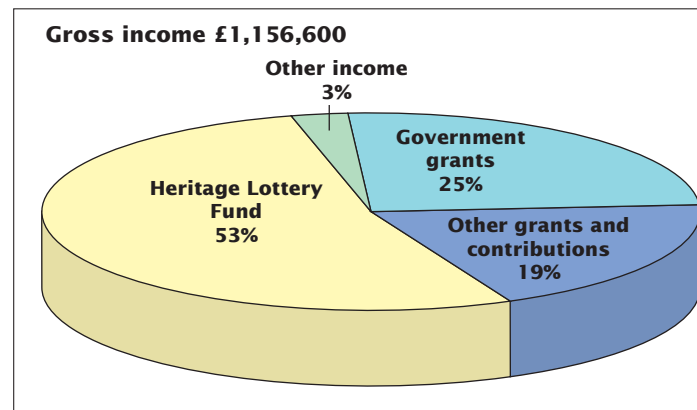


Total gross expenditure

Employees	£391,450
Premises	
Transport	£10,103
Supplies and services	£671,523
Support services	£79,944
Gross expenditure	£1,153,021

Financial summary

Total gross income



Total gross income

Government grants	£284,706
Other grants and contributions	£224,264
Heritage Lottery Fund	£610,800
Other income	£36,863
Gross expenditure	£1,156,634

Other bodies included the INTERREG 2 Seas Programme, the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust.

Expenditure by Project

The final position for the year was a reserve of £85,400, at 31 March 2012, which includes the £2,500 surplus for 2011/12.

High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

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

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.

High Weald
Joint Advisory Committee

The High Weald AONB Unit works on behalf of the JAC to achieve these purposes, guided by the High Weald AONB Management Plan and in accordance with the Unit's 3-year business strategy. An Officer's Steering Group (OSG) advises the Management Board and JAC.

Representatives of the JAC, Management Board, OSG and staff team for 2011/12 were as follows:

Chair

Councillor S Tidy, Councillor B Kentfield (from November 2011)

Vice-chair

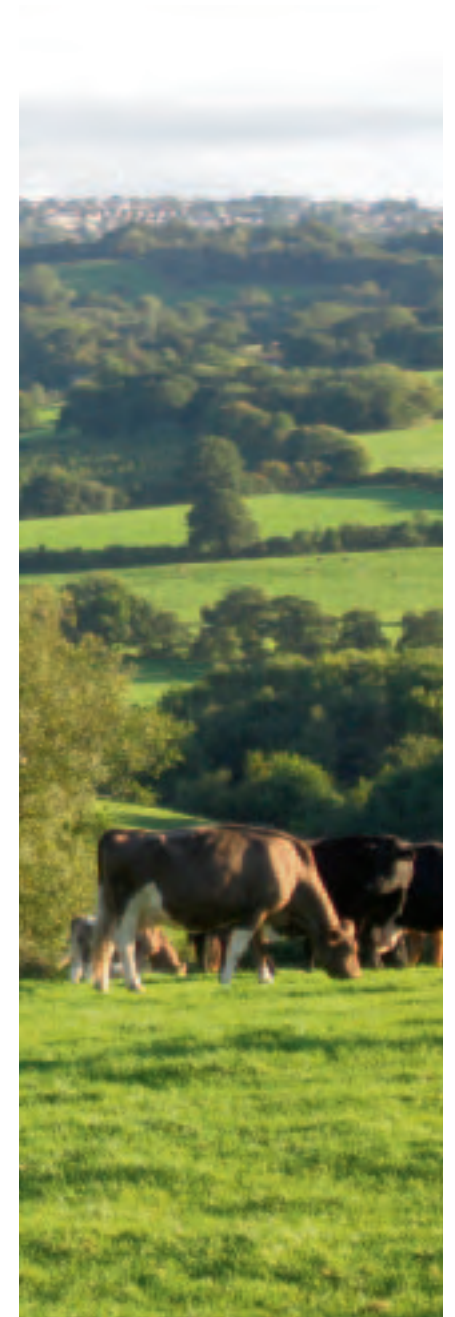
Councillor B Kentfield, Councillor C Hersey (from November 2011)

Officers Steering Group Chair

Paul Newdick

Natural England

Janet Whitman, Nicola Davies (from Summer 2011)



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
David Greenwood

Wealden District Council

Councillor Jonica Fox, Councillor Rowena Moore
(from Summer 2011); 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;
Emma Parnaby (from Summer 2011)

Crawley Borough Council

Councillor S Blake
Tom Nutt

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

No Councillor representative
David Scully

Sevenoaks District Council

Councillor Ms J Davison
Sarah Lloyd

Ashford Borough Council

Councillor R Taylor
Brenda Fazzani

Tonbridge & Malling District Council

Councillor Matthew Balfour
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 M Balfour (from November 2011)
Councillor J Fox (until November 2011)
Natural England representatives

Clerk to the JAC and Board

Simon Bailey

High Weald AONB Unit Staff

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

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

Weald Forest Ridge Manager – Simon Aguss

Weald Forest Ridge Administrator – Patricia Tiltman 0.8FTE

Weald Forest Ridge Project Officer – James Sharpe
(until December 2011)

Cultural Heritage Adviser – Matt Pitts

Education Officer – Laura Sweeting

GIS and Habitat Mapping Officer – Philip Sansum 0.6FTE

High Weald
Joint Advisory Committee

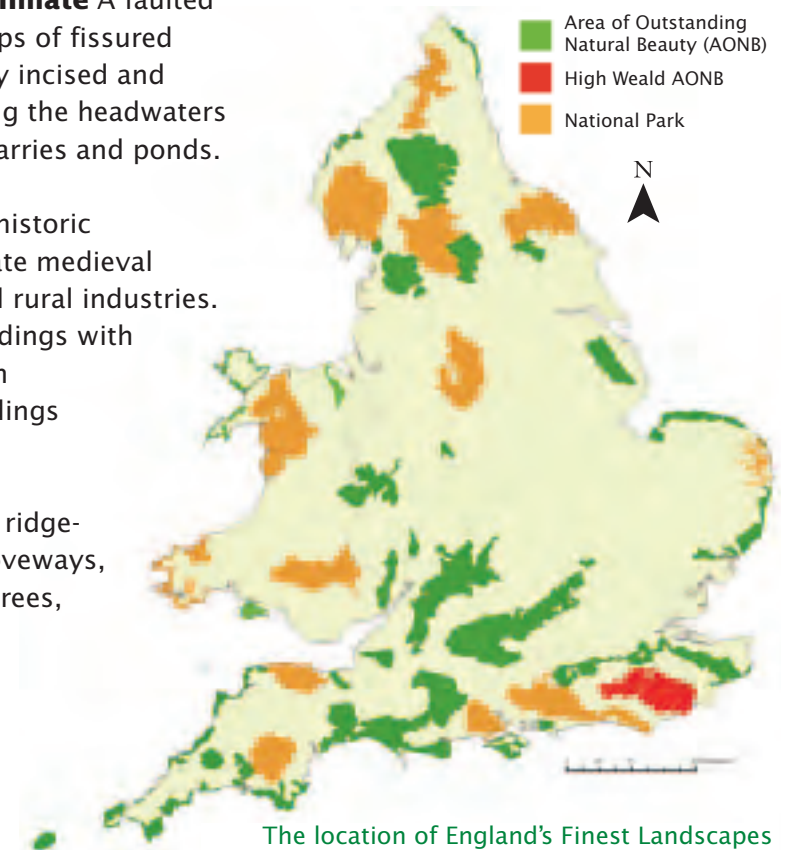




The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The essential character of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was established by the 14th century and the area is therefore 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** A faulted landform of clays and sandstones with outcrops of fissured sandrock and ridges running east-west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill streams forming the headwaters of rivers. A high density of extraction pits, quarries and ponds.
- **Settlement** A very high density of dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets with late medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries. A dominance of traditional timber-framed buildings with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped and an extraordinarily high survival rate of farm buildings dating from the 17th century or earlier.
- **Routeways** Ancient routeways in the form of ridge-top roads and a dense system of radiating droveways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees, wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.





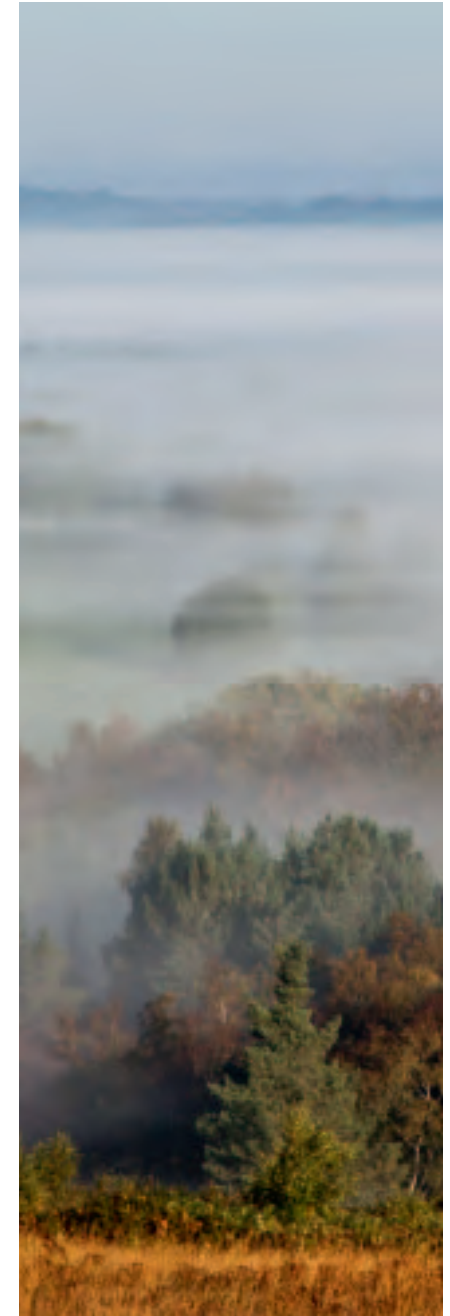
The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



- **Woodland** A great extent of interconnected ancient woods, steep-sided gill woodlands, wooded heaths and shaws, generally in small holdings with extensive archaeology and evidence of long term management.
- **Field and Heath** Small, irregularly-shaped and productive fields bounded by hedgerows and small woodlands predominantly of medieval origin and managed historically as a mosaic of small agricultural holdings typically used for livestock grazing. Distinctive zones of heaths and inned river valleys.

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

Visit **www.highweald.org/learn/about-the-high-weald.html** to watch the High Weald Story and learn more about the five components.





High Weald AONB Unit

Woodland Enterprise Centre
Hastings Road
Flimwell

East Sussex TN5 7PR

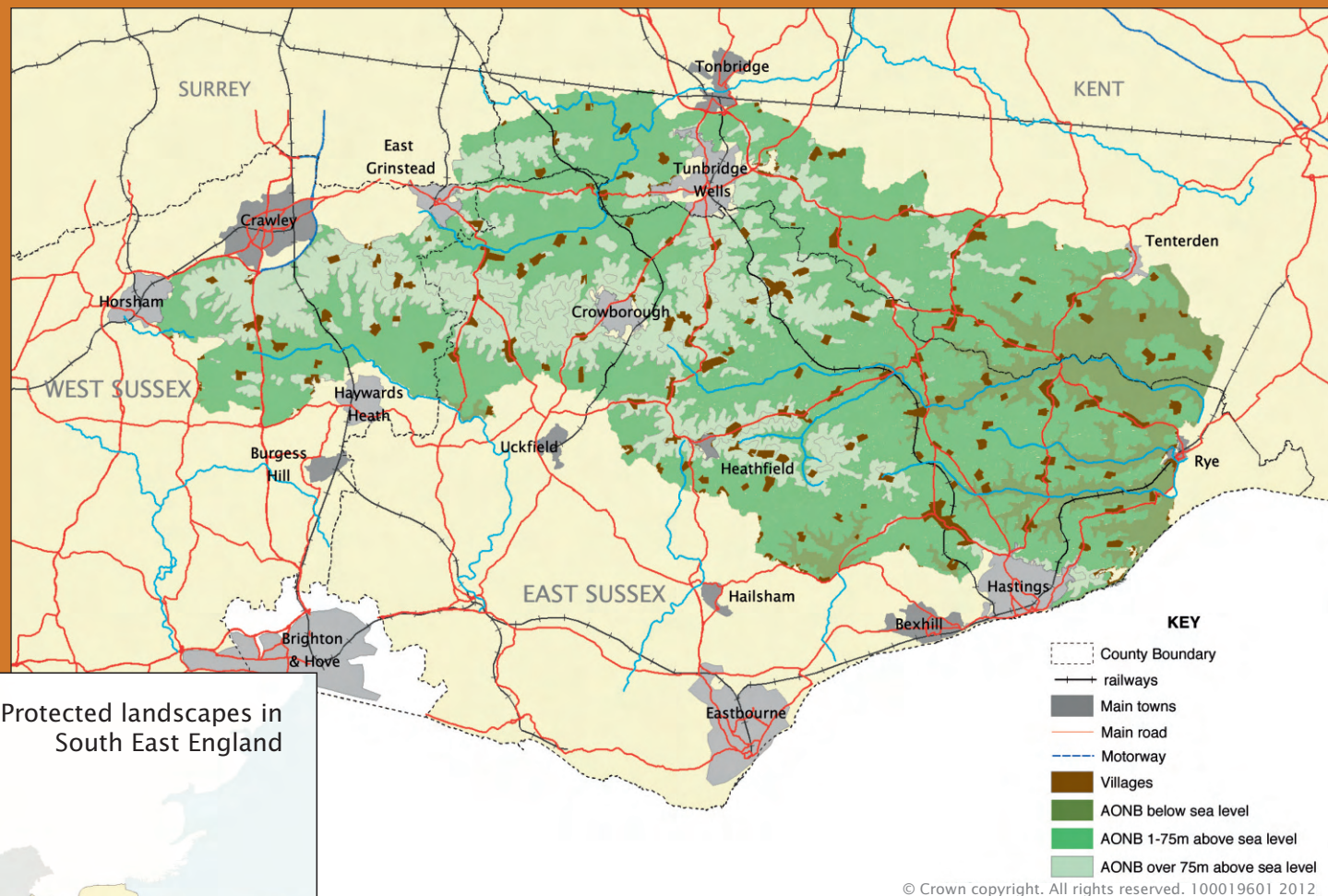
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F: 01580 879499

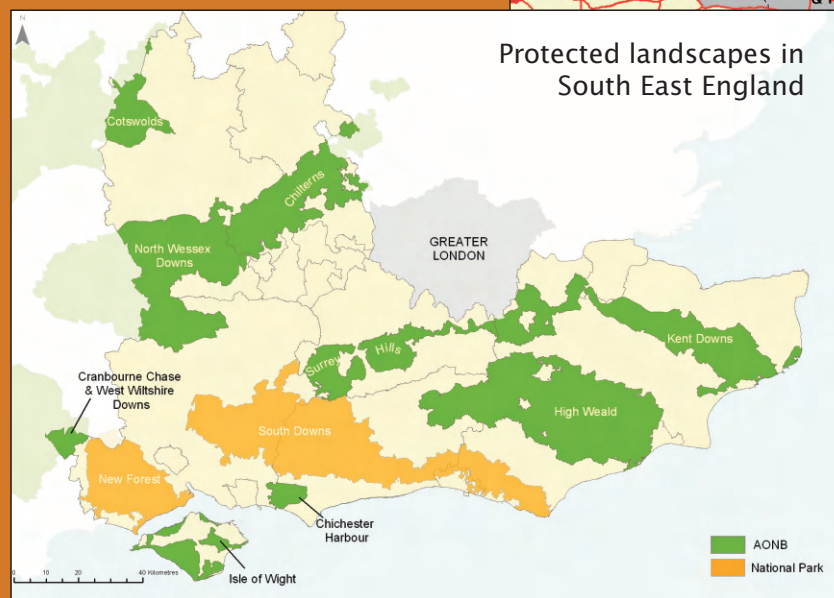
E: info@highweald.org

W: www.highweald.org

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