





High Weald Joint Advisory Committee Annual Review 2017-18

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.

Contents

Foreword	3
1 Preparing, monitoring and reviewing the AONB Management Plan	5
2 Co-ordinating action and enabling delivery of the AONB Management Plan	9
3 Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes	13
Financial summary	17
High Weald Joint Advisory Committee	18
The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	21



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

Foreword

Welcome to the High Weald AONB Partnership's Annual Review for 2017/2018. It has been a year of great successes but also great change, supported as ever by the determined work of our small but dedicated team.

One of the biggest challenges is that of new development. A review of housing in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, released in November and co-authored by the National Association of AONBs and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), revealed that the High Weald is under greater development pressure than any other AONB in the country.

It is crucial that we rise to this challenge, and we continue our role in advising local and national government on how best to ensure they meet their statutory obligations to conserve and enhance the AONB. We are also working with a number of partners to produce practical tools to help protect our historic landscape. This year saw the publication of our High Weald Colour Study, which is already being used on a number of building projects, and our High Weald Design Guidance will launch next year.

We continue to be successful in securing sources of non-Government support for the landscape. The Sussex Lund programme and National Grid Visual Improvement Project are welcome private and charitable contributions in a time of financial uncertainty.

The launch of the Government's 25-Year Environment Strategy has highlighted what the AONB Partnership has known for some time – namely the sheer value of 'the outdoors' to both physical and mental well-being. As this message spreads through the media, it is extremely satisfying to see our highly-valued High Weald Heroes education programme going from strength to strength.















































Despite pressure to turn inwards, the High Weald AONB Partnership recognises that the need for partnership working is greater than ever. We are building a number of new partnerships and developing existing ones to support delivery; our Farm Cluster is thriving, we are working with the Ramblers on the first ever High Weald Walking Festival, and are leading a new Weald Meadows Group to help protect this threatened habitat.

We welcome the changes to our small team over the last twelve months, and I would like to extend my personal thanks to all those who have worked so hard to ensure success. The High Weald AONB Partnership remains committed, expert and able to promote the needs of the area - particularly those of our landbased businesses as we approach BREXIT.

Foreword

Councillor Sylvia Tidy

Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee



















































14 neighbourhood planning processes were supported

Great Crested Newt consultation



1 Providing guidance and producing the AONB Management Plan

Advice was provided on 31 policy documents and 104 development proposals with a potential impact on the High Weald AONB.

- 14 local policy consultations and engagement events with Hastings; Horsham; Tunbridge Wells; Tandridge; Sevenoaks; Ashford; Mid Sussex; and West Sussex including input to supporting evidence documents.
- 14 neighbourhood plan consultations and engagement events with: Cranbrook & Sissinghurst; Lamberhurst; Herstmonceux; Benenden; Ticehurst; Fairlight; Burwash; Slaugham; Horsted Keynes; Crowhurst; Brenchley and Matfield; Rolvenden; and Rother Neighbourhood Planning Forum. This included two presentations (80 attendees); providing four sets of AONB character data and maps and a historical note on a settlement, as well as commenting on various drafts of the plans.
- 9 pre-application discussions and consultations including 4 major housing developments; a waste disposal operation; additional car parking proposals for National Trust properties; a major school development; an eco-camping proposal and a Paragraph 55 house (justification based on exceptional design).





High Weald Colour Study

Producing guidance and developing Management Plan evidence

Historic fields map identifying medieval fields (in brown)



- **78 local authority planning application consultations** (43 major i.e. over 10 homes, and 35 minor) were responded to, most of which were for housing. Other applications included major commercial premises; new sporting and recreational facilities; equestrian development; and eco-camping proposals.
- **2 planning appeals** where evidence was contributed to local authority cases for informal hearings.
- **9 footpath diversion consultations** of which 2 were amended or withdrawn following advice.
- 10 other site-specific planning enquiries and consultations including commenting on environmental impact assessments for Rother Valley Railway; landraising at Sparks Farm Golf Course, Cuckfield; construction of tracks at Newlands and Manywaters, Ardingly; and a proposal to plant new woodland at Great Thorndean Farm, Warninglid.
- 3 other consultations including: Wealden District Council's Strategic Alternative Greenspace at Crowborough; Natural England's Great Crested Newt Development Mitigation Project; and DCLG's consultation on housing numbers (on behalf of NAAONB).
- 3 non-planning consultations including: the Heritage Lottery Fund's consultation on their Strategic Framework 2019 to 2024; Gatwick Greenspace Business Plan consultation and Kent High Weald Partnership Business Plan.

The High Weald Environmental Colour Assessment was produced, 6 training events were held, and each of the area's 100 parishes were provided with updated landscape character map sets.

■ The **High Weald Environmental Colour Assessment** or 'Colour Study' was produced; documenting existing colours in the landscape and providing advice on which colours and materials should be used to help integrate development into the High Weald.





Management Plan workshop

Producing guidance and developing Management Plan evidence

Veteran tree at Dallington



- 6 local authority liaison and training events were held; including 3 workshops on the Colour Study (30 attendees); 2 meetings about development management issues with 5 Wealden DC planning officers; and a High Weald AONB character training event with 10 Mid Sussex DC planning officers.
- A historic fields dataset was created; involving extracting and synthesising data from county historic landscape character datasets.
- **Parish AONB character map sets** were updated with the new historic fields dataset and published online for each of the 100 parishes wholly, or partly, in the AONB.
- The High Weald Legislation and Planning Policy Advice Note was updated.
- A contract to produce a High Weald Design Guide was let and a consultation draft produced.

High Weald AONB Management Plan activity focused on production of the Draft Plan 2019-2024 and filling gaps in the Plan's evidence base.

- The Draft AONB Management Plan 2019-2014 and 3 supporting documents (Strategic Assessment report, Performance and Condition Monitoring report and the Equal Opportunities report) were produced.
- 5 consultation events, attended by 70 people, provided information on past achievements; key issues; and action needed.
- A public survey was completed by 294 people: providing insight on what aspects of the High Weald they find beautiful; how they like to enjoy the area; their perception of threats; and desired improvements.

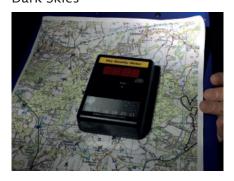




A report on the High Weald's ancient routeways was produced

Producing guidance and developing Management Plan evidence

Light Meters were purchased to enable evidence gathering for Dark Skies



- A report on the function, history and character of the area's historic routeways was produced with a draft assessment framework to enable their consideration in development proposals.
- A survey of veteran trees across 480ha of Dallington Forest was completed; recording 1014 individual trees and 15 groups of trees, and suggesting their importance within the landscape is under-recognised.
- **AONB facts and figures** were updated and expanded to inform the management plan and other consultations.
- A methodology for creating High Weald dark sky maps and gathering dark skies data by individuals was created.

Advice was provided to a further 28 organisations and local partnerships, predominately through partnership or steering group membership.

Action in Rural Sussex 1 'Future of Rural Business' workshop: CPRE 1 'Beauty Betrayed' seminar; Crane Valley Land Trust 5 meetings; Crowborough Festival Association 2 meetings; **Defra** 1 meeting; **Eastern Rother Water Catchment Partnership** 1 meeting; **Forestry Commission** 2 meetings; Glynde Estate 1 meeting; Heritage Lottery Fund 2 meetings; High Weald Network 4 meetings; Historic England 1 meeting; Kent High Weald Partnership Steering Group 1 meeting; Kent Nature Partnership Management Group 9 meetings; Knepp Castle Wildland Advisory Group 1 meeting; Leader **Partnerships** 9 meetings: 5 with Wealden and Rother Rural Partnership Executive Board; 4 with the Central Sussex Local Action Group; Lund Trust 3 meetings; National Trust 2 meetings; Natural England 6 meetings; NFU 2 meetings; The Ramblers 3 meetings; **RSPB** 1 meeting; **South Downs National Park Authority** 2 meetings: **Strutt and Parker** 1 meeting: **Sussex** Local Nature Partnership 2 meetings; Sussex Records Centre 3 meetings; West Sussex Local Access Forum 2 meetings; Woodland Trust Low Weald Steering Group 4 meetings.





'On Top of the Weald' Festival

Punnetts Town Primary School children with their John Muir Award certificates



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

Community Outreach Programme

24 primary schools participated in High Weald Heroes (HWH), the JAC's school education programme, with 72 events involving over 3120 learning sessions.

Activities included:

- Developing and piloting a John Muir/High Weald Heroes Award Scheme working with two schools (2 groups of 15 pupils).
- Delivery of the 'Lost World' arts and science school programme to support the Crowborough Community Festival Association's 'On Top of the Weald' Festival.
- Creating 2 new school Welly Walk routes and publishing 2 Welly Walk leaflets.
- 8 school assemblies involving 1300 children.
- **35 outdoor workshops/walks** including High Weald introductory walk (10), John Muir activity walks (9), Welly Walk development and mapping walk (7), Lost World Quest (3), Anglo-Saxon (3), Science (2) and Habitats and evolution (1), involving 917 children.
- **29 indoor workshops**; pre-history and Stone Age (8), High Weald history (7), Rocks and fossils (2), Habitats (1), Mapping (5)





St Mary's Primary School on a Lost World Adventure Quest

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

All Saints' & St Richard's C of E Primary School on a wholeschool Welly Walk



and Art and fossil tile workshops (6), involving 893 individual learning sessions.

- Creation of 4 new education resources: Lost World Education Pack; High Weald John Muir Package; 7 school High Weald spotter sheets; and the High Weald Meadows Assembly.
- 12 staff advisory sessions involving 47 adults with circulation of 3 Enews to all 85 HWH schools.

One further education student was given the opportunity to experience the Partnership's work and provided invaluable assistance with its projects.

Eleanor Wilding, a BSc Geography graduate from Brighton University, was recruited as a GIS intern in July 2017.

Land Management Programme

The High Weald Land Management Enhancement Programme (launched in 2016) continued to evolve with a focus on enabling landowners to develop and implement projects supported by a range of funding mechanisms. Officers gave site-specific advice to 125 landowners, ran 8 events and enabled 47 landscape restoration projects.

Sussex Lund: the grant scheme of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin

- **Grant awards of £165,000** were made by the Sussex Lund Grants Panel for **29 projects**; including removal of invasive species from small community woodlands; creation of new access paths; wildflower meadow creation; hedge-laying and restoration; restoration of a natural floodplain; and equipment purchase and training for volunteer groups managing woods and heaths.
- **14 projects were successfully completed** by 31 March 2018.





Hedge management information board

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

Hedge planting under National Grid power lines



- A celebration event was held at Wadhurst Park attended by successful scheme applicants and others.
- 35 advisory site visits and 38 advisory calls and emails were provided to help project development and delivery.

Energy Company initiatives to enhance beauty spots in AONBs and National Parks

- Grant awards of £165,266 were made and accepted by 10 landowners for 11 boundary planting and restoration projects within the vicinity of the National Grid power lines at the eastern end of the AONB.
- Two, 11kv power line undergrounding projects with stage 1 approval from a regional steering group (Sheffield Park Garden estate and Bedgebury Pinetum and Forest) were developed working with UK Power Networks.

Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster

- 7 training events were delivered: Farmland Pollinators walk and talk (10 attendees); Managing Grassland for Wildflowers walk and talk (12); Grassland Species Identification workshop (7); Deer Management workshop (20); Deer Impact Assessment walk and talk (13); Dark skies (22) and a Hedge management walk and talk (24).
- The Group grew from **23 members to 37 members**: with many benefiting from the Countryside Stewardship points uplift through their membership.
- In partnership with the Natural England Field Unit 45 fields
 (c86ha) were surveyed for their grassland interest and
 reports with management recommendations circulated to 15
 landowners.
- **4 newsletters** were produced; and 10 organisations engaged in helping the Cluster members achieve their ambitions.





Sussex Lund project at Sherwood Lake in Tunbridge Wells

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

Wildflower ID workshop near Heathfield



Rother Water Catchment Partnership

- 1 wetland project was implemented: installation of a PapaPump cattle drinking system to enhance a water quality on the River Dudwell; and a further 10 potential wetland projects identified.
- A mid-term review of the Water Catchment Partnership plan
 2013 2023 was undertaken and the plan updated.

General including the Restocking the Weald Initiative

- 21 general advisory site visits were provided for landowners across the High Weald.
- A 'Restocking the Weald' event was run in partnership with CLA and land agents, CLM and Batcheller Monkhouse, attended by 80 people.
- 6 landowner/grazier relationships were supported and a new partnership with a national organisation, Fresh Start Land Enterprises initiated to provide future support.

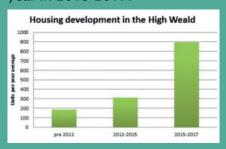




Outstanding week 16-24th September 201

NAAONB Outstanding Week took place in September

The High Weald AONB saw the largest rise in housing development of all AONBs – an average 311 units per year in 2012-2015 to 895 units per year in 2015-2017.



3 Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes

Joint working between AONB Partnership members was achieved through 18 meetings and related follow-up activities.

Key activities included:

- 2 Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) meetings and 3
 Management Board meetings to agree reports, the
 Management Plan Review process and, JAC budget 18/19 and organisational risks and mitigation.
- **14 working group meetings:** Officers Steering Group (3); Design Group (7); Restocking the Weald Group (1); High Weald Land Management Advisers (1) and Weald Meadows Group (2).
- 3 'Introduction to the High Weald' meetings for new JAC members.

The value of the High Weald AONB and other protected landscapes were promoted nationally and regionally working with the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB), the South East Protected Landscapes (SEPL) and national and regional task groups.

Key activities included:

- Attendance of the NAAONB AGM and regional Protected Landscape Chairman's meeting.
- Attendance at the NAAONB's annual conference in Winchester: with 3 presentations/ workshops led by High Weald AONB staff and the Farming – the Next Generation conference in Derbyshire.





Website homepage

Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes

High Weald team members presented at the NAAONB conference

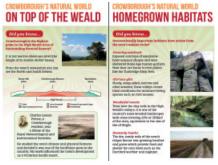


- 1 NAAONB Lead Officers meeting contributing to the Beyond CAP 'offer' to Defra and 3 South East and East Lead Officer meetings.
- 2 SEEPL/NAAONB Planning Officer meetings enabling joint research between CRPE and the NAAONB highlighting the drastic rise in housing applications and approvals within England's AONBs.
- 1 NAAONB Communication Officer meeting resulting in a national PR plan and contributions to joint AONB PR such as #Outstandinghour and #Outstandingweek.
- 3 working groups: the Landscape Institute's working group to develop membership suited for protected landscape professionals; Celebrating Ash Trees; and the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- Sponsorship and assessment of the Taste of Kent Countryside Award, working jointly with the Kent Downs AONB Partnership and Produced in Kent.

General promotion of the area was achieved through:

- 9 enews sent to an average of 2,250 contacts per mailout, 13 media releases sent to an average of 50 media contacts with 30 articles and blog posts published and publication of 19 website news pages. Facebook 'likes' have increased by 34% year on year (now at 516 likes), with Twitter followers rising 23% respectively (now at 2,105 followers).
- Maintenance of www.highweald.org with 117,677 user sessions by 93,560 users and an average time on site of 2.05 minutes. The 5 most-visited pages were: Walking, the High Weald Landscape Trail, Walks, High Weald boundary and Attractions.
- 2 talks to community groups including Seaford Natural History Society and Hastings 8 O'Clock Club; and 2 field trips for the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology and Human Ecology and Environmental Science undergraduates at Kent University.





Five 'Lost World' banners were produced to promote Crowborough's natural heritage

3

Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes

National Grid power lines crossing the landscape



- Creation and launch of www.highwealdwalks.org to promote the first ever High Weald Walks Festival, a partnership project with the Ramblers, planned for September 2018.
- Production of 5 x Lost World banners: designed to educate Crowborough residents about the area's natural heritage.
- Production and distribution of A2-sized hedge management information boards: designed to educate passers-by about hedge laying and coppicing.
- Production and distribution of the High Weald Partnership's
 Annual Review 2016-17.
- Loan of light meters to individuals and communities interested in **dark skies surveys**.

Resources for delivering AONB Management Plan objectives were secured through 7 contracts/grant awards and 4 proposals were submitted to enable activities in 2017/18.

- A grant award of £264,456 for the JAC Partnership's activities 2017/18 was confirmed by **Defra**.
- A contribution of £190,000 was made by the Lund Trust for developing, promoting and administering Sussex Lund, the grant scheme of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin.
- National Grid's Visual Impact Assessment Landscape Enhancement Initiative paid the year one grant (£80,000 of a total offer of £199,860) towards the Beautiful Boundaries project.
- An annual grant of £21,500 was secured for the operation of the Upper Rother and Dudwell Landowner Group 2017/18 under a 5-year contract with Natural England through their Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund.
- A sum of £9,600 was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Sharing Heritage programme for the Crowborough Community Festival Association's first 'On Top of the Weald' Festival.



 A grant award of £2,000 was made by Gatwick Airport Community Trust Fund to develop two new Welly Walks through the JAC's Education Programme.

Proposals were made to:

- Defra's **Protected Landscapes Fund** for the 2018-2019 contribution to the JAC's work.
- Prince's Countryside Trust for a grant of £48,650 towards the Restocking the Weald project (unsuccessful).
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Planning Delivery Fund: an expression of interest to the Design Quality Fund to enable development of the High Weald Design Guide and its communication (unsuccessful).
- National Grid's Visual Impact Assessment Landscape
 Enhancement Initiative: expressions of interest for a second boundary restoration project and a woodland restoration project (grant request of £322,500 towards project costs of £430,000).

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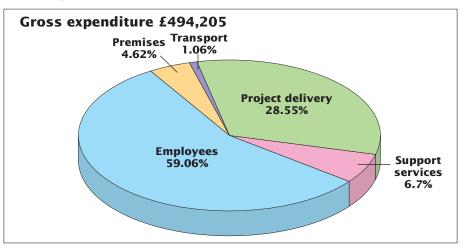
Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes



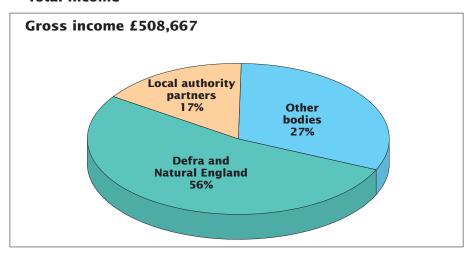
Financial summary

1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

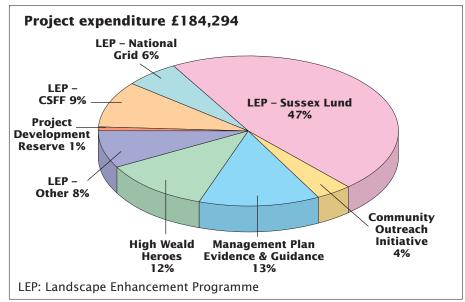
Total expenditure



Total income



Expenditure by project



The final position for the year was a reserve of £139,460 at 31 March 2018, which includes the £14,460 surplus for 2017/18.

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.

The High Weald staff team works on behalf of the JAC to achieve these purposes, guided by the High Weald AONB Management Plan and in accordance with a 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 2017/18 were as follows:

Joint Advisory Committee and Officer's Steering Group

Chairman

Mrs J Davison Councillor Mrs S Tidy (from November 2017)

Vice-chairman

Councillor B Kentfield

Officer's Steering Group Chairman

David Marlow
David Greenwood (from September 2017)

High Weald Joint Advisory Committee



High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

Natural England

Laura Newland

East Sussex County Council

Councillor Mrs S Tidy Virginia Pullan

West Sussex County Council

Councillor B Acraman

Tim Dyer

Kent County Council

Councillor M Balfour Elizabeth Milne

Surrey County Council

Councillor M Sydney

Councillor Mrs Lesley Steeds (from September 2017)

David Greenwood

Wealden District Council

Councillor Mrs R Moore

Natalie Bumpus

Rother District Council

Councillor B Kentfield

David Marlow

Diane Russell (from September 2017)

Hastings Borough Council

Councillor Richard Street

Murray Davidson

Mid Sussex District Council

Councillor C Hersey Jennifer Hollingum

Horsham District Council

Councillor Mrs E Kitchen

Councillor A Lee (from May 2017)

Vacant

Crawley Borough Council

Councillor I Irving

Tom Nutt

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Councillor Mrs J Soyke

David Scully

Sevenoaks District Council

Mrs J Davison

Councillor M Dickens (from November 2017)

Helen French

Ashford Borough Council

Councillor A Pickering

Matthew Nouch

Tonbridge & Malling District Council Councillor H Rogers

Jenny Knowles

Tandridge District Council

Councillor Mrs L Lockwood

Sarah Thompson

JAC Co-optees

Recreation/Leisure

Mrs A Field, Forestry Commission

Community/Economy

Mr J Leggett, Action in Rural Sussex

Landowners

Mr R Edwards, Country Land and Business Association

Farming

Mr W White, National Farmers Union

Community

Mrs J Davison (from November 2017)

JAC Management Board

Mrs I Davison

Councillor Mrs S Tidy

Councillor B Acraman

Councillor M Balfour

Councillor C Hersey

Councillor B Kentfield

Councillor R Moore

Laura Newland

Clerk to the JAC

Samantha Nicholas

Treasurer to the JAC

Mark Whiffin

Jill Fisher (from January 2018)

High Weald AONB Staff Team

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

The partnership delivered its 2017/18 work programme with a staff team averaging 6.7 FTEs.

Core

Co-Directors – Sally Marsh (0.5FTE)/Jason Lavender (0.62FTE)
Business Manager – Gerry Sherwin (0.8FTE)
Planning Adviser – Claire Tester (0.8FTE)
Research Officer – Charles Winchester
(1FTE) to September 2017
Team Support Officer – Samantha Nicholas (0.8FTE)
Communications Officer – Emma White
(0.5FTE, 0.6 FTE from September 2017)
GIS Intern – Eleanor Wilding (1FTE) from July 2017

Projects

Outreach Officer – Matt Pitts (0.8FTE, 0.2FTE to December 2017) Land Management Project Officer – Ross Wingfield (1FTE) from September 2017 Land Management Project Officer – Christine Meadows (0.6FTE) from September 2017 Education Officer – Rachel Bennington (0.6 FTE)

The Partnership provided office accommodation, administrative support and guidance to the Woodland Trust's Low Weald PAWS Officer throughout 17/18.

Team skills were developed through a 1-day QGIS training event attended by seven staff and a 1-day Presentation skills training event attended by all staff.

Internal projects included establishing a Sharepoint filing system as part of a wider East Sussex County Council programme and installing QGIS to enable all team members to access and use GIS for day-to-day work.

High Weald Joint Advisory Committee









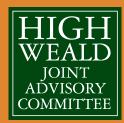
The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The essential character of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was established by the 14th century and 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 and water systems a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams.
- **Settlement** dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.
- **Routeways** a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).
- **Woodland** an abundance of ancient woodland, highly interconnected and in small holdings.
- **Field and Heath** small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of wooded heaths, and inned river valleys.

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

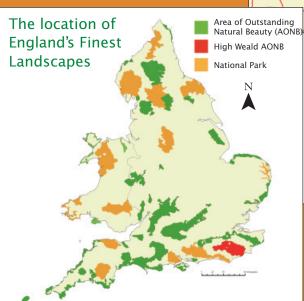


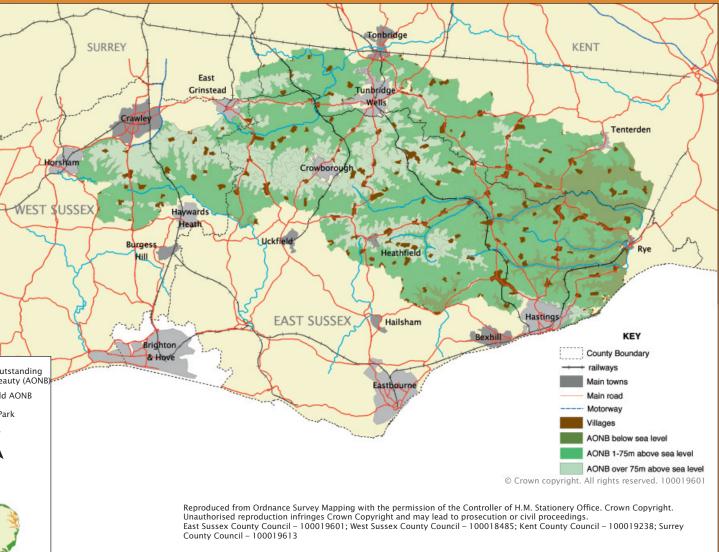


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The annual review is published by the High Weald AONB Unit on behalf of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC).

W: www.highweald.org





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