



High Weald Joint Advisory Committee Annual Review 2018-19

*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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Map of High Weald AONB	Back cover



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



Foreword

I t gives me great pleasure not only to welcome you to the High Weald AONB Partnership's annual review but also to look back on the year's many and varied achievements.

The High Weald AONB Partnership is well known for its rigorous research ensuring the advice it gives on the conservation and enhancement of this nationally important landscape is informed by evidence. At a time when unsubstantiated opinions appear to trump facts, the insights this research gives us – residents, farmers, businesses or national and local policy makers – supports our collaborative efforts managing the High Weald.

The culmination of our research this year was the publication of the AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 and its adoption, by the 15 local authorities in the High Weald, as their management policy for the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. This Plan is the single most important document for the AONB and its creation has already resulted in fruitful collaborations that meet its objectives. For example this year saw the launch of the first High Weald Walking Festival run in conjunction with the local branches of the Ramblers. The Walking Festival's 36 guided walks were a great success introducing local people and visitors to our landscape and highlighting once again that many of the best outcomes come from organizations and people working together.

As far back as 1979 the science of climate change – why it was happening and how to stop it – has been understood, yet actions to address this emergency at a national and international scale can only be described as sporadic at best. Unless we want to end up repeating the mistakes of the past, low carbon technology and land-use will need to become essential components of a viable and sustainable High Weald rural community. Building on our past carbon-reducing projects, the AONB Partnership is leading the way in promoting regenerative agriculture and land-use by working with a range of specialists in this field and by running a series of training and support events for our farmers and foresters.



Foreword

Talking of our farmers, this year has seen the Upper Dudwell and Rother Farm Cluster go from strength to strength. This group currently has 58 members who work together with AONB Partnership support to benefit the soil, water, wildlife, and historic features on their individual farms and across the wider landscape in an effort to show productive farming can go hand-in-hand with maintaining and restoring the environment.

In addition, and behind the scenes, the AONB partnership staff have continued to give advice on many policy documents and development proposals with a potential impact on the AONB and also to deliver action on the ground; coordinating Sussex Lund and other sources of funding, providing land management guidance, and supporting 30 primary schools as part of our High Weald Heroes school education work.

I cannot finish without saying a huge thank you to all our partners whether they are farmers, foresters, community groups, schools, residents, charities, businesses, or authorities who share our enthusiasm for the wonderful landscape of the High Weald and also our passion for understanding and conserving it better.



Councillor Sylvia Tidy

Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)
May 2019





High Weald AONB
Management Plan 2019-2024

A response to the national
review of protected landscapes
was submitted



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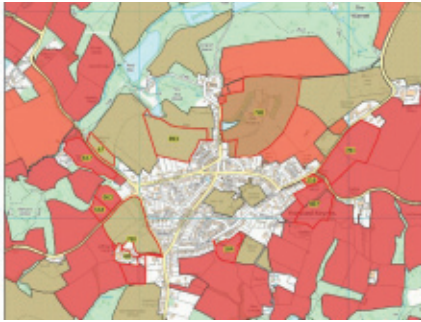
Producing the AONB Management Plan and providing advice and guidance

The new High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 was approved by the area's 15 local authorities following public consultation.

Key activities included:

- **A public consultation on the Draft AONB Management Plan 2019-2014** and its 3 supporting documents (Strategic Assessment report, Performance and Condition Monitoring report and the Equal Opportunities report), from 13 June to 25 July 2018.
- **Analysing 143 consultation responses**, 115 from individuals and 28 from organisations.
- Amending the plan to reflect the consultation; updating the facts, figures and maps; and producing a **Consultation Statement**.
- **Formal adoption of the Plan** by each of the area's 15 local authorities (by the 31 March 2019 deadline) following approval of the Plan by the Joint Advisory Committee.





Data and maps were supplied to help neighbourhood planning

1

Producing the AONB Management Plan and providing advice and guidance

Comments were made on 100 development proposals

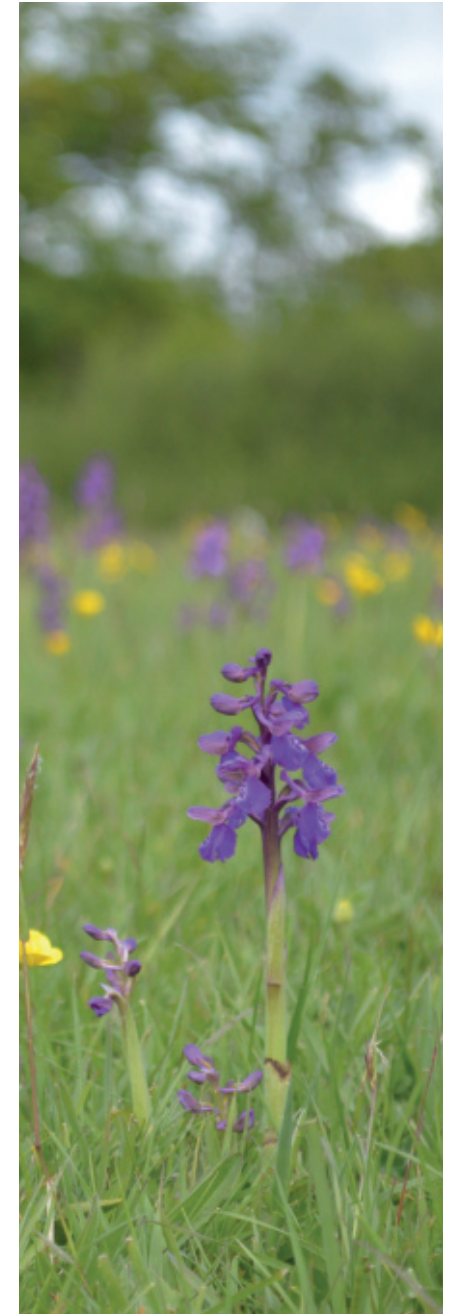


Responses were provided on 5 national and regional policy consultations:

- The **Glover Review** of England's NPAs & AONBs (2 written responses and 2 meetings with Defra).
- Ofgem's consultation on the **Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project**.
- Defra's consultation on **Net Biodiversity Gain**.
- Defra's consultation on **Health & Harmony: the future for food, farming, & the environment in a Green Brexit** (1 written response and 1 workshop).
- Consultations on the **Gatwick Airport Ltd's airport master plan and airspace modernisation**.

Advice and comment were provided on 20 local policy documents and 100 development proposals with a potential impact on the High Weald AONB:

- **9 consultations on district and borough local plans**, for Ashford BC, Mid Sussex DC, Horsham DC, Rother District Council DC, Sevenoaks DC, Tandridge DC, Tonbridge and Malling BC, Tunbridge Wells BC and Wealden DC.
- **9 neighbourhood plan consultations** for Benenden, Burwash, Cranbrook and Sissinghurst, Crowhurst, Horsted Keynes, Hurst Green, Slaugham, Ticehurst, Wadhurst.
- **17 pre-application discussions and consultations**.
- **73 local authority planning application consultations**.
- **4 planning appeals**.
- **5 footpath diversion consultations**.
- **1 non-planning consultation**.





Proposals for a Grassland Recovery Network were developed

1

Producing the AONB Management Plan and providing advice and guidance

Sustainable Housing Conference



The Partnership was contracted to develop an approach to a High Weald Nature Recovery Area, an ambition of the Government's 25-year Environment Plan.

Key activities included:

- Producing a **vision** for a multi-functioning grassland network.
- An **online survey of grassland managers**. **Survey responses** were received from 63 people and a **report** produced.
- **15 consultations** with grassland owners, managers, advisers and specialists.
- A review of **monitoring & evaluation approaches** and recommendations for a High Weald NRA.
- A review of **seed sourcing for grassland restoration** in the High Weald.
- **A critique of Countryside Stewardship** as an incentive scheme for the Weald, with recommendations for the future.
- A review of approaches to **managing roadside verges** for biodiversity.
- A review of grassland-related **data and targeting** approaches.
- Production of a summary report.

Additional guidance was provided through training events and publications.

- A **Sustainable Housing Conference** was run in partnership with the Good Homes Alliance (40 attendees).
- Members of the High Weald Design group produced a **consultation draft of the High Weald Design Guide**.





Natural England visit to the Farm Cluster

1

Producing the AONB Management Plan and providing advice and guidance

Woody debris dam: a focus for water catchment partnerships



- The High Weald **Legislation and Planning Policy Advice Note** was updated.
- **1 AONB character training event** was held for Wealden DC planning officers (20 attendees).

The Partnership liaised with a further 36 organisations and local partnerships, often through steering group membership. Advice was wide-ranging, a reflection of the AONB team's broad range of expertise.

Ashdown Forest Conservators 2 meetings; **CPRE (national)** 2 meetings; **CPRE (Kent)** 2 meetings; **Crane Valley Community Land Trust** 6 meetings; **Defra** 1 meeting; **Pevensey and Cuckmere Cluster and test and trials Partnerships** 2 meetings; **Eastern Rother Water Catchment Partnership** 2 meetings; **East Sussex County Council**: 1 meeting; **East Sussex and West Kent Tourism**; 1 meeting **Forestry Commission** 1 meetings; **Hastoe Housing Association** 1 event **Highways Agency** 1 meeting; **Hop Picker's Line Heritage Group**; 1 meeting **High Weald Network** 3 meetings; **High Weald Land Management Advisers** 9 telecalls **Kent County Council** 1 meeting **Kent High Weald Partnership Steering Group** 2 meetings; **Kent Local Nature Partnership** 5 meetings; **Knepp Castle Wildland Advisory Group** 1 meeting; **LEADER Partnerships**: 1 meeting with Wealden and Rother Rural Partnership Executive Board; 3 with the Central Sussex Local Action Group; **Lund Trust** 3 meetings; **National Trust** 2 meetings; **Natural England** 3 meetings; **Royal Botanic Gardens Kew** 3 meetings; **Southern Water** 1 meeting; **South East Water** 1 meeting; **South Downs National Park Authority Design Panel** 1 meeting; **Sussex Flow Initiative** 3 meetings; **Sussex Local Nature Partnership** 4 meetings; **Sussex Records Centre** 2 meetings; **Sussex Wildlife Trust** 1 event; **Tunbridge Wells Cultural and Learning Hub** 1 event; **University of Kent** 2 meetings; **West Sussex Local Access Forum** 1 meeting; **Woodland Trust (national and regional)** 2 meetings.





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

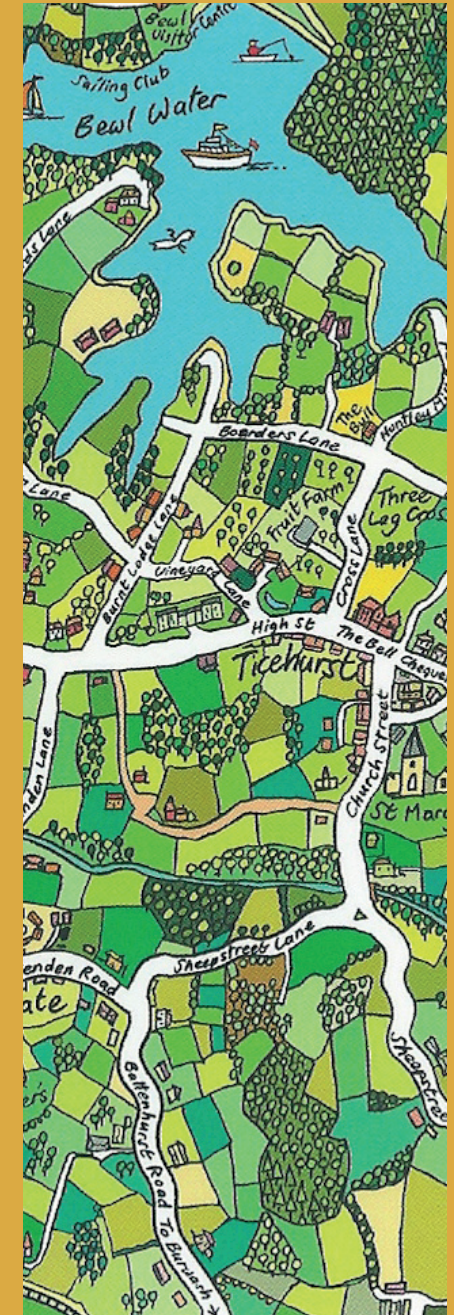
Community Outreach Programme

High Weald Heroes

30 primary schools participated in High Weald Heroes (HWH), the JAC's school education programme, with 74 events involving over 3115 learning sessions.

Activities included:

- Creating **5 new school Welly Walk routes** and publishing 5 Welly Walk leaflets.
- Recruiting and induction **3 new HWH schools** and running **5 school assemblies** involving 1045 children.
- **35 outdoor workshops/walks** including Welly Walk development and mapping walks (8), historical welly walks (10), science walks (11) and landscape inspired poetry and art walks (6), involving 1196 individual learning sessions.
- **26 themed indoor workshops:** historical (9), rocks and soils (6), mapping (7) and heritage (4), involving 792 individual learning sessions.
- **Creation of 11 new education resources:** historical handling boxes for the Anglo Saxon, Roman, Medieval, Tudor and Early Post Medieval, Victorian and Modern and World Wars periods (in partnership with ESCC archaeology); a 'mini-meadow' advice sheet; and High Weald spotter sheets (4).



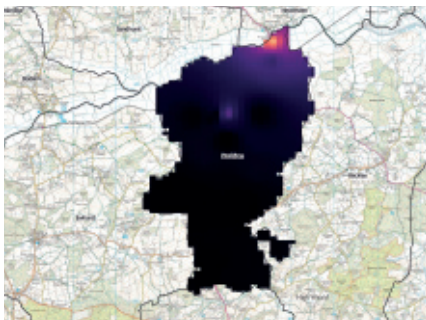


Roman milestone made from clay

2

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

Dark sky map



- **8 staff advisory sessions** involving 33 adults with circulation of **3 Enews** to all 88 HWH schools.
- **Development of the 'Mini-Meadows' project** to enhance school grounds, involving 3 schools in its first year.

Dark Skies

The value of the High Weald's dark sky was promoted and conservation advice and practical support provided to local communities.

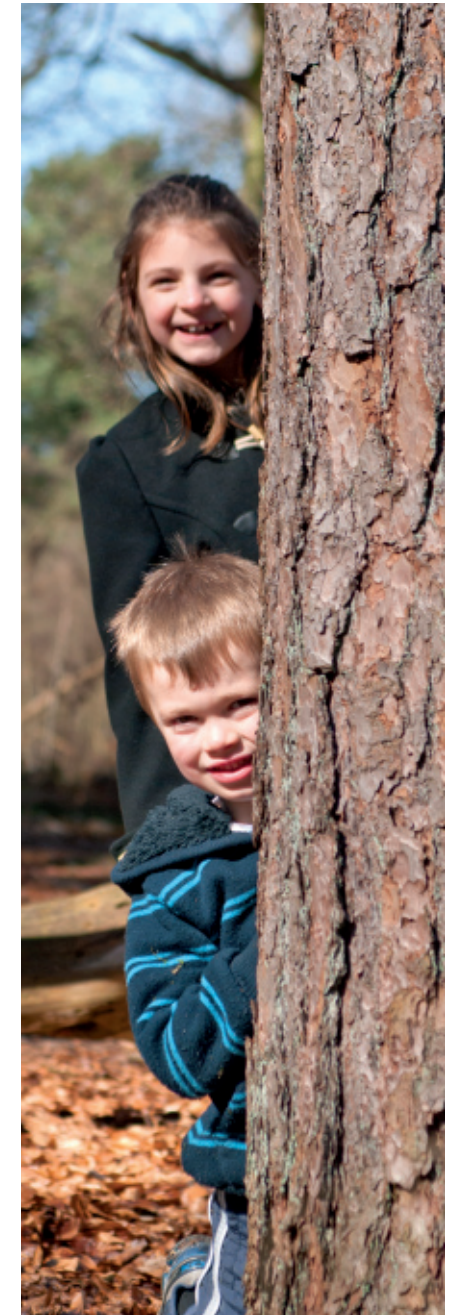
Key activities included:

- **Light meters were loaned to 20 individuals** to enable dark sky readings in Cranbrook and Sissinghurst, Hawkhurst and Northiam parishes and **interpolation maps** produced.
- **1 Dark Sky event** (30) was held in partnership with the National Trust (Bodiam Castle) as a pilot for school-focused family events in 2019/20.

Further Education

Four education students were given the opportunity to experience the Partnership's work and provided invaluable assistance with its projects.

- A BSc Geography graduate from Southampton, supported the team as a GIS intern for 3 months and 3 undergraduates each spent 3-5 days with the team.





Sussex Lund drop in event

2

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

Invertebrate survey of veteran tree supported by Sussex Lund



Land Management Programme

The High Weald Land Management Enhancement Programme focused on enabling landowners to develop and implement projects and to work collaboratively. Officers gave site-specific advice to 153 landowners, ran 24 events and enabled 47 landscape restoration projects.

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

- **Grant awards of £152,000** were made by the Sussex Lund Grants Panel for **35 projects** including removal of non-native conifer trees to improve scenic quality; installation of boardwalks to improve access and protect sensitive woodland habitat; hedge-laying to restore overgrown hedgerows; and equipment purchase and training for volunteer groups managing community greenspaces.
- **29 Sussex Lund projects were completed** in 2018/19: (10 with support of Sussex Lund 2017, 19 with support of Sussex Lund 2018).
- **A celebration event** at Wadhurst Park was attended by successful scheme applicants and others.
- **90 advisory site visits, 58 advisory calls and emails, 4 events and 21 articles** promoted and guided project applications and helped with project development and delivery. Events included: Application drop-in session (11), Rhododendron management techniques (10), an introduction to grassland restoration and creation (25), and scything (8).

Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster

- The Group grew from **37 members to 58 members** following targeted promotion.
- **2 advisory group meetings**, 1 AGM (23 attendees) and **7 newsletters** were produced to steer and promote the Farm Cluster's work.





Four deer liaison groups were set up

2

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

Fungi training



- **28 site visits** were undertaken to identify opportunities for environmental enhancements and collaborative working.
- **10 training events were delivered** (no. of attendees in brackets): Meadow management best practice (2); Rootwave demonstration (9); Creating and managing wildflower meadows (16), High Weald fungi id (16), Soil health principles (2); Soil health and farming systems (14); Mob grazing and hedges (7), Agroforestry walk and talk (12), Introduction to Countryside Stewardship Mid-tier (5); and Meadows survey 2018 feedback (17).
- A **Deer Stalkers Liaison event** (31 attendees) led to a **deer management plan** and recruitment of a part-time and seasonal deer co-ordinator (with financial support from the Woodland Trust).
- **4 neighbourhood deer liaison groups were established** to enable collaborative deer management: Stonegate (3 meetings), Dallington (1 meeting) subsequently becoming Dallington South west (1 meeting) and Dallington North west (1 meeting) and North Hadlow Down (1 meeting).
- **64 fields** (c.162ha) across 13 holdings were **surveyed for their plant and invertebrate interest** (in partnership with the Natural England Field Unit and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew) and reports with management recommendations circulated to each landowner.
- **An EDNA project was piloted** (in partnership with the Natural England Field Unit and Sussex Wildlife Trust) to test the value of the technology in identifying high value grasslands in the Weald. The pilot, involved grassland surveys of fungi and analysis of soil samples to determine their fungi (waxcap) interest.
- **Giant Hogweed stands were treated** on 12 land holdings, a **survey of 35km** of the River Rother was completed and a **Giant Hogweed Management Plan** produced. The contract was managed by the Partnership with financial support from the Environment Agency.





Grassland surveys

2

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

Giant Hogweed stands were treated on 12 land holdings



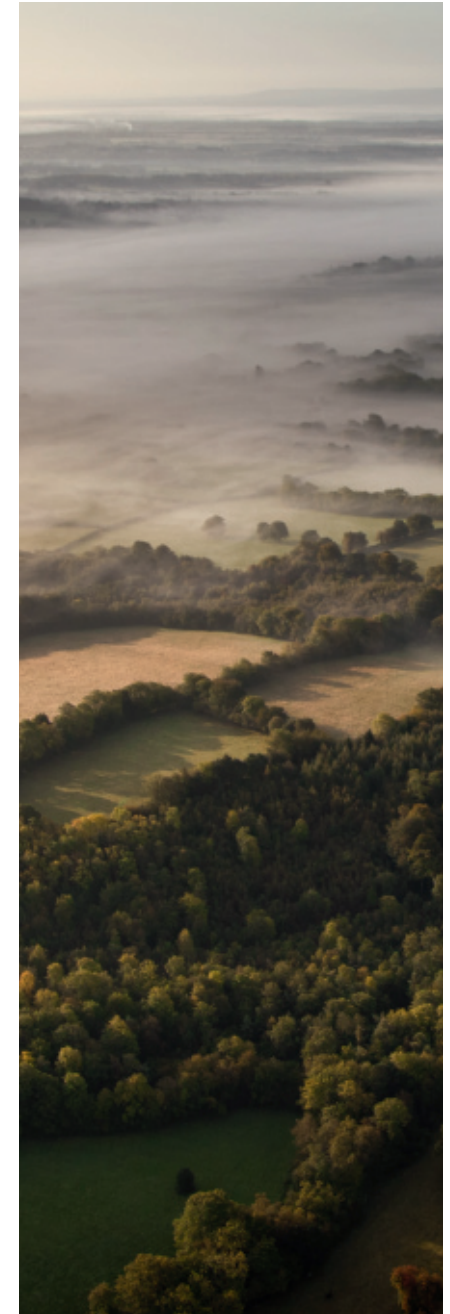
- A **Public Goods Report** highlighting the natural assets within the Farm Cluster area was produced working with the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre

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

- **3 hedgerow projects were completed** within the vicinity of the National Grid power lines as part of the AONB Partnership-led Beautiful Boundaries project. With support of a National Grid grant award, 245 metres of hedgerow were coppiced, 114 metres laid and 923 metres planted.
- **2 11kv power line undergrounding projects** with stage 2 approval from the regional steering group, Sheffield Park Garden estate and Bedgebury Pinetum and Forest, continued to be developed by UK Power Networks.

Other activity

- **A community woodland event** (14 attendees) enabled knowledge-sharing (financially supported by the Plunkett Foundation). **3 community woodlands were assisted** with woodland surveys, management plans and entering into Countryside Stewardship.
- **22 general advisory site visits** were provided for landowners across the High Weald and **4 site visits** were undertaken to enable delivery of the Rother Water Catchment Partnership action plan.
- **1 grassland management and restoration training event** was held for High Weald land management advisers (18 attendees).



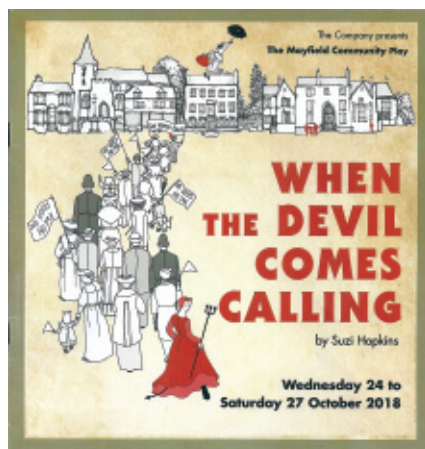


Annual Review 2017/18

3

Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes

The Mayfield Community Play

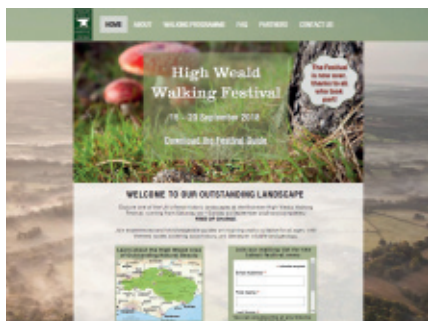


- Representing AONBs on the **Landscape Institute's (LI) Land Managers Leadership Forum and Landscape Apprenticeship Scheme** to develop the LI offer for protected landscape professionals (involving 8 events).
- Participation in the **NAAONB's Taking the Lead programme** to develop AONB's organisational resilience; steering its focus (4 responses) and participating in 4 workshops.
- Promoting the **National Grid' Landscape Enhancement Scheme** to AONBs nationally (involving 1 presentation and 4 advisory sessions) and participating in UKPN's South East and East Underground Steering Group (2 meetings).
- Liaison and meetings (2) with **MPs for Wealden and Rother**.

General awareness of the High Weald, its character and actions to conserve, enhance and enjoy it was achieved through:

- **11 enews** sent to 1,491 contacts per mail out (after our GDPR data cleanse), **7 media releases** sent to some 58 media contacts with **49 articles published** (online or printed) and publication of **21 website news pages**
- **Increasing Facebook 'likes' by 37% and Twitter followers by 13%** (707 page likes and 2,375 followers respectively).
- Maintenance of **www.highweald.org** with 114,330 user sessions by 88,672 users and an average time on site of 2.09 minutes. The 5 most-visited pages were: Walking, the High Weald Landscape Trail, Self-guided circular walks, High Weald boundary and 3-5 mile walks.
- **2 talks** for community groups and **2 field trips** for the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology and Human Ecology and Environmental Science undergraduates at Kent University.
- Sponsorship and judging of the **Taste of Kent Countryside Award**, working jointly with the Kent Downs AONB Partnership and Produced in Kent, and sponsorship of the **Mayfield Community Play**.





www.highwealdwalks.org
homepage

3

Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes

Festival walkers



- Distribution of A2-sized **hedge management information boards** to educate passers-by about hedge laying and coppicing and design of an A5 **giant hogweed poster**: produced to warn passers-by of potential hazards from management works.
- Production and distribution of the High Weald Partnership's **Annual Review 2017-18**.

The first High Weald Walking Festival was launched in 2018 with over 400 individual walking sessions were recorded over the week from 15 to 23 September and an average of more than ten attendees per walk.

Key activities included:

- **Working with Festival co-hosts**, local branches of the Ramblers (High Weald Walkers, Battle Ramblers and Rother Ramblers) to plan and run the event.
- Recruiting and briefing walks leaders including **1 walks leaders event** (12 attendees).
- Developing a **programme of 36 guided walks** with themes such as local history, art, creative writing, wildlife and geology.
- Developing and updating a new website for the event: and producing and distributing a **festival walks leaflet**, posters and fliers.
- **Promoting the Festival** through a range of media channels with **27 articles** published locally and nationally.
- **8 Unit-led walks** during the Festival week.
- **Evaluating the Festival** with feedback forms indicating half of the walkers were High Weald residents, others came from other parts of Sussex and Kent, and a tenth came from further afield.





Unveiling of Ticehurst Well restoration supported by Sussex Lund

3

Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes

Boundary restoration project supported by National Grid

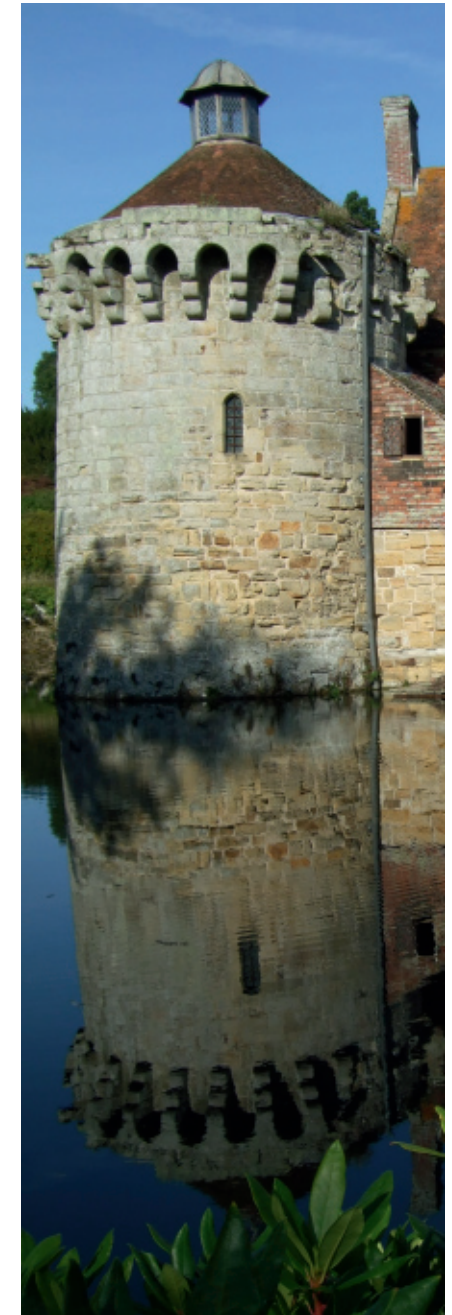


Resources for delivering AONB Management Plan objectives were secured through 4 contracts/grant awards and 3 proposals were submitted to enable activities in 2018/19.

- A grant award of £269,005 for the JAC Partnership's activities 2018/19 was confirmed by **Defra**.
- A contribution of £177,000 was made by the **Lund Trust** for developing, promoting and administering **Sussex Lund 2018**, the grant scheme of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin.
- A sum of £37,200 was secured from the **Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund** for the facilitating the Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster in 2018/19 under a 5-year contract with Natural England.
- A contract of £25,000 was awarded by **Natural England** to develop an approach to developing a High Weald Nature Recovery Area.
- Contributions were also received from the **Plunkett Foundation** (for a community woodland workshops, the **Woodland Trust** (for deer management liaison) and **the Ramblers** (for the High Weald Walking Festival).

Proposals were made to:

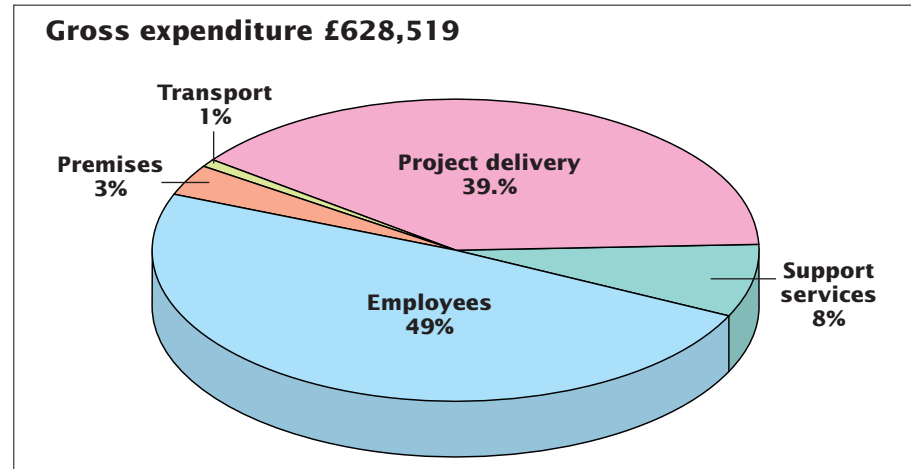
- Defra's **Protected Landscapes Fund** for the 2019/20 contribution to the JAC's work (grant request of £273,632).
- National Grid's **Visual Impact Assessment Landscape Enhancement Initiative**: for a second boundary restoration project and a woodland restoration project (grant requests of £322,500 and £430,000 respectively).
- Defra's **Tests and Trials programme** for development of the Partnership's neighbourhood deer liaison work (grant request of £20,000).
- Wealden District Council's **Community Grant Scheme** for contributions to the Partnership 2019-2022 (grant request of £21,600).



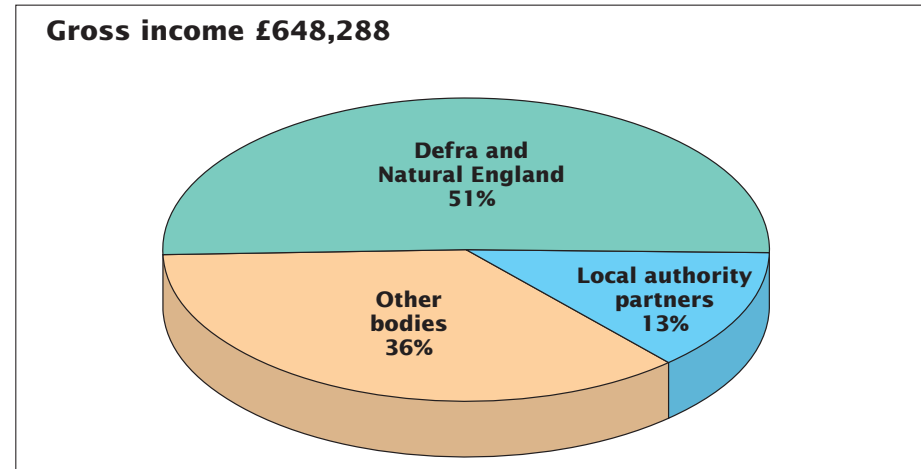
Financial summary

1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

Total expenditure

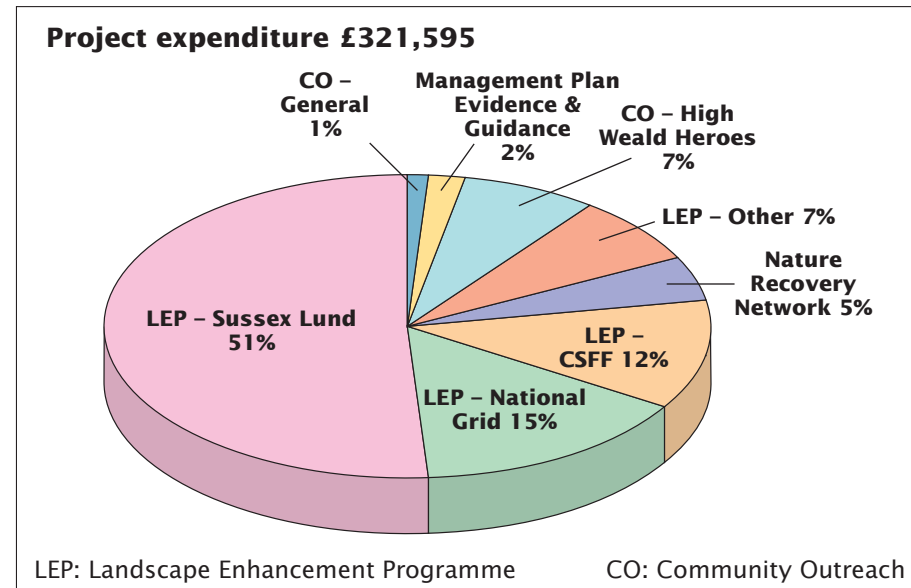


Total income



Other bodies included: Lund Trust, National Grid, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Kent Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust and local Ramblers groups.

Expenditure by project



The final position for the year was a reserve of £159,229.00 March 2019, which includes the £19,769.00 surplus for 2018/19.

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 also:

- increases 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 2018/19 were as follows:

Joint Advisory Committee and Officer's Steering Group

Chairman

Mrs S Tidy

Vice-chairman

Councillor B Kentfield

Officer's Steering Group Chairman

David Greenwood

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

Councillor Peter Bradbury (from September 2018)

Tim Dyer

Don Baker (from August 2018)

Kent County Council

Councillor M Balfour

Elizabeth Milne

Surrey County Council

Councillor Mrs Lesley Steeds

David Greenwood

Wealden District Council

Councillor Mrs R Moore

Natalie Bumpus

Rother District Council

Councillor B Kentfield

Diane Russell

Hastings Borough Council

Councillor R Street

Cllr M Evans (from June 2018)

Murray Davidson

Mid Sussex District Council

Councillor C Hersey

Jennifer Hollingum

Horsham District Council

Councillor A Lee

Mark Daly (from January 2019)

Crawley Borough Council

Councillor I Irving

Richard Mosinghi (from November 2018)

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Councillor Mrs J Soyke

David Scully

Sevenoaks District Council

Councillor M Dickens

Helen French

Ashford Borough Council

Councillor A Pickering

Matthew Nouch

Ian Grundy (from September 2018)

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

Matthew Woodcock, Forestry Commission
(from March 2019)

Community

Mrs J Davison

Community/Economy

Mr J Leggett, Action in Rural Sussex

Mrs P Mayson, Action in Rural Sussex (from Nov. 2018)

Landowners

Mr R Edwards, Country Land and Business
Association

Farming

Mr W White, National Farmers Union

JAC Management Board

Councillor Mrs S Tidy

Councillor P Bradbury

Councillor M Balfour

Councillor C Hersey

Councillor B Kentfield

Councillor R Moore

Mrs J Davison

Laura Newland

Clerk to the JAC

Samantha Nicholas

Treasurer to the JAC

Jill Fisher



The High Weald team

High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

High Weald AONB Staff Team

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

The partnership delivered its 2018/19 work programme with a staff team averaging 6.3 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 – Vacant

Team Support Officer – Samantha Nicholas (0.8FTE)

Communications Officer – Emma White (0.6 FTE, maternity leave from October 2018)

Sarah Watson (0.6 FTE, maternity cover from October 2018)

GIS Intern – Eleanor Wilding (1FTE) until June 2018, Will Jones (1FTE) from November 2018 to January 2019

Projects

Land Management Project Officer – Ross Wingfield (1FTE)

Land Management Project Officer – Christine Meadows (0.6FTE)

Land Management Project Officer (secondment from Royal Botanic Gardens Kew) – Iain Parkinson (approximately 0.2FTE)

Education Officer – Rachel Bennington (0.6 FTE)

Outreach Officer – Matt Pitts (casual staff)

Team skills were developed through 2-day Facilitation training and 1-day Lumina Spark personal and team development training.

Individually staff also attended conferences on: Natural Capital (CLA); Evidence Matters (The Keep), the Future of Farming (Westminster briefing), Landscape Scale Monitoring (KWT), Strategic Framework (HLF), NPPF (Landscape Institute), No-till agriculture (Groundswell), as well as the Sussex Biological Recorders seminar and Sussex Archaeology Conference.





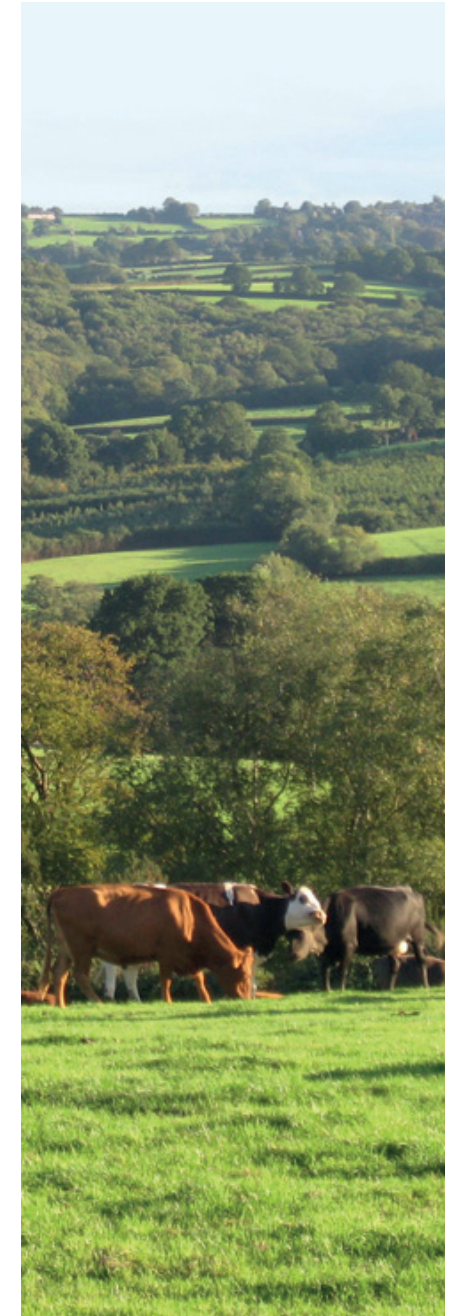
The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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.

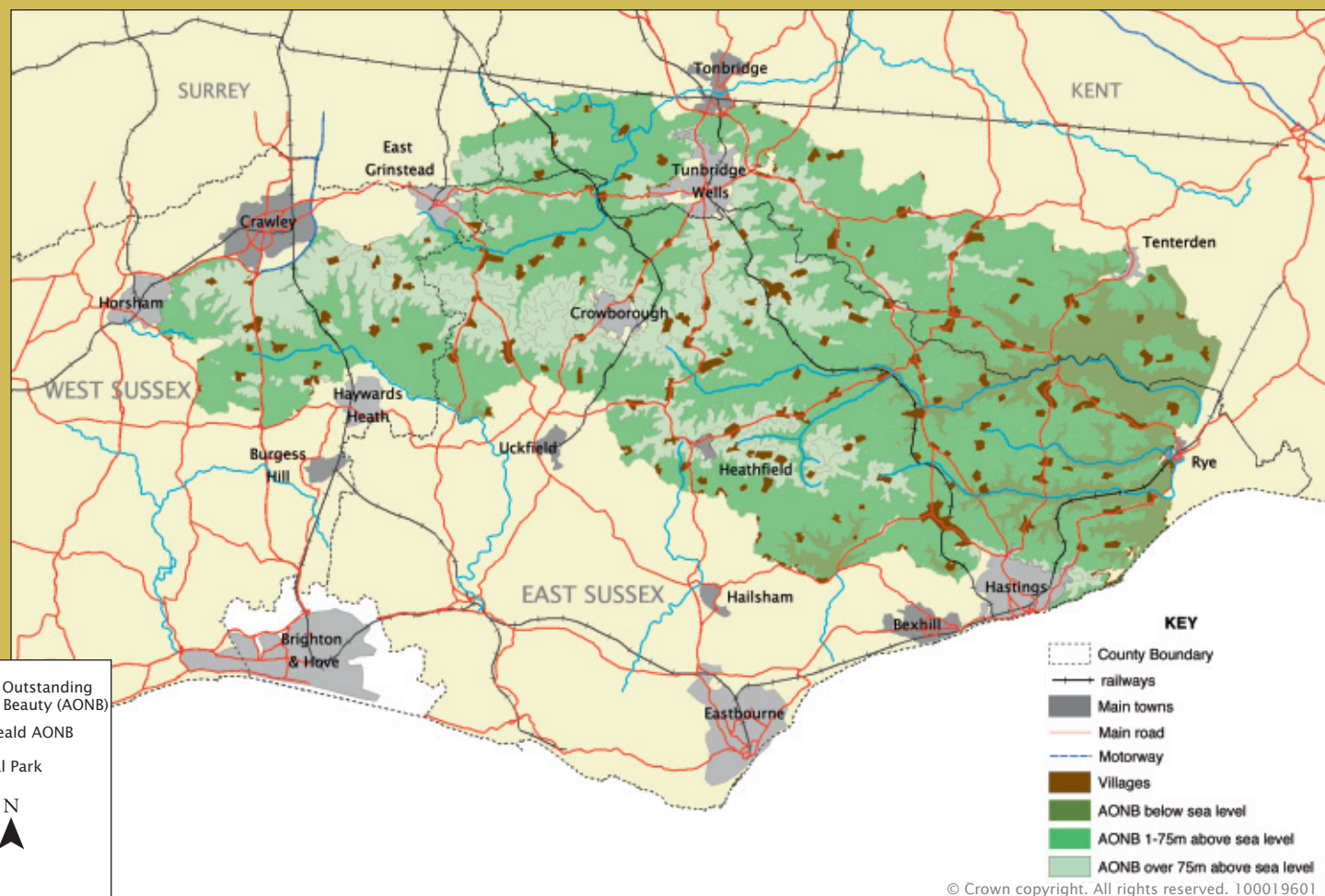
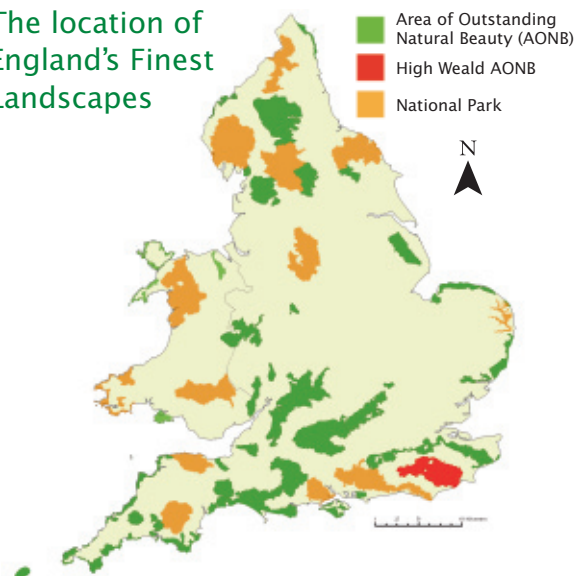


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The location of England's Finest Landscapes



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