



## High Weald Joint Advisory Committee Annual Review 2019-20

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



HIGH WEALD  
One of the  
AONB Family



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

Celebrating 30 years of High  
Weald designation with Escots  
primary school



## Foreword

**W**elcome to the High Weald AONB Partnership's annual review for 2019-20. The year has brought many wonderful successes and celebrations, including the 70th anniversary of the creation of AONBs. The inspiring and emotive poem 'Fugitives' was written by Poet Laureate Simone Armitage to mark the occasion; we have included it in full on the last page of this report and I would strongly encourage you to read it. However, there have also been many challenges over the last 12 months; a trend likely to continue as we forge our path through these strange and uncertain times.

The year started with the launch of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 and ended with publication of the High Weald Housing Design Guide. The Management Plan is the single most important document for the AONB, setting out long term objectives for conserving this nationally important landscape, whereas the High Weald Housing Design Guide provides clear, practical and consistent advice on design expectations for new housing development to enable design that reflects the High Weald's intrinsic character without stifling creativity. Both documents provide much needed guidance and have been widely welcomed.

We have continued to support farmers and landowners working on their own or with others on a range of projects across the High Weald; successfully securing sources of non-Government support for such projects. Sussex Lund – which allocated some £230,000 to projects this year – and the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative are welcome programmes in a time of financial uncertainty.

Alongside this activity we have run a varied programme of well-attended training events tailored for farmers and land managers. The high point came in October when we welcomed 90 guests to our sold-out Farming Futures conference. The inspirational day looked at how Regenerative Agriculture in the High Weald could heal soils; produce nutrient-dense food; increase above and below







ground biodiversity and capture and store more carbon, whilst also building productive, profitable and resilient businesses. We also had the honour of working with 17 local family farming businesses as part of The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme. This national training programme helps farm businesses thrive, ensuring a diverse farming sector in the UK, which is something we value dearly and wholeheartedly support.

Our High Weald Hero education programme has continued to be popular with more than 80 primary schools across the AONB now part of our pioneering scheme to inspire the next generation of landscape lovers. The second High Weald Walking Festival welcomed a raft of new partner organisations, with 50 guided walks taking place over a sunny week in September including creative writing, 'forest bathing' and foraging walks.

I cannot finish without saying a huge thank you to all our partners past, present and future. The High Weald AONB Team at Flimwell works tirelessly and enthusiastically on behalf of us all, ensuring the next generation inherit a landscape we are proud to have left behind. As we move into an uncertain future, it is only by working together that we will rise to the challenge.

**Councillor Sylvia Tidy**  
Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)  
June 2020

School art celebrating 70 years of protected landscape designation

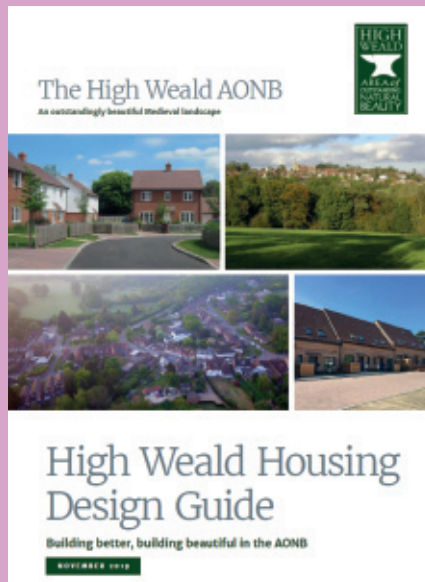






Launch of the High Weald Management Plan

High Weald Housing Design Guide



# 1

## Promoting the AONB Management Plan and providing advice and guidance

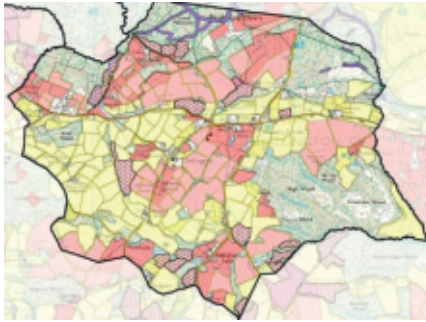
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**We launched the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024, produced a High Weald Housing Design Guide and held 15 training events.**

Key activities included:

- **Launch and promotion of the AONB Management Plan** to local authorities, parish councils and other key stakeholders
- **Consultation on the draft High Weald Housing Design Guide** including a workshop with developers (20 attendees) on the draft Housing Design Guide
- **Publication and launch of the High Weald Housing Design Guide**, with one authority adopting it as a material planning consideration
- **4 AONB local authority training events** (attendees in brackets): Wealden District Council (20); East Sussex County Council (18); Rother District Council and Hastings Borough Council (30); and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (20)
- **1 parish council training event** (32 attendees) and **11 presentations** to parish councils and resident groups.





Data and maps were supplied to help neighbourhood planning

# 1

Promoting the AONB Management Plan and providing advice and guidance

Comments were made on 158 development proposals



**We provided responses to 3 national and regional policy consultations, and 19 local policy documents.**

Responses were submitted to:

- **Glover Review** of England's NPAs & AONBs (the recommendations)
- Defra group's discussion paper on **Nature Recovery**
- **Regional Transport Strategy for the South East**
- **8 district and borough plans:** local plans (including site allocations) for Tunbridge Wells BC, Crawley BC, Horsham DC, Mid-Sussex DC and Wealden DC; and mineral plans for Kent and East Sussex
- **11 neighbourhood plans:** for Benenden, Battle, Burwash, Chailey, Cranbrook and Sissinghurst, Crowhurst, Horsted Keynes, Hurst Green, Lamberhurst, Rolvenden and Wadhurst.

**We provided advice and comment on 158 development proposals: 48 major, 81 minor and 29 other.**

Other developments included:

- 11 resident pre-application discussions and consultations
- 1 planning appeal
- 3 EIA screenings
- 7 footpath diversion consultations; and
- 6 electricity and rail infrastructure consultations.







The High Weald Farming Futures conference

# 1

Promoting the AONB Management Plan and providing advice and guidance

Promoting healthy soils is a priority



**We continued to develop our approach to nature recovery in the High Weald, focusing on promoting the benefits of regenerative agriculture techniques.**

Key activities:

- **Research into regenerative agriculture (RA)** techniques and their application in the High Weald
- A High Weald **‘Farming Futures’ conference (90 attendees)** – involving national farming pioneers sharing practical experience and inspiring discussion on regenerative agriculture practices to improve soils, farm resilience and profits in a mixed landscape
- **Establishment of a demonstration farm** showing the practicalities of transition to RA farming methods
- **Piloting a farm improvement plan** to help guide the transition from a conventional agricultural system to a RA system.

**We advised over 77 organisations and local partnerships on the High Weald’s landscape. Advice was wide ranging, a reflection of the AONB team’s broad range of expertise.**

We had (meetings in brackets):

- **12 meetings with the Defra group** (Defra, Natural England, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission) including hosting visits from the Defra Wildlife team and a representative of the Glover Review Panel
- **38 meeting with local stakeholders:** Ashdown Forest Conservators (3); Bore Place Trust (2); Butterfly Conservation (1); CPRE Kent (1); Dare to Live Trust (1); Darwell Area Conservation Society (1); Highways Agency (1); Kent Wildlife Trust (1); Local authorities – West, Sussex, Kent, Tunbridge Wells, Mid-Sussex (6); National Trust (2); RSPB (1); Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (2); South East Water (1); Southern Water (3); Southern Farm Cluster Facilitators (2); Sussex Wildlife Trust (1); Sussex Police (1); The Keep (1); University of Kent (2); University of Waterloo (1); West Sussex Local Access Forum (1); Woodland Trust (2)







Defra wildlife team visit

# 1

Producing the AONB  
Management Plan and  
providing advice  
and guidance

Southern Water visit



- And served as **steering group members on 7 partnerships:** Agrichology (1); Central Sussex Local Action Group (2); Sussex Local Nature Partnership (3); Kent Local Nature Partnership (2); Kent High Weald AONB Partnership (3); Pevensey and Cuckmere Cluster and test and trials Partnership (3); Eastern Rother Water Catchment Partnership (2); Medway Catchment Partnership (2); Medway Catchment Partnership (1); South Downs National Park Authority Design Panel (2); and High Weald Land Management Advisers Group (6).

*“It was inspiring to spend time with you and fires me up even more to ensure we contribute the most we can to the environment and society in the future.”*

Caroline, Bore Place





Sussex Lund drop in event

## 2

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

### Land Management Programme

**We advised 153 land managers and helped them develop and implement 45 landscape restoration projects. We ran 24 events with 257 attendees to build skills in business and environmental management.**

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

**Sussex Lund supports small-scale, practical projects that improve the landscape of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is administered by the AONB team.**

Key activities:

- **49 grant awards totalling £229,100** were made by the Sussex Lund Grants Panel. Projects included installing woody debris dams to slow water flow and create wetland, woodland thinning to create sunny rides and glades; orchard planting; and equipment purchase and training for volunteer groups managing community greenspaces
- **33 Sussex Lund projects were completed** in 2019/2020 (12 with support of Sussex Lund 2018 and 22 with support of Sussex Lund 2019)

Hedge-laying project supported by Sussex Lund







Deer co-ordination video

## 2

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

Species-rich grassland survey



- **128 advisory site visits, 27 advisory calls and emails and 3 advisory drop events (21 attendees)** guided project applications and helped with project development and delivery
- **3 videos were produced** to promote successful wetland, woodland and access projects.

### Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster

**A group of farmers, foresters and other land managers working together to benefit soil, water, wildlife and historic features on their farms and across the wider landscape. The Cluster is supported by the AONB team.**

We facilitated:

- Group growth from 58 members to **65 members** through promotion via word-of-mouth
- **17 site visits** were undertaken to identify opportunities for environmental enhancements and collaborative working, and we endorsed 3 countryside stewardship applications
- **1 advisory group meeting (4 attendees), 1 AGM** (30 attendees) and **8 newsletters** were produced to steer and promote the Farm Cluster's work
- **9 training events** (no. of attendees in brackets): Giant hogweed & Japanese knotweed control (3); Mob grazing and soil health (29); Meadows surveying walk and talk (20); PflA mob grazing study tour (27); Historic farmsteads and Wealden settlement (24); Green hay walk and talk (10); Deer season launch (18); Ash dieback (10); and Soil fungi foray (9)
- **An annual deer management forum** (19) for stalkers to review practice, communication and deer control and production of **a video on co-ordinating deer management**
- **4 neighbourhood deer liaison groups** to help collaborative deer management: Stonegate, Dallington South west, Dallington North west and North Hadlow Down







10km of new hedgerow was planted

## 2

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

Visual Impact Assessments of 11Kv powerlines were undertaken



- **Surveys of 55 fields across 11 holdings** for their plant and invertebrate interest with reports and management recommendations circulated to each landowner (in partnership with the Natural England Field Unit and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew)
- The second year of the **EDNA pilot grassland project**, involving waxcap surveys and soil analysis with EDNA technology to test a new approach to identifying high value grasslands (in partnership with the Natural England Field Unit and Sussex Wildlife Trust)
- **Giant Hogweed control** on organic farms along the River Dudwell, using a company called Rootwave to kill plants with electricity. The contract was managed by the Partnership with financial support from the Environment Agency.

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

**National Grid and UKPN support schemes in protected landscapes that reduce the visual impact of their transmission lines and improve the visual quality of the surrounding landscape. The AONB identify and facilitate the projects. Key activities:**

- **8 hedgerow projects were completed** within the vicinity of the National Grid power lines as part of the AONB Partnership-led 'Beautiful Boundaries' project supported by National Grid
- **10km of historic boundaries were restored** through the planting of 24,000 trees
- **18 site visits** offered practical advice and support with hedgerow projects
- **Seven grant awards** were issued to land managers for delivery of further historic boundary projects
- **Hedge management information boards** were distributed to landowners and contractors





Events focused on farm business profitability

## 2

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

### Meadows Question Time



- **Two 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
- **3 visual impact assessments** of the 11Kv lines at Witherenden, Salehurst and Newenden were completed.

### The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme

**This national training programme helps farm businesses thrive, ensuring a diverse farming sector in the UK.**

We facilitated:

- **Sign-up of 17 farm enterprises** to the business programme following targeted promotion
- **10 farm business health checks**
- **5 business training events** focused on (number of attendees): Welcome to the programme (8); Business health check tool feedback (13); Practical cost management (14); Strategic financial management (16); Business planning and managing change (10); and Planning for your future (12).

All participants **strongly agreed or agreed that they would make changes** to their farm business to improve its resilience as a result of the workshops.

### Other activity

- **A Meadows 'Question time' event** (41 attendees), was held at Royal Botanic Gardens Wakehurst and enabled participants to pose questions to a panel of national and local grassland experts. The recording was published online
- **13 general advisory site visits** were provided for landowners across the High Weald and **4 visits** were undertaken to enable delivery of the Rother Water Catchment Partnership action plan.







Outdoor learning session

## 2

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

Teacher's workshop



## Community Outreach Programme

**We involved 25 primary schools in High Weald Heroes (HWH), the JAC's school education programme, running 81 events involving over 3141 learning sessions (328 teachers and parents, 2813 pupils).**

Key activities:

- Creating **3 new school Welly Walk routes** and publishing 2 Welly Walk leaflets
- Recruiting and induction **3 new HWH schools and** refresher sessions for 2 existing HWH schools
- **Three school assemblies** involving 327 children
- **42 outdoor workshops/walks** including Mapping and geography (17), Historical welly walks (6), Science (8), Landscape inspired poetry and art (8), and the John Muir Award (3), involving 1,385 individual learning sessions
- **37 themed indoor workshops:** Historical (20), Rocks and soils (5), Mapping (9) and John Muir Award (3) and Heritage (4) and involving 792 individual learning sessions
- **Presentation of a national environmental (John Muir) award to 30 children** following their completion of a range of High Weald Hero actions
- **A teacher workshop** (18 attendees) looking at the future of HWH and outdoor learning
- **1 heritage schools teacher training session**, initiating new heritage themed activities developed through a new partnership with Historic England





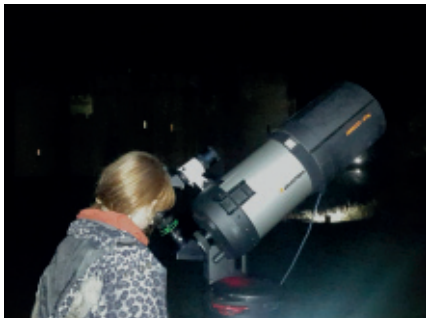


Handling boxes

## 2

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

Exploring dark skies



- Creating **9 new handling boxes** to engage children with the High Weald's past, from the Stone Age to the modern day
- A **school art competition** to celebrate AONB designation, with winning artwork displayed on the Partnership's website and email signature
- Creating a **Facebook group** for HWH teachers and production of **3 Enews** to all 88 HWH schools.

\*Another 8 events involving 4 schools and over 224 learning sessions were cancelled due to Covid-19.

*"When I saw your High Weald education pages, I was blown away! I think the High Weald has set a model for what we all (AONBs) should be doing"*

Wendy, Chilterns Conservation Board

**We promoted the High Weald's dark skies and offered practical advice and support to local communities.**

Key activities:

- **Light meters were loaned to two community groups** to enable dark sky readings across Dallington, Burwash, Brightling and Ewhurst parishes
- **1 Dark Sky event** (93 attendees) was held in partnership with Wild about Burwash and the South East Astronomy Group.





Walks Festival launch

## 2

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

Plant identification on a Festival walk



**We ran the second High Weald Walking Festival 2019 from 14 to 22 September with over 50 walks, 700 individual walking sessions and an average of 15 attendees per walk.**

Key activities included:

- **Working with Festival co-hosts**, local branches of the Ramblers: High Weald Walkers, Battle Ramblers, Rother Ramblers and Mid-Sussex Ramblers to plan and run the event
- Developing a **programme of 50 guided walks**, working with many organisations and individuals, with themes such as local history, art, creative writing, wildlife and geology
- Updating **www.highwealdwalks.org** and producing and distributing 2000 **festival walks leaflets**, posters and fliers
- **Promoting the Festival** through a range of media channels, building subscribers to 1,017, an increase of 82% with 5,000 website users and a Facebook reach of 26,000
- **A Festival launch** at The Hub café in Bodiam on Saturday with stalls and six walks (120 attendees)
- **Three team-led walks** during the Festival week
- **Evaluating the Festival**: feedback forms (270) rated all walks excellent or good and highlighted that 11% of the participants wouldn't usually go out on a walk.

*"I loved meeting other walkers as I like walking but don't like going on my own...I felt on a high when I got home!"*

Jenny, Tenterden







Going Out Out poster

## 2

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

Habitat leaflets



**We increased public awareness of the High Weald's character, and actions to conserve, enhance and enjoy the area, through:**

- **'Going Out Out' regional marketing campaign** encouraging young people to get out and explore National Parks and AONBs, working in partnership with the rail and bus operators
- **Publication of three Weald habitat leaflets** (digital and print): Wildflower Grasslands; Heathlands and Sandrock
- **10 Enews** sent to 1,692 contacts per mail out, **11 media releases** sent to 72 media contacts with **26 articles published** (online or printed) and publication of **23 website news pages**
- Maintenance of **www.highweald.org** with 147,293 user sessions (114,330 in 18/19) by 115,774 users (88,672 in 18/19) and an average time on site of 2mins 2 secs. The 5 most-visited pages were: walking, Sussex bonfire celebrations 2019, the High Weald Landscape Trail, self-guided circular walks, and 3-5 mile walks
- **Increasing Facebook 'likes' by 59% and Twitter followers by 14%** (1,126 page likes and 2,707 followers respectively)
- Sponsorship and judging of the **Taste of Kent Countryside Award**, working jointly with the Kent Downs AONB Partnership and Produced in Kent. Attendance at the award ceremony and associated promotional activity via Enews, High Weald website and social media channels, focussed on highlighting quality High Weald produce and hard-working farmers
- **1 field trip** for the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology and Human Ecology and Environmental Science undergraduates at Kent University
- Production and distribution of the High Weald Partnership's **Annual Review 2018-19**.







Launch of the Design Guide

Celebrating protected landscapes designation at the AONB conference



# 3

## Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes

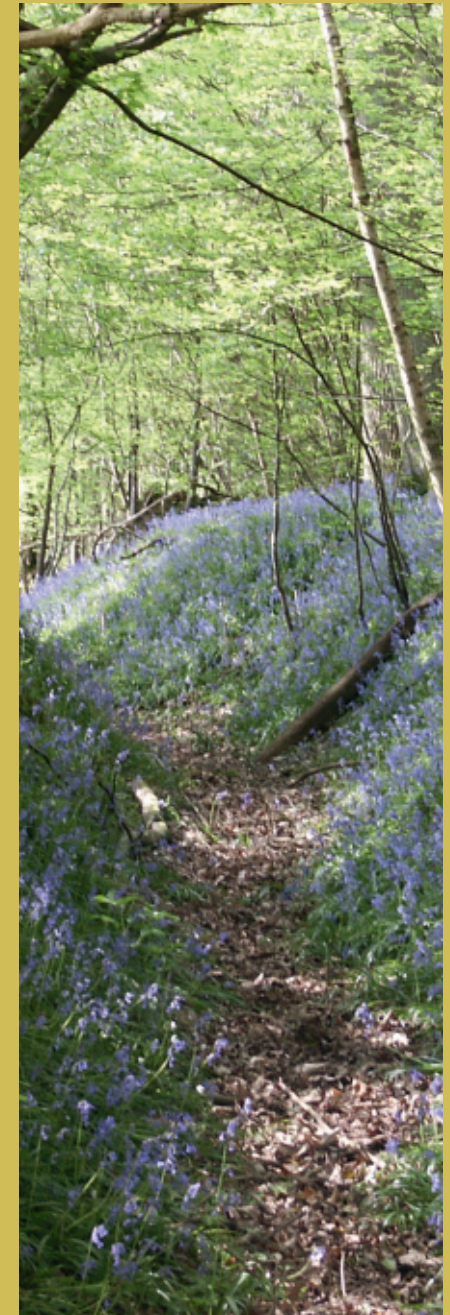
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**We helped AONB Partnership members and others work together to achieve the vision for the AONB through 28 meetings and related follow-up activities.**

Key activities included:

- **2 Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) meetings and 3 Management Board meetings:** to agree the AONB Design Guide, JAC budget 19/20 and organisational risks and mitigation and consider approaches to taking forward the Glover Review recommendations
- **13 working group meetings:** Officer's Steering Group (2); Design Group (1); High Weald Network (5); High Weald Walking Festival (5); Sussex Lund (3) and Weald Meadows Group (1)
- **Raising awareness of the Glover Review recommendations** for protected landscapes with the area's 11 MPs
- **1 AONB training session** for Rother District Council members.

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





Summary of the Colchester Declaration discussion

### 3

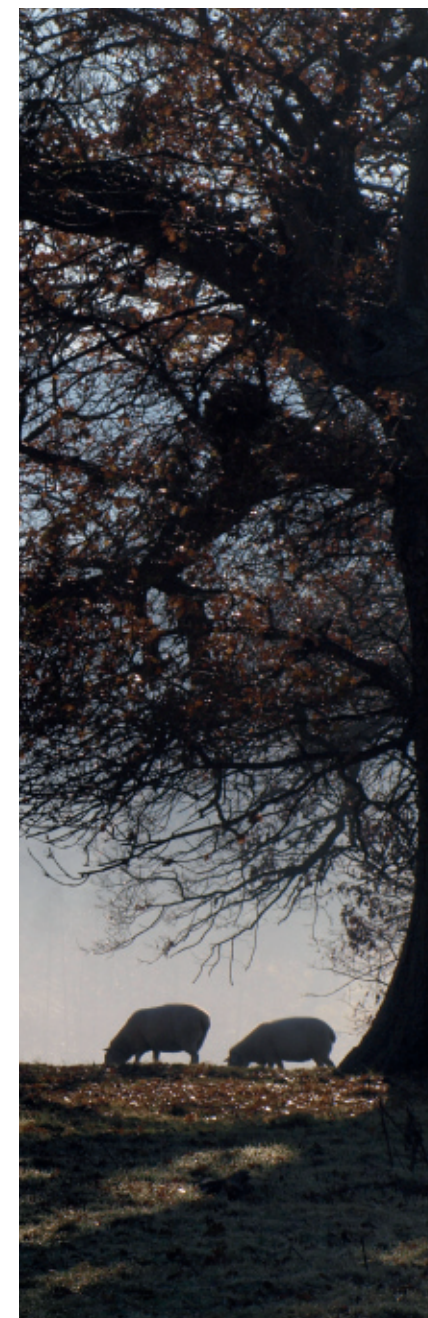
#### Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes

#### The Mayfield Community Play



Key activities included:

- **Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the creation of protected landscapes**, including: NAAONB's Landscapes for Life Week; 'Hearts in the Landscape' social media project, promotion of specially-commissioned Simon Armitage poem 'Fugitives' and the production of 3 nature recovery case studies for the 70@70 campaign
- Attendance at the **NAAONB's annual conference** in Colchester and the **NAAONB AGM**, (leading on 1 workshop)
- Attendance at the **NAAONB lead officers and South East and East Protected Landscapes (SEEPL)** lead officer meetings (4)
- Attendance at the **NAAONB planning officer and SEEPL planning officer meetings** (2), producing responses to support national policy and evidence gathering (Raynsford Review, housing position statement, and planning recommendations of Glover Review), and leading on 1 workshop (major development)
- Membership of the **Colchester Declaration Steering Group** (2 meetings), leading and facilitating delivery of the Colchester Declaration targets
- Representing AONBs on the **Landscape Institute's (LI) Land Managers' working groups**, developing the LI offer for protected landscape professionals (4 events)
- Participation in the **NAAONB's Taking the Lead programme**, developing the AONB Partnership's organisational resilience (6 workshops)
- Participation in the **NAAONB's Communications Group**, developing 'one' voice for AONBs through social media channels
- Participating in **UKPN's South East and East Undergrounding Steering Group** (1 meeting).







Second-hand tractor for community orchard management, supported by Sussex Lund

### 3

#### Championing the High Weald and protected landscapes

Dams to slow water flow, supported by Sussex Lund



#### We secured resources to deliver the AONB Management Plan through 6 contracts/grant awards and submitted one proposal to enable activities in 2020/2021.

- A grant award of £273,632 for the JAC Partnership's activities 2019/20 was confirmed by **Defra**.
- A contribution of £255,490 was made by the **Lund Trust** for developing, promoting and administering **Sussex Lund 2019**, 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 2019/20 under a 5-year contract with Natural England.
- Sums of £164,611 and £99,668 were secured from National Grid's **Visual Impact Assessment Landscape Enhancement Initiative**: for a second boundary restoration project and a woodland restoration project respectively.
- A contract of £5,635 was awarded by **The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme** to facilitate business development training for farm businesses.
- A contract of £8,000 was awarded by **Historic England** to deliver a heritage-focused schools programme.
- Contributions were also received from local **Ramblers Groups** (for the High Weald Walking Festival).

Proposal were made to:

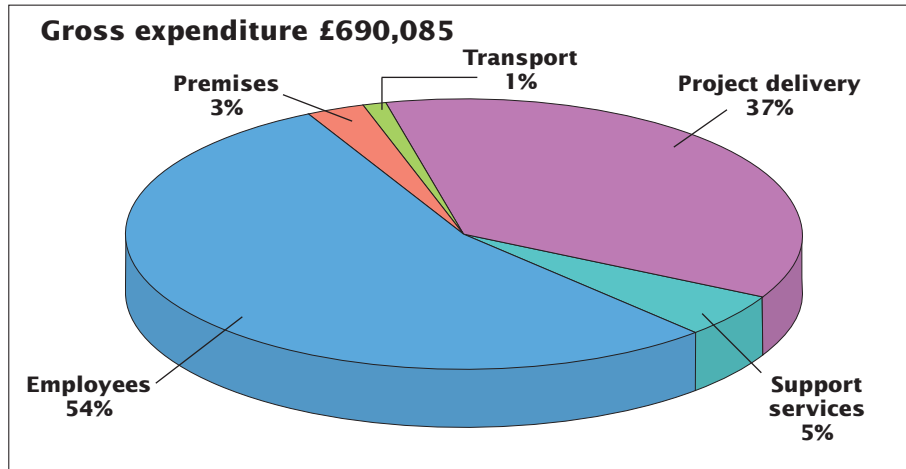
- Defra's **Protected Landscapes Fund** for the 2020/21 contribution to the JAC's work (grant request of £273,632).
- Defra's **Community Woodland Scheme**, in partnership with other AONBs (unsuccessful).



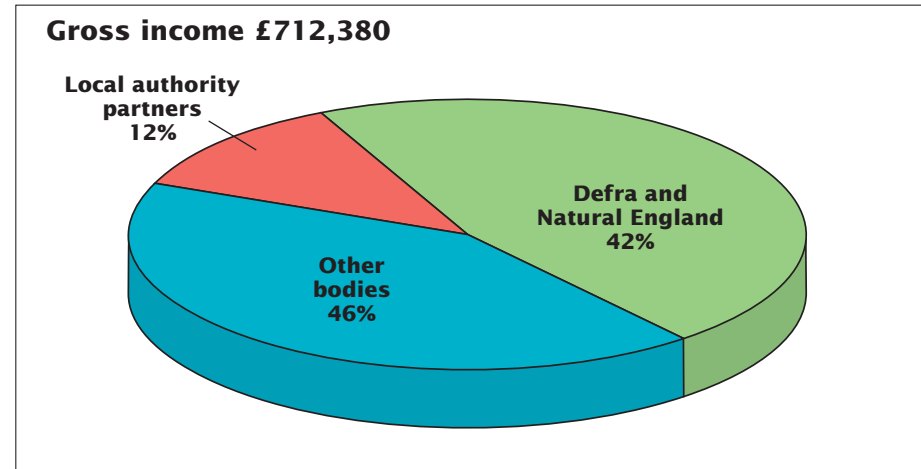
# Financial summary

1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

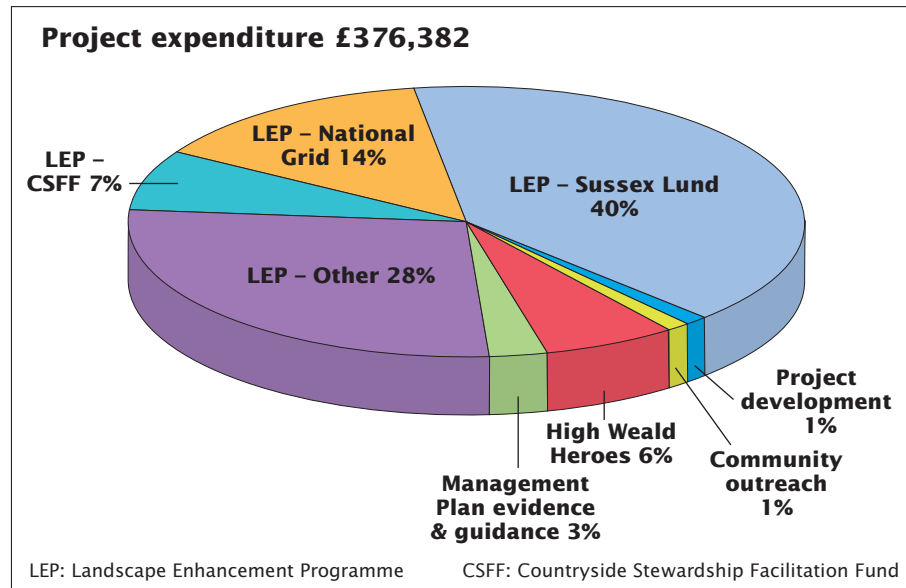
## Total expenditure



## Total income



## Expenditure by project



Other bodies included: Lund Trust (Charites Aid Foundation), National Grid, Environment Agency, Natural England, Kent Wildlife Trust and local Ramblers groups.

The final position for the year was a reserve of £181,524.00 March 2020, which includes the addition of £22,295 in 2019/20.



# High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

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*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 2019/20 were as follows:

## **Joint Advisory Committee and Officer's Steering Group**

### **Chairman**

Mrs S Tidy

### **Vice-chairman**

Councillor B Kentfield, Councillor P Bradbury (from June 2019)

### **Officer's Steering Group Chairman**

Mr D Marlow, Ms J Hollingum (from September 2019)

### **Officer's Steering Group Vice-Chairman**

Ms J Hollingum, Ms D Russell (from September 2019)

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High Weald  
Joint Advisory Committee

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**Natural England**

Laura Newland

**East Sussex County Council**

Councillor Mrs S Tidy

Virginia Pullan

**West Sussex County Council**

Councillor P Bradbury

Don Baker

**Kent County Council**

Councillor M Balfour

Helen Page (to June 2019) TBA

**Surrey County Council**

Councillor Mrs L Steeds

David Greenwood

**Wealden District Council**

Councillor R Moore

Councillor P Dixon (from June 2019)

Natalie Bumpus

**Rother District Council**

Councillor B Kentfield

Councillor J Vine-Hall (from June 2019)

Diane Russell

**Hastings Borough Council**

Cllr M Evans

Councillor L Levane (from September 2019)

Murray Davidson & Kerry Culbert (from June 2019)

**Mid Sussex District Council**

Councillor C Hersey

Councillor P Bradbury (from September 2019)

Jennifer Hollingum

**Horsham District Council**

Councillor A Lee

Councillor T Hogben (from September 2019)

Mark Daly

**Crawley Borough Council**

Councillor I Irving

Richard Mosinghi

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

Councillor Mrs J Soyke

David Scully

**Sevenoaks District Council**

Councillor M Dickens

Helen French

**Ashford Borough Council**

Councillor A Pickering

Carly Pettit (from September 2019)

**Tonbridge & Malling District Council**

Councillor H Rogers

Councillor D Lettington (from May 2019)

Jenny Knowles

**Tandridge District Council**

Councillor Mrs L Lockwood

Sarah Thompson

**JAC Co-optees**

Recreation/Leisure

Mr M Woodcock, Mr C Harrison (from October 2019)

Community

Mrs J Davison

Community/Economy

Mrs P Mayson, Action in Rural Sussex

Landowners

Mr T Bamford, Country Land and Business Association

Farming

Mr W White, National Farmers Union

**JAC Management Board**

Councillor Mrs S Tidy

Councillor P Bradbury (from November 2019)

Councillor M Balfour

Councillor P Dixon (from November 2019)

Councillor J Vine-Hall (from November 2019)

Mrs J Davison

Laura Newland

**Clerk to the JAC**

Samantha Nicholas

**Treasurer to the JAC**

Jill Fisher





Landscapes for Life conference

## 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 2019/20 work programme with a staff team averaging 6 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** – Sarah Watson (0.6 FTE) and Emma White (0.6 FTE from November 2019)

**GIS Intern** – Conor Parkes (1FTE May 2020 to July 2020)

### Projects

**Land Management Project Officer** – Ross Wingfield (1FTE)

**Land Management Project Officer** – Christine Meadows (0.6FTE)

**Education Officer** – Rachel Bennington (0.6 FTE)

Staff built their knowledge and skills through conferences – Oxford Real Farming, Groundswell and the AONBs Landscape for Life – and courses: First Aid at Work, Crowd Funding, Writing for Impact, Human Behaviour Change for Wildlife Conservation, Forestry Commission Grants and Regulations, Archive and Historical Resources and Grassland Species.





# 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.





# Fugitives — Simon Armitage

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*The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty commissioned this poem to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, which paved the way for the creation of the UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.*

Then we woke and were hurtling headlong  
for wealds and wolds,  
blood coursing, the Dee and the Nidd in full spate  
through the spinning waterwheels in the wrists  
and over the heart's weir,  
the nightingale hip-hopping ten to the dozen  
under the morning's fringe.

It was no easy leap, to exit the engine house of the head  
and vault the electric fence  
of commonplace things,  
to open the door of the century's driverless hearse,  
roll from the long cortège  
then dust down and follow  
the twisting ribbon of polecats wriggling free from extinction  
or slipstream the red kite's triumphant flypast out of oblivion  
or trail the catnip of spraint and scat tingeing the morning breeze.

On we journeyed at full tilt  
through traffic-light orchards,  
the brain's compass dialling for fell, moor,  
escarpment and shore, the skull's sextant  
plotting for free states coloured green on the map,  
using hedgerows as handrails,  
barrows and crags as trig points and cats' eyes.

We stuck to the switchbacks and scenic routes,  
steered by the earth's contours and natural lines of desire,  
feet firm on solid footings of bedrock and soil

fracked only by moles.  
We skimmed across mudflat and saltmarsh,  
clambered to stony pulpits on high hills  
inhaling gallons of pure sky  
into the moors of our lungs,  
bartered bitcoins of glittering shingle and shale.

Then arrived in safe havens, entered the zones,  
stood in the grandstands of bluffs and ghylls, spectators  
to flying ponies grazing wild grass to carpeted lawns,  
oaks flaunting turtle doves on their ring-fingers,  
ospreys fishing the lakes from invisible pulleys and hoists,  
the falcon back on its see-through pivot, lured from its gyre.

Here was nature as future,  
the satellite dishes of blue convolvulus  
tuned to the cosmos, tracking the chatter of stars,  
the micro-gadgets of complex insects  
working the fields, heaths tractored by beetles,  
rainbowed hay meadows tipsy with mist and light,  
golden gravel hoarded in eskers and streams.

And we vowed not to slumber again  
but claimed sanctuary  
under the kittiwake's siren  
and corncrake's alarm,  
in realms patrolled by sleepwalking becks and creeks  
where beauty employs its own border police.

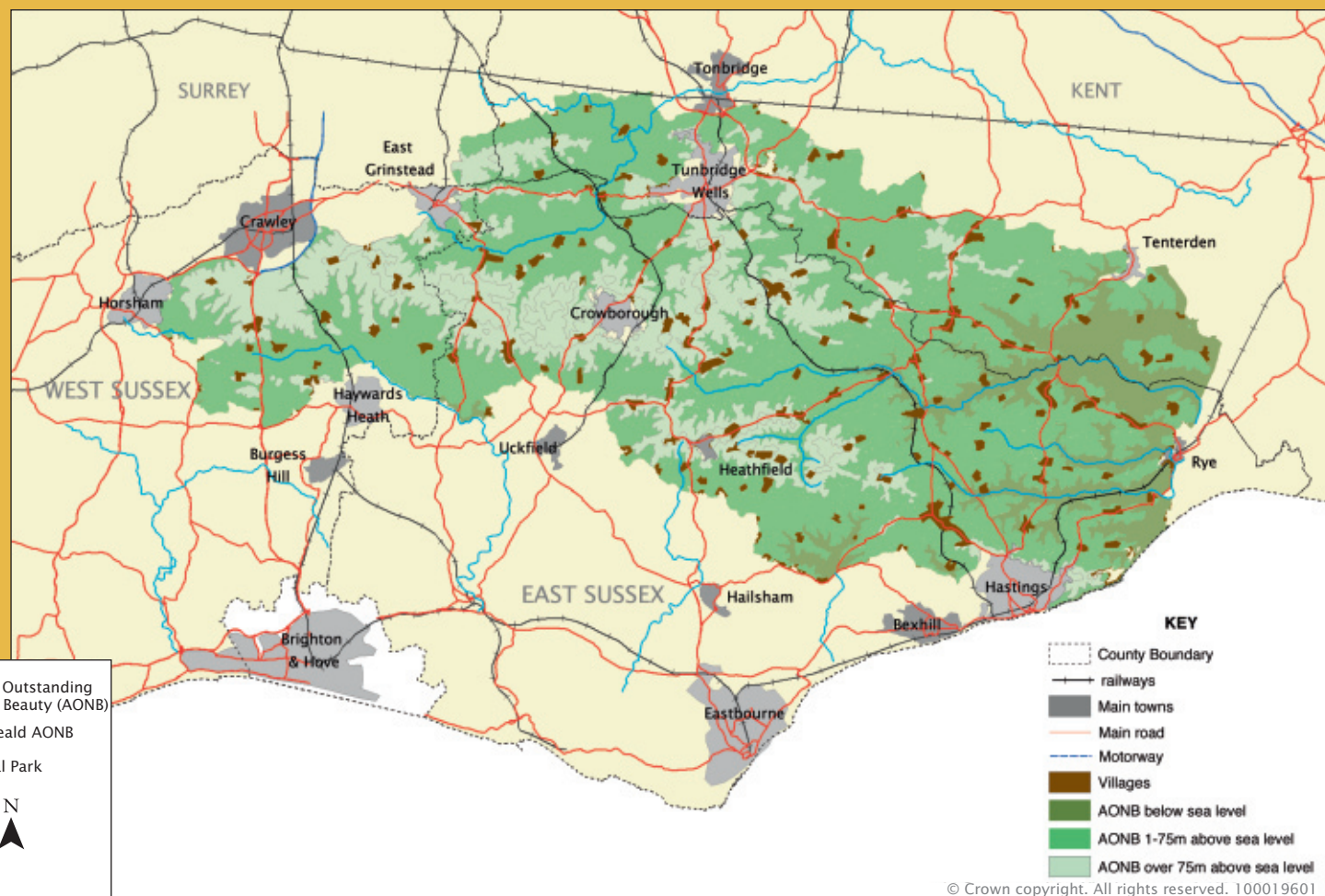
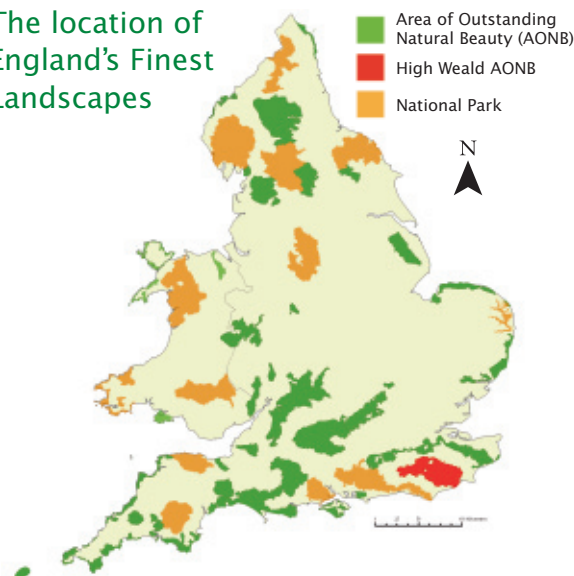
And witnessed ancient trees  
affirming their citizenship of the land,  
and hunkered and swore oaths, made laws  
in hidden parliaments of bays and coves,  
then gathered on commons and capes  
waving passports of open palms, medalled by dog rose and teasel  
and raising the flag of air.

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## The location of England's Finest Landscapes



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