



# 1. Introduction

The High Weald AONB Management Plan is subject to a 5 year review cycle and work to review the 2014-2019 Plan began in March 2017. A crucial part of the review process is engagement, and the decision was taken to engage at an early stage to ensure the revised draft incorporated as many different peoples' views from the outset as possible. The engagement process may be divided into two parts:

1. Expert engagement
2. Public engagement

This report relates to the expert engagement part of the process – the public engagement part of the work will take place in the coming months.

The process involved running a series of character component-themed workshops in which experts their respective fields were invited to submit their views on various aspects of a specific character component. Those unable to attend the workshops were given the option of submitting their views via a feedback form.

The following sections outline the method used to run the workshop, a summary of the results and some conclusions on what they mean for the new plan. This particular report details the woodland-themed workshop, which was the first workshop in the series.

## 2. Method

In order to gather expert input at an early stage, practitioners and representatives from a range of partner organisations were invited to a series of character component-themed workshops. Invitees were selected from the AONB Unit's database of contacts – a process which also afforded the opportunity to update and add to our existing contacts where gaps were apparent – and invitations were sent out via Eventbrite several weeks in advance of the events



Public Understanding & Enjoyment workshop  
Image ©Matt Pitts

The workshops themselves all took place in mid-May, with each workshop consisted of either a morning (10am-1pm) or afternoon (2pm-5pm) session. They involved a series of introductory presentations (outlining the importance of the AONB and Management Plan, as well as introducing the character and significance of the component in question) and the use of facilitators to note down responses to a range of pre-defined questions on a flip chart. Some of the questions also involved a ranking component and the session was broken up by a guest speaker with specialist knowledge of an aspect of a particular component.

The woodland workshop was held in the afternoon of Tuesday May 16<sup>th</sup>. A detailed outline of the work shop may be found in the table on p.3.

Question	Purpose	Activity	Timings
<b>INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION FROM THE DIRECTOR &amp; COMPONENT-SPECIFIC PRESENTATION ON CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE</b>			30 mins
Q1) <i>“What has been done to achieve the conservation and enhancement of High Weald XXXX in the last 5 years?”</i>	The purpose of this questions is: i) to get people in a positive frame of mind by asking them to think about successes/achievements and ii) to contribute to the performance & condition monitoring portion of the plan by giving us a sense of the work that has been done conserve & enhance the landscape and realise the MP’s targets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Write the question at the top of a flipchart sheet in advance of the workshop</li> <li>▪ Split the participants into manageable groups (up to 10 per group) with each group working on separately on the same question</li> <li>▪ Record peoples’ comments on the flipchart, ensuring each group uses a different colour pen</li> <li>▪ Throughout the process try to keep discussion and debate to a minimum and ensure everyone has a say, and try to keep to time</li> <li>▪ Make sure to write as neatly as possible so the information can be transcribed later!</li> </ul>	15 mins
Q2) <i>“What are the main issues affecting the conservation and enhancement of XXXX in the High Weald?”</i>	The purpose of this question is to generate a list of the most important issues affecting each component and in doing so, potentially identify new issues that were not included in the previous plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Write the question at the top of a flipchart sheet in advance of the workshop, as well as the initials of the facilitator, the topic and question</li> <li>▪ For smaller groups (10 and under) this exercise may be done as a single group. For larger groups, split the participants into two groups with each group working on separately on the same question</li> <li>▪ Record peoples’ comments on the flipchart, ensuring each group uses a different colour pen</li> <li>▪ Once everyone’s had a chance to submit their views, number each point randomly</li> <li>▪ Once all the points are numbered, ask the participants to rank them by noting down on sticky dots the numbers of the four issues they consider most important.</li> <li>▪ Once everyone’s numbered their four dots collect them up and – with the help of another facilitator – stick the dots next to their respective point</li> <li>▪ Once all the dots have been stuck up summarise the results for the group pointing out the highest ranking points and asking the groups’ opinion on the result</li> <li>▪ Throughout the process try to keep discussion and debate to a minimum and keep to time</li> <li>▪ Make sure to write as neatly as possible so the information can be transcribed later!</li> </ul>	30 mins
<b>REFRESHMENTS &amp; GUEST SPEAKER</b>			40 mins
<p>Q3i) <i>“What would the successful conservation and enhancement of High Weald XXXX look like?”</i></p> <p>Q3ii) <i>“What needs to be done in the next 5 years to achieve the conservation and enhancement of XXXX in the High Weald?”</i></p>	The purpose of these questions is to get people thinking about: i) what the landscape would be like if it was to be successfully conserved and enhanced and ii) the most achievable actions that need to be taken/changes that need to occur for this vision to be realised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Write the question at the top of a flipchart sheet in advance of the workshop</li> <li>▪ Split participants into manageable groups (up to 10 per group)</li> <li>▪ Give each group a different colour pen and send them to separate stations</li> <li>▪ Allow 20 mins for each group to initially respond to their assigned question and then swap the groups around so each group can have their say on the other groups’ question (<b>NB:</b> make sure you keep the same colour pen so that you can distinguish which responses belong to which group).</li> <li>▪ Once the groups have switched stations, their facilitator should explain the new question ask the group if there’s anything they would like to add to what’s already been said by the previous group. Each group then has ten minutes to add their thoughts and comments to what has already been written down by the preceding group.</li> <li>▪ Once everyone’s had a chance to submit their views, gather everyone into one large group around the Q3ii) <i>“What needs to be done to achieve it?”</i> question and number each point on the board randomly</li> <li>▪ Once all the points are numbered, ask the participants to rank them by noting down on sticky dots the numbers of the four issues they consider most important.</li> <li>▪ Once everyone’s numbered their four dots collect them up and – with the help of another facilitator – stick the dots next to their respective point</li> <li>▪ Once all the dots have been stuck up summarise the results for the group pointing out the highest ranking points and asking the groups’ opinion on the result</li> <li>▪ Throughout the process try to keep discussion and debate to a minimum and keep to time</li> <li>▪ Make sure to write as neatly as possible so the information can be transcribed later!</li> </ul>	c.40 mins
<b>NB:</b> In addition to the activities outlined above, workshop participants will also be given the opportunity to make additions to the draft character statements. The draft statements will be posted on the wall during the workshops and the opportunity to add to them will be flagged up following each character component presentation.			

## 3. Results

Responses from the workshop have been organised by question and are displayed below. A list of the original points for each group is provided first, followed by some basic analysis of these responses. In the case of Q1, this entailed generating a word cloud from participant responses and that shows the most frequently occurring words in larger font.

For the following questions (Q2 – Q3), workshop answers were tabulated and grouped according to themes identified in the existing Management Plan (2014-2019). Where responses did not fit into pre-existing categories they were grouped in their own standalone category. Using this approach enables support for existing issues, targets and indicators of success to be clearly identified, as well as clearly highlighting those that have been newly identified through the workshop process.

Ranking information from the workshop exercises has also been included where available.

### **Q1) What has been done to achieve the conservation & enhancement of High Weald woodland in the last 5 years?**

Both groups' transcribed responses to the first question of the woodland workshop may be seen below:

#### **Group 1 CT responses**

- Lottery funded post advising landowners at HW (PAWS)
- Consistency of partners attention to woodland
- LEEDER grants
- Forestry Commission countryside stewardship grants
- Woodland Trust projects
- Natural England training on SSSIs
- Greater awareness of deer impacts and management – Deer Initiative training
- Active management increased and better
- Use as fuel – woodchip
- Decaying wood within woodlands encouraging this accepting its value
- Woodland management planning
- Raised standard of woodland management
- Ancient woodland inventory
- Gill woodland study
- Increased forestry access
- Wood fairs/training
- Events have increased awareness e.g. pheasants in woodlands
- Archaeology in woodlands better understood and raised awareness

#### **Group 2 CW responses**

- PAWS restoration
- Market growth
- Woodland creation

- Buffering of ancient woodland
- Natural England's and the Forestry Commission's standing advice on the protection of ancient woodland from development
- Availability of grants for biodiversity etc.
- NPPF mentions ancient woodland
- Policies in Local Plans to protect ancient woodland
- Investment in machinery
- Training of coppice/woodland workers
- Ancient Woodland Inventory available for most districts
- Growing public interest
- More education around woodlands – e.g. forest schools
- Improvements in timber harvesting, processing and construction techniques
- Increased demand for home-grown timber e.g. "Grown in Britain". This has attracted bigger players and made them take note
- Increase in woodland use over last 5 years
- Interest and awareness of public about woodlands has grown because of threats – e.g. disease
- Small woodland owners enthusiastic
- Recreational use of woodland growing – e.g. glamping

After transcription, all the above responses were gathered together in a single and fed into an online word cloud generator (available from: <http://www.wordclouds.com/>). The word cloud generator determines the size of the words in the output image by the number of times they are used in the original text. The image below, therefore, provides a visual representation of the most frequently occurring words used by attendees in answer the “what’s been achieved in the last 5 years” question.



## Q2) What are the main issues affecting the conservation & enhancement of woodland in the High Weald?

		Issues raised in the workshop categorised by issues in the 2014-19 AONB Management Plan (with workshop scores in brackets)
Existing top five issues MP 2014-2019	<i>Increasing threat to the viability of small scale coppice businesses vital to the long term management of sensitive ancient woodlands from a combination of socio-economic factors including the lack of affordable rural housing and secure work space; the focus of policy and support on industrial forestry practices</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for landscape approach – adjacent fields and heathland – no whole farm approach (3)</li> <li>- Wood lotting lack of integrated management (2)</li> <li>- Lack of market for wood (2)</li> <li>- Cost of housing affecting ability of workers to live here and lack of storage and security (2)</li> <li>- Reducing number of woodsmen (1)</li> <li>- Loss of woodland culture network – foresters retiring</li> <li>- More part-time (rather than full-time) workers in woodland</li> <li>- Lack of active management (7)</li> <li>- Micro-lotting of woodlands (2)</li> <li>- Woodland lotting fragmentation of ownership making coherent effective management plans difficult (2)</li> <li>- Loss in markets: Weald forest products – local impact but not necessarily widespread trend (1)</li> <li>- Low availability of labour (1)</li> <li>- Cost of application for grant money can be prohibitive (1)</li> <li>- Lack of affordable housing and yard space for woodland workers (1)</li> <li>- Lack of small scale grants for coppice workers</li> <li>- Rural crime and machinery theft</li> </ul>
	<i>Ongoing decline in the species associated with managed coppice including woodland butterflies such as fritillaries mirroring the decline in coppicing and ride management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ecological pressure</li> <li>- Loss of woodland species – birds and butterflies (2)</li> </ul>
	<i>Increasing incidence of fungus like pathogens and insect diseases affecting trees and woodlands increasing economic risk for the industry and requiring rapid adaptation of management practices</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tree disease (4)</li> <li>- Tree disease (3)</li> </ul>
	<i>Ancient woodlands including gill woodlands under threat from eutrophication; trampling, disturbance and invasive species such as rhododendron</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased population visitor pressure and need for education – opportunity but also habitat pressure (3)</li> <li>- Rodi and other invasive species (3)</li> <li>- Cabins in wood/eco-tourism</li> <li>- Gardenfication of woodland – species and garden clippings</li> <li>- Fencing off woodland into gardens</li> <li>- Stock encroaching into woodland</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-native invasives balsam, knotweed etc. (3)</li> <li>- Intensive game rearing and farming impacting woods and wood edges</li> <li>- Dumping of waste in woodlands</li> <li>- Fly tipping</li> <li>- People incorporating woodlands into their gardens</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Deer browsing an increasing threat to woodlands and discouraging active coppice management, with the growing of higher quality timber trees also at risk from bark stripping by squirrels.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deer (7)</li> <li>- Squirrels (1)</li> <li>- Deer pressure (4)</li> <li>- Wild boar and grey squirrel (1)</li> </ul>
<b>New Issues</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased development pressure – developers challenging AWI (3)</li> <li>- Lack of knowledge by some landowners – need for advice (2)</li> <li>- Climate change (2)</li> <li>- Climate change – impact on gills (1)</li> <li>- Challenge of collaboration between landowners and advisors (2)</li> <li>- Resources for advice the same but demand more (1)</li> <li>- Recognition and conservation of ancient and veteran trees (1)</li> <li>- Lack of sympathetic contractors (1)</li> <li>- Is there enough new woodland? Where do the new veteran trees come from? (1)</li> <li>- Network of businesses – culture of woodland (1)</li> <li>- More pressure on public bodies</li> <li>- Brexit – policy uncertainty and funding uncertainty</li> <li>- Management of enclosed commons and greens</li> <li>- Lack of pollarding</li> <li>- Uncertainty around future of grant schemes – countryside stewardship (3)</li> <li>- Impact from house and road building e.g. A21 (2)</li> <li>- Lack of access hindering management (2)</li> <li>- Access to difficult woodland (1)</li> <li>- Poor hedge and shaw management (1)</li> <li>- Low quality timber resource available (1)</li> <li>- Lack of marketing skills (1)</li> <li>- Budget cuts (1)</li> <li>- International market (1)</li> <li>- Lack of public and landowner understanding and awareness of management e.g. coppice (1)</li> <li>- Mushroom picking of a large scale and other commercial foraging</li> <li>- Demand for access can be an issue but also an opportunity</li> </ul>

### Q3 i) What would the successful conservation & enhancement of High Weald woodland look like?

		IoS raised in the workshop categorised by IoS in the 2014-19 AONB Management Plan
Existing IoS MP 2014-2019	<p><b>W1 Objective: To maintain existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.</b></p> <p><b>Associated IoS:</b>  <i>i) no further loss of ancient woodland from 2004 baseline; (including woodlands under 2ha now identified in the Revised Ancient Woodland Inventory completed in 2012 for the High Weald)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No loss of ancient or any woodland better connectivity and even a gain in woodland extent</li> <li>- Improving resilience to disease by planting diversity of native species – and non-natives?</li> <li>- Healthy trees and reduction in disease</li> <li>- I agree this is a good indicator.</li> </ul> <p><b>*NB: a point coloured purple signifies that it has been submitted remotely via a consultation form rather than during the workshop.</b></p>
	<p><b>W2 Objective: To enhance the ecological functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.</b></p> <p><b>Associated IoS:</b>  <i>i) increase in the proportion of ancient woodland designated as SSSI or equivalent</i>   <i>ii) increase in priority woodland sites under active management</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Well managed</li> <li>- More resilient woodland</li> <li>- Connected woodland</li> <li>- Landowners committed to their woods pride in woodland culture</li> <li>- Place for unmanaged woodland</li> <li>- Diversity of age and species</li> <li>- Diversity of species</li> <li>- Diverse woodlands – age and structure</li> <li>- Well managed woodlands</li> <li>- SSSIs are a representative sample of habitats in the south-east region and therefore does not seem an appropriate indicator. Non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites aim to form comprehensive coverage of sites of substantive nature conservation value, however receive approximately the same level of protection as Ancient Woodland (through local planning policy) so perhaps not applicable for an indicator either.</li> <li>- I agree this is an important indicator and should include an ‘identified as non-interventional’ section, if not already included.</li> </ul> <p><b>*NB: a point coloured purple signifies that it has been submitted remotely via a consultation form rather than during the workshop.</b></p>

	<p><b>W3 Objective: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands.</b></p> <p><b>Associated IoS:</b>  <i>i) increase in Historic Environment Records (HER) records for woodlands</i></p> <p><i>ii) increase in woodland managers and contractors trained in woodland archaeology</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrated with historic remains</li> </ul>
	<p><b>W4 Objective: To increase the output of sustainably produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets.</b></p> <p><b>Associated IoS:</b>  <i>i) increase in number of skilled woodland workers</i></p> <p><i>ii) increase in residential dwellings utilising locally sourced wood fuel and/or timber in construction</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accessible to work</li> <li>- More people working in woods</li> <li>- Woodfuel and heating systems</li> <li>- Housing for key land based workers</li> <li>- HW signature house with timber</li> <li>- Planking more woodland in the right place</li> <li>- Local timber used more especially in buildings</li> <li>- Best economic use of woodland</li> <li>- More facilities for woodsmen and accommodation</li> <li>- Vibrant network of interested people</li> </ul>

## New IoS

- Ecologically rich – more insects, butterflies, invertebrates, red squirrel, pine martins and beaver
- Wet woodland acting as flood plain
- More veteran trees
- Woodland more integrated with farming
- Wood pasture increased
- More use of leaf fodder
- Use of wood for soil improvement
- More non woodland products – venison
- Deer management
- Sustainable deer population
- Ash trees
- Wider public appreciation of woodland
- No squirrels (grey)
- More integrated management of woodlots
- Forest schools – make them better
- Game management responsibly run
- Open space management – glades within woodland
- In keeping with High Weald
- Better understanding of area
- Better educated public
- Public responsibly enjoying woodland
- Ride edges kept open
- Well planned and monitored – continuity of Forestry Commission
- Stable organisations consistent advisors
- More funding
- Woodland grant scheme that's specific to SE and administered by FC
- More local timber processing facilities
- More collaboration and joined up working
- Improved green infrastructure around potential development sites
- Better GI connectivity in areas that are developed
- More elm in the landscape
- Better maintained hedgerows

**Q3 ii) What needs to be done in the next 5 years to achieve the conservation & enhancement of High Weald woodland?**

		Targets raised in the workshop categorised by Targets in the 2014-19 AONB Management Plan
<b>Existing targets MP 2014-2019</b>	<p><b>W1 Objective: To maintain existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.</b></p> <p><b>Associated Targets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No loss of ancient woodland;</li> <li>• An understanding of the national value of the woodland network as a whole, with its density of core sites supplemented by mosaics of small sites, recognised in ecological network mapping, green infrastructure and carbon management strategies;</li> <li>• Any proposed increase in woodland cover to be informed by knowledge of the historical ecology of the landscape with small scale woodland creation buffering high value sites such as gills and enhancing landscape connectivity without ‘cutting across the grain’ of the historic landscape taking precedence over large plantations on historically open land.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Re-connecting isolated woodlands (1)</li> <li>- Identifying important woodland and targeting buffering or reconnecting may be an important exercise?</li> </ul> <p><b>*NB: a point coloured purple signifies that it has been submitted remotely via a consultation form rather than during the workshop.</b></p>
	<p><b>W2 Objective: To enhance the ecological functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.</b></p> <p><b>Associated Targets:</b></p> <p>a. Public bodies and charities owning woodland taking the lead, supported by targeted grant and advice mechanisms, in securing active management across large areas in multiple ownerships to i) maintain interconnected ride and open habitat systems across more extensive blocks of woodland particularly wooded heaths and ii) provide appropriate conditions to reverse the decline of key priority species such as the Pearl-bordered Fritillary;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Slow down biodiversity loss in woodlands (5)</li> <li>- Sharing of best practise (5)</li> <li>- Good planning policies protecting woodland and green infrastructure (5)</li> <li>- Buffer ancient woodland against development (4)</li> <li>- Improved woodland resilience – diversity and age (4)</li> <li>- Encourage collaboration to create economies of scale (3)</li> <li>- Landscape scale invasive control (3)</li> <li>- Better biosecurity (2)</li> <li>- Fostering bigger, better more joined up management (1)</li> <li>- Sharing survey data (1)</li> </ul>

b. The under-representation of the High Weald's Ancient Semi-natural Ancient Woodland (ASNW) resource in the national network of protected sites, remedied through complexes of small ancient woodlands, either independently or in association with larger ancient woodlands, designated as SSSIs or equivalent with support for appropriate management;

c. Active interventions in place to control rhododendron and eliminate it from the most sensitive sites e.g. gill woodlands, with public bodies and charities taking a lead;

d. Integration of habitat, species and management data across the Weald and support for landscape scale programmes targeted to reverse the decline in key species and protect vulnerable habitats such as gill woodlands; wet woodlands; veteran trees; wood pasture and parkland;

e. Continuing support for the restoration of planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS) building on the success of the High Weald Ancient Woodland Restoration Project with public bodies and charities taking a lead;

f. Establishment of a long term ecological monitoring and research programme to assess the management status of woodlands, and the impact of pests and diseases such as Ash dieback; climate change; deer browsing pressure and increased mechanisation on the woodland resource to inform future policy;

g. Rural development support targeted at woodland businesses that can deliver small scale and sensitive management of ancient woodlands, with support also provided for businesses developing a supply of 'local seed' tree planting stock;

h. Planning policies and decisions taking account of the low resistance and longer recovery times of woodlands; recognising the significance of incremental damage from trampling and disturbance by livestock, machinery and recreational pressure;

<p>i. Woodland owners and managers, and woodland contractors able to access specialised advice and training to support management of sensitive ancient woodland habitats and associated species;</p> <p>j. Felling licences and woodland grant schemes considering the potential impact on woodland ecology in the wider landscape, connected and adjacent woods as well as other habitats;</p> <p>k. Application of Natural England’s Standing Advice on Ancient Woodland applied across the AONB in all relevant land use decision making with a minimum 15m buffer and having regard for individual context;</p> <p>l. Support for veteran tree surveys to establish a baseline for monitoring and protecting such trees;</p> <p>m. Implement developing UK tree and plant health biosecurity policies and ensure effective liaison and communication between forest managers and plant health specialists.</p>	
<p><b>W3 Objective: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands.</b></p> <p><b>Associated Targets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support provided for archaeological survey and research to remedy the under-recording of the woodland archaeological resource and inform its future management; integration of woodland archaeology data with the Historic Environment Records (HER), and improved dissemination of information online;</li> <li>• Public bodies and charities owning ancient woodlands leading on proactively identifying and promoting the archaeology and historic assets of woodlands;</li> <li>• Training in soil conservation and woodland archaeology accepted by forestry bodies and land based training providers as a minimum standard for machinery operators in ancient woodlands.</li> </ul>	

**W4 Objective: To increase the output of sustainably produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets.**

**Associated Targets:**

- a. Public subsidy and support mechanisms for biomass and wood fuel tailored to the character of the High Weald, focusing on small scale residential and business log wood or mixed installations; local log wood networks and support for woodland businesses delivering sensitive management of ancient woodlands;
- b. The Deer Initiative expanded and effective deer control secured over large areas in multiple ownership with public bodies actively promoting venison consumption;
- c. Commitment by public bodies to promote and procure local wood products including chestnut fencing and timber in residential construction;
- d. Support for innovation and product development focused on utilising small diameter hardwood and softwood thinning for higher value local uses;
- e. Coordination with other bodies to lobby for tighter controls on the global trade in plants and improve biosecurity measures to minimise pest and disease threats;
- f. Investigate and consult on possible control and eradication proposals for grey squirrels;
- g. A partnership between forestry bodies, planning authorities and rural development initiatives to provide business support, training and planning advice in an integrated manner with a joint initiative established to tackle housing and yard space affordability;
- h. Training geared to efficient coppice harvesting and utilisation; programmes expanded to facilitate farmers and growers utilising wood on the farm, and vocational training in schools and colleges to support careers in woodland management and timber processing;

- Deer management and marketing of venison (5)
- More training available for forest coppice workers (4)
- Use more local timber for building etc. (3)
- Improved understanding of needs of woodland sector amongst planners (2)
- Improved timber quality (2)
- Implementation of new techniques to control grey squirrels – e.g. good nature traps (2)
- Working with local authorities to promote use of local timber in buildings, for instance design guidance (2)
- Build brand for High Weald wood products timber (1)
- Develop farmsteads so there is affordable housing for rural workers (1)
- Forestry colleges need to better teach student realities of working in woodland sector (1)
- Encourage self-builders to use timber

	<p>i. Baseline assessment of the state of the woodland industry undertaken with special attention given to coppice workers and the extent of coppicing activity.</p>	
<p><b>New targets</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More education so people understand the need for woodland management (8)</li> <li>- Better promotion of wider benefits of trees and woodland e.g. air quality (3)</li> <li>- Need to achieve greater recognition of value and importance of commercial forestry – plantations aren’t all evil (2)</li> <li>- Image of commercial forestry needs to be improved (2)</li> <li>- Use of AOC for forestry workers (1)</li> <li>- Achieve/secure continuity in terms of woodland grant schemes (1)</li> <li>- Possibility of incorporating non-natives to improve productivity – e.g. eucalyptus (1)</li> <li>- Make the business of taking on apprentices less burdensome and more straight forward (1)</li> <li>- Better evidence base and information readily available on value of woods and trees (1)</li> <li>- Facilitate access to woodland that is difficult to access (1)</li> <li>- Greater community involvement in woodland management</li> <li>- Developer contributions funding improvements</li> <li>- Educate potential users about timber</li> <li>- Doing more high profile builds as pilots e.g. schools</li> <li>- Educate potential users about timber</li> <li>- Target of % locally sourced timber</li> <li>- Inspire more investment in supply chain</li> </ul>	



## 4. Conclusions

The woodland workshop provided an invaluable opportunity to engage with a range of experts at an early stage of the Management Plan review. The input that has been provided on the issues, indicators of success and targets for woodland will help shape the next Plan and highlight sections that require updating and/or additional information.

By comparing responses collated during the workshop and organising them alongside the content of the existing plan (see the tables on the preceding pages), it is clear that many of the points raised – including some of the most highly ranking (where ranking data is available) – are largely supportive and fit squarely within the issues, indicators of success and targets of the existing Plan. Where differences do occur (such as around the importance of continuity in woodland grant scheme support and the need for improved public understanding of woodlands and their management – points which are not explicitly mentioned in the woodland section of the current Plan) this will be taken on board in the review process and appropriate updates made. Similarly, parts of the plan that received little or no support from consultees will be considered for removal or alteration.

As well as informing the redrafting of the revised Plan, the information gathered at this expert engagement workshop will also be fed into the Performance and Condition Monitoring reports – documents that are required by the review process and that help measure the effectiveness of the last plan and thereby highlight areas that require improvement in the next Plan.

In conclusion, the information summarised in this report represent a critical first step in the 2019-2024 Management Plan review.

# Appendix A

## Workshop question response transcripts

**Q1)** What has been done to achieve the conservation & enhancement of High Weald woodland in the last 5 years?

### Group 1 CT responses

- Lottery funded post advising landowners at HW (PAWS)
- Consistency of partners attention to woodland
- LEEDER grants
- Forestry Commission countryside stewardship grants
- Woodland Trust projects
- Natural England training on SSSIs
- Greater awareness of deer impacts and management – Deer Initiative training
- Active management increased and better
- Use as fuel – woodchip
- Decaying wood within woodlands encouraging this accepting its value
- Woodland management planning
- Raised standard of woodland management
- Ancient woodland inventory
- Gill woodland study
- Increased forestry access
- Wood fairs/training
- Events have increased awareness e.g. pheasants in woodlands
- Archaeology in woodlands better understood and raised awareness

### Group 2 CW responses

- PAWS restoration
- Market growth
- Woodland creation
- Buffering of ancient woodland
- Natural England's and the Forestry Commission's standing advice on the protection of ancient woodland from development
- Availability of grants for biodiversity etc.
- NPPF mentions ancient woodland
- Policies in Local Plans to protect ancient woodland
- Investment in machinery
- Training of coppice/woodland workers
- Ancient Woodland Inventory available for most districts
- Growing public interest
- More education around woodlands – e.g. forest schools
- Improvements in timber harvesting, processing and construction techniques

- Increased demand for home-grown timber e.g. "Grown in Britain". This has attracted bigger players and made them take note
- Increase in woodland use over last 5 years
- Interest and awareness of public about woodlands has grown because of threats – e.g. disease
- Small woodland owners enthusiastic
- Recreational use of woodland growing – e.g. glamping

## Q2) What are the main issues affecting the conservation & enhancement of woodland in the High Weald?

<b>Group 1 CT responses</b>	<b>Rank</b>
▪ Deer	7
▪ Tree disease	4
▪ Increased population visitor pressure and need for education – opportunity but also habitat pressure	3
▪ Increased development pressure – developers challenging AWI	3
▪ Rodi and other invasive species	3
▪ Need for landscape approach – adjacent fields and heathland – no whole farm approach	3
▪ Wood lotting lack of integrated management	2
▪ Lack of knowledge by some landowners – need for advice	2
▪ Lack of market for wood	2
▪ Climate change	2
▪ Challenge of collaboration between landowners and advisors	2
▪ Cost of housing affecting ability of workers to live here and lack of storage and security	2
▪ Squirrels	1
▪ Access to difficult woodland	1
▪ Resources for advice the same but demand more	1
▪ Recognition and conservation of ancient and veteran trees	1
▪ Lack of sympathetic contractors	1
▪ Is there enough new woodland? Where do the new veteran trees come from?	1
▪ Network of businesses – culture of woodland	1
▪ Reducing number of woodsmen	1
▪ More pressure on public bodies	1
▪ Ecological pressure	1
▪ Brexit – policy uncertainty and funding uncertainty	1
▪ Loss of woodland culture network – foresters retiring	1
▪ Cabins in wood/eco-tourism	1
▪ Gardenfication of woodland – species and garden clippings	1
▪ Fencing off woodland into gardens	1
▪ Stock encroaching into woodland	1
▪ Management of enclosed commons and greens	1
▪ Lack of pollarding	1
▪ More part-time workers in woodland	1
<b>Group 2 CW responses</b>	<b>Rank</b>
▪ Lack of active management	7
▪ Deer pressure	4
▪ Tree disease	3
▪ Non-native invasives balsam, knotweed etc.	3
▪ Uncertainty around future of grant schemes – countryside stewardship	3
▪ Impact from house and road building e.g. A21	2
▪ Micro-lotting of woodlands	2

- Loss of woodland species – birds and butterflies 2
- Lack of access hindering management 2
- Woodland lotting fragmentation of ownership making coherent effective management plans difficult 2
- Poor hedge and shaw management 2
- Loss in markets: Weald forest products – local impact but not necessarily widespread trend 1
- Low quality timber resource available 1
- Wild boar and grey squirrel 1
- Low availability of labour 1
- Lack of marketing skills 1
- Climate change – impact on gills 1
- Cost of application for grant money can be prohibitive 1
- Budget cuts 1
- International market 1
- Lack of affordable housing and yard space for woodland workers
- Lack of public and landowner understanding and awareness of management e.g. coppice
- Lack of small scale grants for coppice workers
- Intensive game rearing and farming impacting woods and wood edges
- Dumping of waste in woodlands
- Rural crime and machinery theft
- Mushroom picking of a large scale and other commercial foraging
- Fly tipping
- Demand for access can be an issue but also an opportunity
- People incorporating woodlands into their gardens

### Q3 i) What would the successful conservation & enhancement of High Weald woodland look like?

#### Group 1 CT responses

- Ecologically rich – more insects, butterflies, invertebrates, red squirrel, pine martins and beaver
- Well managed
- Diversity of age and species
- Accessible to work
- More people working in woods
- Woodfuel and heating systems
- Housing for key land based workers
- HW signature house with timber
- More resilient woodland
- Wet woodland acting as flood plain
- Connected woodland
- More veteran trees
- Woodland more integrated with farming
- Diversity of species
- Wood pasture increased
- More use of leaf fodder
- Use of wood for soil improvement
- More non woodland products – venison
- Landowners committed to their woods pride in woodland culture
- Deer management
- Ash trees
- Wider public appreciation of woodland
- No squirrels (grey)
- Planking more woodland in the right place
- More integrated management of woodlots
- Forest schools – make them better
- Game management responsibly run
- Local timber used more especially in buildings
- Open space management – glades within woodland
- In keeping with High Weald
- Integrated with historic remains
- Better understanding of area
- Place for unmanaged woodland
- Ride edges kept open
- Best economic use of woodland
- Well planned and monitored – continuity of Forestry Commission
- More facilities for woodsmen and accommodation
- More funding
- Stable organisations consistent advisors
- Vibrant network of interested people
- Public responsibly enjoying woodland

## Group 2 CW responses

- Healthy trees and reduction in disease
- Diverse woodlands – age and structure
- Well managed woodlands
- Woodland grant scheme that's specific to SE and administered by FC
- More local timber processing facilities
- More collaboration and joined up working
- Sustainable deer population
- Better educated public
- No loss of ancient or any woodland better connectivity and even a gain in woodland extent
- Improved green infrastructure around potential development sites
- Better GI connectivity in areas that are developed
- More elm in the landscape
- Improving resilience to disease by planting diversity of native species – and non-natives?
- Better maintained hedgerows

**Q3 ii) what needs to be done in the next 5 years to achieve the conservation & enhancement of High Weald woodland?**

<b>Group 1 &amp; Group 2 combined responses</b>	<b>Rank</b>
▪ More education so people understand the need for woodland management	8
▪ Slow down biodiversity loss in woodlands	5
▪ Sharing of best practise	5
▪ Good planning policies protecting woodland and green infrastructure	5
▪ Deer management and marketing of venison	5
▪ More training available for forest coppice workers	4
▪ Buffer ancient woodland against development	4
▪ Improved woodland resilience – diversity and age	4
▪ Encourage collaboration to create economies of scale	3
▪ Use more local timber for building etc.	3
▪ Better promotion of wider benefits of trees and woodland e.g. air quality	3
▪ Landscape scale invasive control	3
▪ Improved understanding of needs of woodland sector amongst planners	2
▪ Need to achieve greater recognition of value and importance of commercial forestry – plantations aren't all evil	2
▪ Image of commercial forestry needs to be improved	2
▪ Improved timber quality	2
▪ Implementation of new techniques to control grey squirrels – e.g. good nature traps	2
▪ Better biosecurity	2
▪ Working with local authorities to promote use of local timber in buildings, for instance design guidance	2
▪ Build brand for High Weald wood products timber	1
▪ Develop farmsteads so there is affordable housing for rural workers	1
▪ Use of AOC for forestry workers	1
▪ Achieve/secure continuity in terms of woodland grant schemes	1
▪ Possibility of incorporating non-natives to improve productivity – e.g. eucalyptus	1
▪ Forestry colleges need to better teach student realities of working in woodland sector	1
▪ Make the business of taking on apprentices less burdensome and more straight forward	1
▪ Better evidence base and information readily available on value of woods and trees	1
▪ Re-connecting isolated woodlands	1
▪ Fostering bigger, better more joined up management	1
▪ Facilitate access to woodland that is difficult to access	1
▪ Sharing survey data	1
▪ Greater community involvement in woodland management	
▪ Developer contributions funding improvements	
▪ Educate potential users about timber	
▪ Doing more high profile builds as pilots e.g. schools	

- Educate potential users about timber
- Encourage self-builders to use timber
- Target of % locally sourced timber
- Inspire more investment in supply chain

# Appendix B

## Consultation form response transcripts

### High Weald AONB Management Plan Review

*Technical consultation on the conservation and enhancement of the **woodland** component of natural beauty*

#### Context

AONB Management Plans guide the management of the nation's protected landscapes and are a statutory requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000. The High Weald AONB Management Plan is an evidence-based document that sets out the priorities for future conservation and enhancement efforts in the area, as well as providing a means for you and others to assess the impact of development on the landscape's special character.



#### Purpose of the consultation

We are reviewing the High Weald AONB Management Plan (on behalf of our 15 local authority partners) and need your specialist input on the woodland component of natural beauty. Specifically, we would like your views on:

- landscape character as it relates to woodland
- the top issues facing woodland
- the most important long-term objectives for the management for woodland
- the most significant 2024 management targets for woodland
- the means by which progress towards these objectives should be assessed

## How you can make your views heard

Please fill in your contact details below and then complete the consultation form on the following pages. Text from the current Plan is highlighted in the grey. Targets from the current Management Plan have been omitted for brevity, but can be found in full [here](#), along with the information specifically relating to geology, climate and water (pp.22-23). Your views on which targets should be rolled forward to 2019 and why would be welcome, as well as any proposals for new targets. A map showing the extent of the AONB may be found at the end of this document.

The information you provide will help shape the new Management Plan and, ultimately, the future management of this special area.

*Thank you in advance for you time!*

<b>Name:</b>	XXXX
<b>Email:</b>	XXXX
<b>Organisation:</b>	XXXX

## Woodland – character defined

The High Weald AONB is characterized by the great extent of ancient woods, gills, and shaws in small holdings, the value of which is inextricably linked to long-term management.

### Comments

-

### Top 5 issues:

- Increasing threat to the viability of small scale coppice businesses vital to the long term management of sensitive ancient woodlands from a combination of socio-economic factors including the lack of affordable rural housing and secure work space; the focus of policy and support on industrial forestry practices;
- Ongoing decline in the species associated with managed coppice including woodland butterflies such as fritillaries mirroring the decline in coppicing and ride management;
- Increasing incidence of fungus like pathogens and insect diseases affecting trees and woodlands increasing economic risk for the industry and requiring rapid adaptation of management practices;
- Ancient woodlands including gill woodlands under threat from eutrophication; trampling, disturbance and invasive species such as rhododendron;
- Deer browsing an increasing threat to woodlands and discouraging active coppice management, with the growing of higher quality timber trees also at risk from bark stripping by squirrels.

### Comments / Additional issues

-

## W1 Objective: To maintain existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland

### Indicators of success

- i) No further loss of ancient woodland from 2004 baseline; (including woodlands under 2ha now identified in the Revised Ancient Woodland Inventory completed in 2012 for the High

Weald).
<p>Comments:</p> <p>I agree this is a good indicator.</p>
<p>2019 targets to be rolled forward (please mark with a 'x')</p> <p>a)   b)   c)</p>
<p>Proposed new targets for 2024:</p> <p>-</p>
<p><b>W2 Objective: To enhance the ecological functioning of woodland at a landscape scale</b></p> <p><b>Indicators of success</b></p> <p>i.      Increase in the proportion of ancient woodland designated as SSSI or equivalent;</p> <p>ii.     Increase in priority woodland sites under active management.</p>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>i)      SSSIs are a representative sample of habitats in the south-east region and therefore does not seem an appropriate indicator. Non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites aim to form comprehensive coverage of sites of substantive nature conservation value, however receive approximately the same level of protection as Ancient Woodland (through local planning policy) so perhaps not applicable for an indicator either.</p> <p>ii)     I agree this is an important indicator and should include an 'identified as non-interventional' section, if not already included.</p>

2019 targets to be rolled forward (please mark with a 'x')

a) b) c) d) e) f) g) h) i) j) k) l) m)

Proposed new targets for 2024:

Identifying important woodland and targeting buffering or reconnecting may be an important exercise?

**W3 Objective: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands**

**Indicators of success**

- i. Increase in Historic Environment Records (HER) records for woodlands;
- ii. Increase in woodland managers and contractors trained in woodland archaeology.

Comments :

2019 targets to be rolled forward (please mark with a 'x')

a) b) c)

Proposed new targets for 2024:

**W4 Objective: To increase the output of sustainably produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets**

**Indicators of success**

- i. Increase in number of skilled woodland workers;
- ii. Increase in residential dwellings utilising locally sourced wood fuel and/or timber in construction.

Comments: -

2019 targets to be rolled forward (please mark with a 'x')

a)   b)   c)   d)   e)   f)   g)   h)   i)

Proposed new targets for 2024:

**Any other comments?**

No. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and apologies I could not attend on the day.