

# HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE



**23 March 2016 meeting** held at East Court, College Lane, East Grinstead, RH19 3LT

## Members present:

Mrs J Davison	Sevenoaks District Council, Chairman
Cllr B Kentfield	Rother District Council, Deputy Chairman
Cllr Mrs S Tidy	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Mrs L Dunbar	Tandridge District Council
Cllr Mrs J Soyke	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr Mrs R Moore	Wealden District Council
Cllr M Balfour	Kent County Council
Cllr L Dunbar	Tandridge District Council
Cllr B Acraman	West Sussex County Council

## Officers present:

Mr T Alty	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Mr D Greenwood	Team Leader, Countryside Funding and Marketing , Surrey County Council
Ms G Sherwin	AONB Business Manager, High Weald AONB Unit
Mr M Pitts	AONB Outreach Officer, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs T Taylor	AONB Land Management Adviser, High Weald AONB Unit
Mr C Winchester	AONB Landscape Adviser, High Weald AONB Unit
Mr D Marlow	OSG Chairman, Rother District Council
Mr T Dyer	Team Manager, Environment and Heritage, West Sussex County Council

## 1. APOLOGIES

### 1.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:

Councillor C Hersey, Councillor M Sydney, Councillor A Pickering, Councillor R Street, Councillor H Rogers, Mrs Alison Field, Mrs V Pullen, Mrs H French, Mr J Seymour , Mrs J Hollingum, Mr D Scully, Mr J Lavender, Mrs S Marsh, Mrs J Hollingum.

## 2. MEMBERS INTERESTS

### 2.1 It was noted that there were no declarations of interest raised by the Members.

## 3. URGENT MATTERS

### 3.1 It was noted that no urgent matters were raised by the Members.

## 4. MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 6 November 2016

### 4.1 Apologies were given for not including David Marlow on the attendance list for the meeting held on 6 November and it was agreed that the minutes would be updated accordingly.

### 4.2 RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting of 6 November 2016 as a correct record.

5. **MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD – 2 March 2016**

5.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Management Board held on 2 March 2016 as a correct record.

6. **MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP – 10 February 2016**

6.1 The Committee considered a verbal report on the Officer Steering Group (OSG) by the OSG Chairman, David Marlow.

6.2 David Marlow informed the Committee that the OSG has produced a Planning Briefing Paper. The Paper was based on a report comparing the local authority planning policies across the AONB which had been produced by Natalie Bumpus, Wealden DC, on behalf of the OSG. The Paper has been produced to assist Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in fulfilling their duties to have regard to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. The Paper has been approved by the Management Board and will be sent to the Heads of Planning for circulation within the local authorities.

6.4 David Marlow, on behalf of the OSG, also confirmed that they will produce a summarised version of the Planning Briefing Paper for Members who attend planning committees.

6.3 RESOLVED to note:

(1) the Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 10 February 2016 as a correct record.

(2) the Planning Briefing Paper, and to send the Briefing Paper with a covering letter to the appropriate Heads of Planning within the AONB Local Authorities.

7.0. **REVENUE BUDGET 2016/2017**

7.1 The Committee considered a report by Finance Manager, Thomas Alty, who presented the Revenue Budget for 2016/17.

7.2 The Defra contribution for 2016/17 was forecast to reduce by £12,800. However, since the budget was approved for consultation, Defra have confirmed an inflationary increase of £4,400 bringing the 2016/17 contribution to £260,000. The additional contribution has been allocated to projects.

7.3 The local authorities have confirmed contribution towards the core budget with the exception of Kent County Council which has provisionally approved their contribution, totalling £10,000, subject to formal approval of the budget.

7.4 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects is estimated to be £150,200 in 2016/17. It is proposed to allocate £56,000 from the Defra 'single pot' to projects. The project budget reflects that current projects are more modest in scale with development and delivery dependent on core, not project staff.

7.5 The increased Defra contribution of £17,800 over the 4 year period will help to meet the core budget deficit forecast for 2017/18 to 2019/20.

- 7.6 It was confirmed that although Defra no longer contributes up to 75% of redundancy payments, the reserves have been built up to £104,400, and in the worst case scenario will cover all staff redundancies.
- 7.7 It was reflected that the positive outcome in the current budget allocation was due to the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty campaigning on behalf of the AONBs and Rory Stewart MP's support for AONBs and National Parks.
- 7.3 RESOLVED to note the report and:
- (1) approve the Revenue Budget for 2016/17.
- (2) thank the local authorities and Defra for their contributions towards core costs and High Weald Heroes.

## **8. LAND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME (LEP)**

- 8.1 The JAC considered a report by Gerry Sherwin, High Weald Business Manager, on the Landscape Enhancement Programme and a presentation from Matthew Pitts and Tamara Taylor on the Programme's progress.
- 8.2 Gerry Sherwin informed the Committee of the background to developing the LEP. The Unit have been very successful in the past in securing project funding through Heritage Lottery Funds but this area has become excessively competitive. Many of the past land management schemes have been habitat-specific such as Living Woods and the Weald Meadows Initiative, however the new approach will advise on all habitats that require restoration. There are now many grants which are becoming available to landowners such as the Water Catchment Partnerships, National Grid and Countryside Stewardship which are not easy to access. To maximise the opportunity for landowners to access the grants and deliver management plan objectives, two officers have been appointed. Matt Pitts, who previously managed the Living Woods project, is now the Outreach Officer (0.8FTE), and Tamara Taylor (0.4FTE), who has worked in agricultural sector for many years with Natural England and National Trust, has been recruited as a Land Management Adviser.
- 8.3 Cllr Brian Kentfield enquired whether the Unit could ask for contributions from the landowners. Gerry Sherwin informed the Committee that the grant applications could include costs for managing project implementation but not for the initial development of projects though the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund, as an exception, could specifically fund project development.
- 8.4 Matt Pitts and Tamara Taylor took the Committee through a presentation of the Landscape Enhancement Programme's delivery to date. Presentation appended.
- a. The presentation covered the opportunities to improve a wide range of habitats by accessing various grant schemes which can tackle issues such as: over grazing; poor quality infrastructure; rights of way access; degraded hedgerows; and river restoration to improve water quality and flow.

- b. Many of the new funding programmes give greater flexibility and opportunities for the Unit to fill the gaps that will support landowners to benefit from the schemes. The Unit has taken a targeted approach through GIS mapping to show existing stewardship schemes. This has been followed up by ground surveying the areas that are not currently under Countryside Stewardship and building relationships with the local landowners.
  - c. The Unit have put in a bid to the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund (CSFF) which allocates funds to service providers with environmental land management experience to support land managers to improve the natural environment. The Rother & Dudwell area has been selected and 23 landowners with 3,000 conjoined hectares have signed up to the scheme, 1000 hectares over the minimum requirements for this Fund.
  - d. The National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative has led to the Unit identifying 35 km of hedgerow restoration in the project area with an estimated cost of £450,000.
  - e. Sussex Lund, managed by the Sussex Community Foundation, was launched at the beginning of March and applications are required by 15 April 2016. The Fund has been opened up to the all parishes in the AONB. The LEP is enabling several projects to apply such as Stonegate Primary School, Wadhurst Parish, Crowborough Town Council and Tablehurst Farm in West Sussex.
  - f. The Committee was informed of two projects which have been initiated through the LEP. The Red Barn Field project in Sedlescombe has an under-managed species-rich meadow. The Parish Council, through the LEP, now has a Management Plan and initiated a grazing scheme to install secure fencing. Keith Datchler of the High Weald Landscape Trust has carried out emergency hay cutting and the fencing will be installed in the next month. The adjacent farmer will support the grazing programme. The meadow is used by the community and will act as a seed bank for future meadows.
  - g. The Rother and Romney Water Catchment Partnership have allocated funding to manage the removal of barriers such as the box culvert at Doleham Ditch, a tributary of the Rother. The Unit is working in partnership with the landowner, the Internal Drainage Board, the Environment Agency and Wild Trout Trust to improve the flow of the river which will impact on species such as wild trout.
- 8.5 The Members agreed that engagement with landowners from the officers was invaluable. This facilitation was essential as many landowners struggle to cope with the Stewardship Scheme paperwork. This will also encourage landowners to improve infrastructure and encourage positive grazing schemes. Cllr Mrs Moore offered to participate in the scheme to see how accessible they are to small- scale farmers.
- 8.6 There was a discussion around invasive species, highlighting the lack of continuity of management to eradicate certain species such as Himalayan Balsam, and the risks of tuberculosis spread in the Weald's cattle through increasing badger populations.
- 8.7 The LEADER Programme was also discussed and the Unit advised that there may be scope for other grant funds, such as Sussex Lund, to support projects being submitted to the

LEADER programmes that were not scoring highly against its criteria, for example jobs generated, with other grant funds such as Sussex Lund which may be more appropriate.

8.8 RESOLVED to note the report and for the project funding to be allocated to Landscape Enhancement Programme.

## **9. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING**

9.1 The JAC considered a report and presentation from Charles Winchester, Landscape Adviser, on the background to the Neighbourhood Planning guidance. Presentation appended.

- a) It was presented to the Committee that neighbourhood planning was introduced in the Localism Act in 2011, and has the potential to significantly affect the location and appearance of future development across the AONB. In the past few months there has been significant increase in parishes requesting data. The Unit holds a large amount of Geographic Information System character components which can be shared with a wider audience.
- b) The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) data shows there is a significant increase in the number of parishes producing a neighbourhood plan. The AONB has seen an increase across East Sussex and Kent with the greatest concentration in Mid-Sussex.
- c) The Unit, with the support of the Officer Steering Group, have developed guidance and metadata to upload on the website for each of the 99 parishes.

9.2 The Committee discussed the cost of producing a neighbourhood plan. The initial cost analysis of £15,000 tends to be very different to the reality, up to £35,000 in some cases. Cllr Mrs Davison informed the Committee that it was possible to get funding to support the development of neighbourhood plans.

9.3 The Unit explained that due to IT issues the uploading of the data onto the AONB website was taking longer than expected. Cllr Mrs Moore urged the Unit to have the information available as soon as possible as the data was also useful in a wider context. David Marlow agreed that availability of components data would create great awareness of the AONB.

9.3 RESOLVED to note the report.

## **10. RISK MANAGEMENT**

10.1 The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on risk management and the associated risk management matrix.

10.2 Gerry Sherwin informed the Committee, on behalf of Jason Lavender, that although Defra had offered secure funding until 2019 they could not be complacent and were looking for future funding options.

10.3 The greatest risk at present was highlighted as not having skilled staff in place. The Planning Officer position has now been filled. Claire Tester will start with the Unit in June 2016. The Unit are also planning to recruit a part-time, Communication Officer.

10.4 Resolved to note the report and;

(1) request that the Management Board continue to meet to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management.

**11. AOB**

11.1 There will be a June Management Board Meeting and the next JAC meeting is to be held in November 2016. A doodle poll will be sent to the Committee.

# Landscape Enhancement Programme - Landscape scale conservation across the High Weald



# Unfenced ancient woodland (W1&2)

## Lack of woodland management (W1&2)



# Issues - Rights of Way



# Non native species river/woodland



# Degraded boundaries (FH2&3)





# Water Quality (G1)









# Under and over managed grassland (FH1)



# Potential Projects



- Hedgerow restoration, planting and fencing
- Woodland fencing
- Watercourse fencing
- Riparian woodland regeneration/ planting
- Meadow restoration – enhancement, fencing, water supply
- Rights of way improvements







# Potential Funding for Landowners



## Current Grant Schemes

- Brede Habitat Enhancement Fund £140k
- Water Catchment Partnership circa £40k 15/16

## New Grant Schemes

- National Grid £250k p/a to 2020
- Sussex Lund £250k p/a
- CS facilitation fund ~£20k p/a 5yrs

# Opportunities



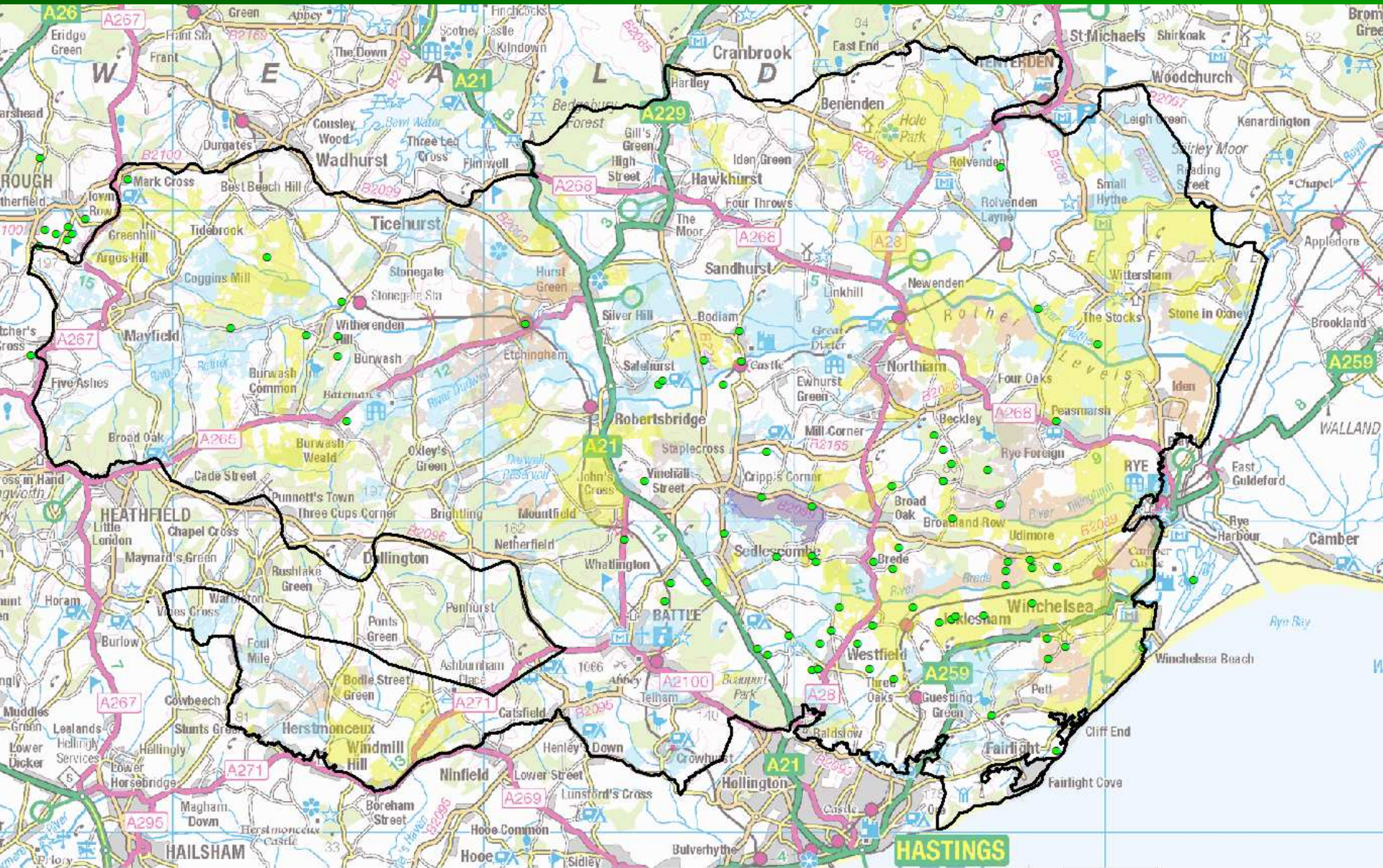
- Money with less strings than CAP
- Join gaps between ES agreements
- Work on a landscape scale
- Support Countryside Stewardship applications
- Work collaboratively
- Community Engagement
- Capital works producing lasting benefit

# Approach



- Identify gaps in Stewardship on GIS
- Walk gaps from footpaths
- Identify and map potential projects
- Produce publicity material
- Update website
- Approach landowners & cost projects
- Produce application & implement

# Using GIS to target Areas



# CSFF Upper Rother & Dudwell



# CSFF Upper Rother & Dudwell

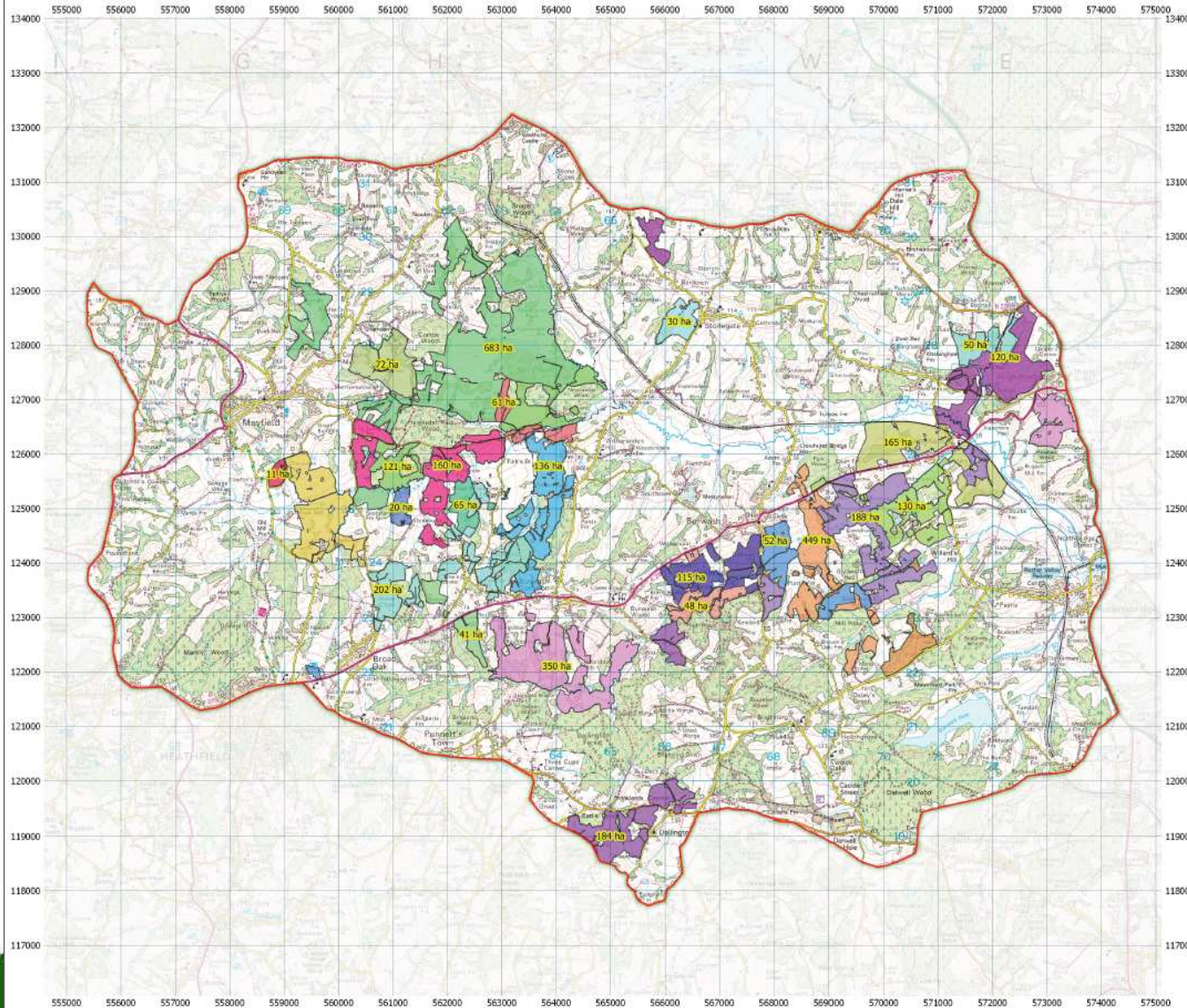


## Working Farmed landscape

23 land managers signed up

- **Priority River Habitat** – Water Quality Diffuse Pollution
- **Turtle Dove** – increase habitat
- **Species Rich Meadows** – link small sites
- **Ancient Woodland** – coordinate deer management

# CS Facilitation Fund

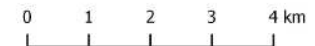


## Upper Rother and Dudwell Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund Area

### Key

- CSFF Area
- CSFF Landowner Members
- Ahrens
- Booth
- Brickell
- Daltrey
- Datchler
- Fairall
- Farebrother
- Firrel
- Haines
- Hind
- Hobbs
- Howard
- Logan
- Mockford
- Payne
- Rausing
- Robinson
- Seymour
- Sherwood
- Siggs
- Tebbett ( LA Riviere Ltd)
- Tebbett (Fontridge Manor)
- Watson
- Whapham

**Total Area: 3453 ha**  
**Potential Extra Area: 1227 ha**



Researched and produced by the  
High Weald AONB Unit

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# Sussex Lund



Sussex  
Community  
Foundation

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You are here / [News](#) / New grants to improve High Weald



## NEW GRANTS TO IMPROVE HIGH WEALD

We're looking for green projects that will make tangible improvements to the High Weald

Kevin Richmond  
Sussex Community Foundation

A new grants programme, Sussex Lund, is being launched by Peter Baldwin and

# Sussex Lund



- Small scale projects
- Landscape, ecology with public benefit
- £500 to £10,000
  
- Rotherfield meadows
- Stonegate Primary school
- Wadhurst Parish
- Crowborough Town Council
- Tablehurst – West Sussex

# National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative



nationalgrid

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## Landscape Enhancement Initiative

Visual Impact Provision

About the initiative

Who can apply

Our selection criteria

How to apply

Meet the panel

Frequently asked questions

What could be funded

### About the initiative

The scheme launches in 2016, the window for expressions of interest is expected to open in March.

The Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) is a grant scheme that forms an important part of National Grid's Visual Impact Provision project.



"National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative aims to provide up to £24 million over six years (2015-2021) for localised visual improvement projects."

Apply

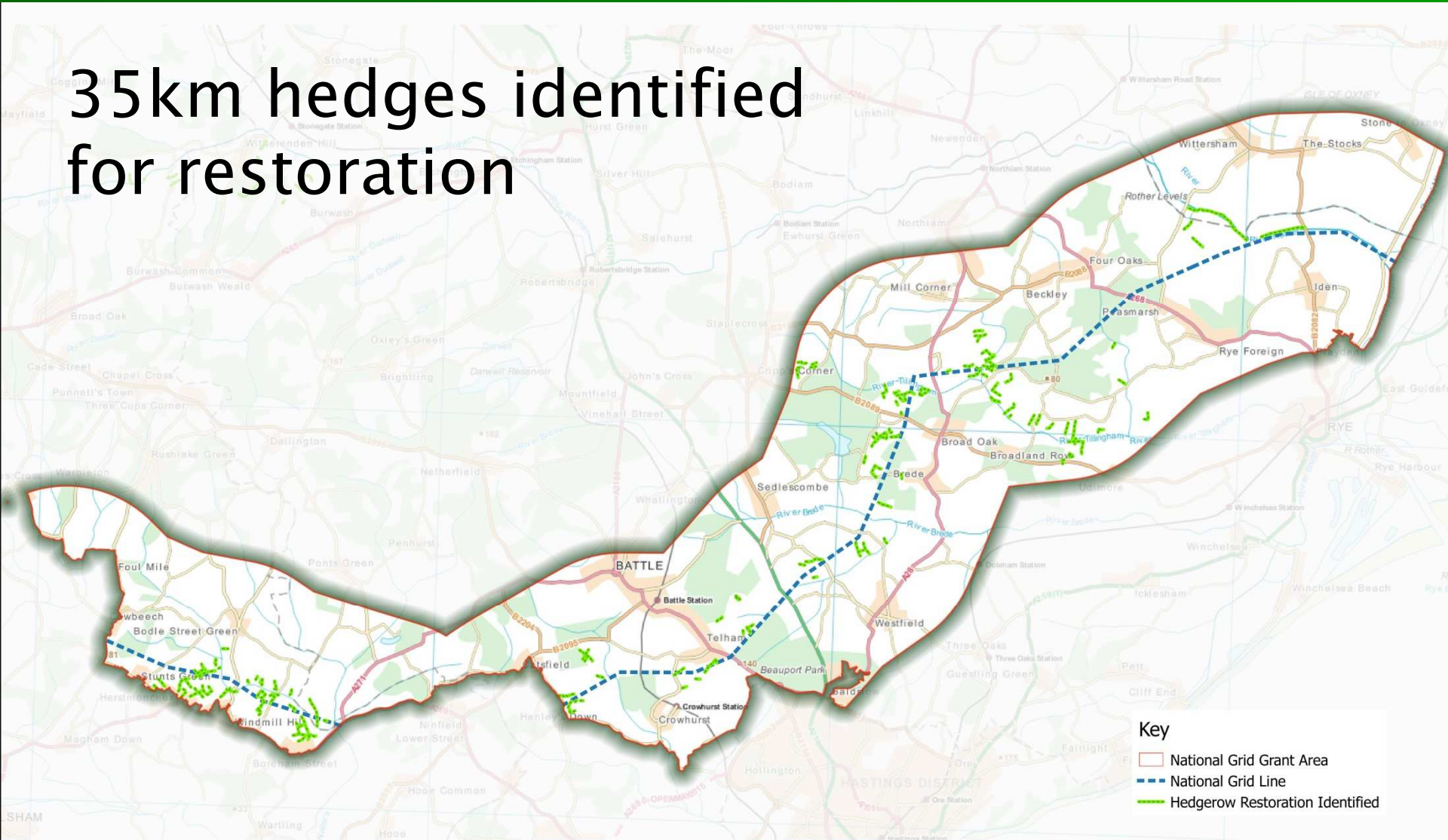
click here if you have read our guidelines and are ready to apply

Click Here for Help

or if you have questions about the application process

# National Grid - Identified Projects

## 35km hedges identified for restoration



# Brede Farm Habitat Fund



## Red Barn Field Seddlescombe

- Species rich meadow owned by parish council
- High amenity value – adjacent to village hall /pre school
- Loss of management threatening habitat.
- Project to fund fencing and water supply to enable grazing

# Brede Farm Habitat Fund



- Neighbouring farmer agreed to aftermath graze
- Produce management plan
- On going hay cutting to be organised
- Potential as a donor meadow for other projects in area





# Water Catchment Partnership



# Conclusions

- Proactively targeting land managers
- Landscape scale approach
- Identify projects
- Variety of grant schemes
- Support people to access schemes
- Enthuse and encourage applications

# Neighbourhood Planning



# The context

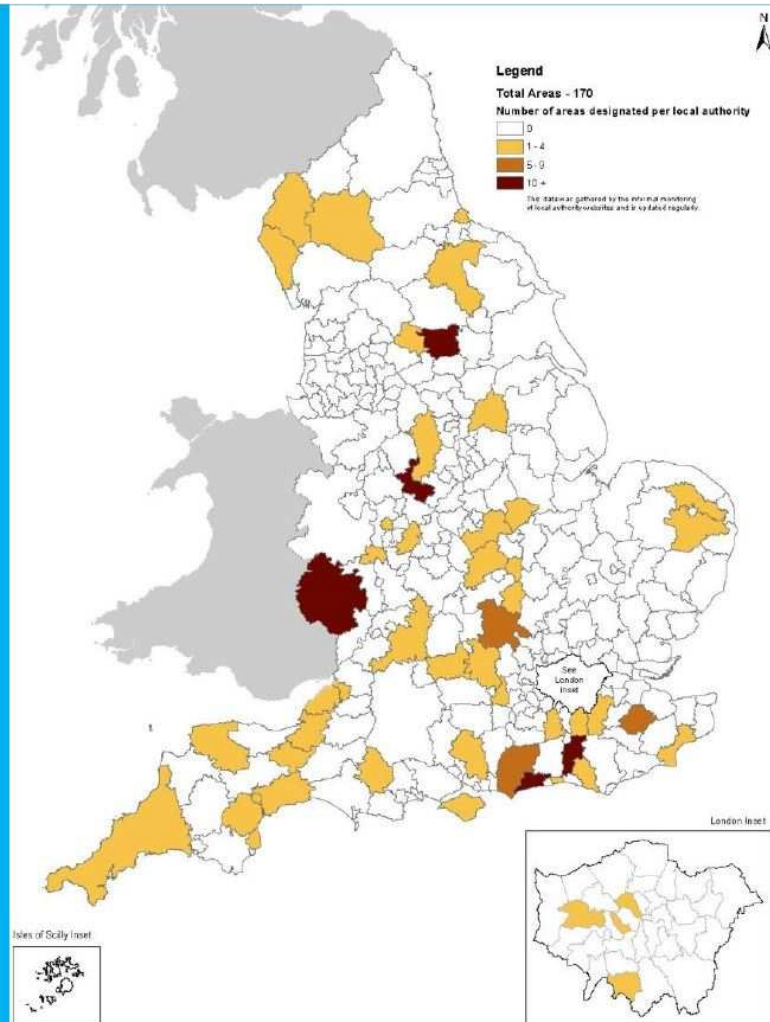


1. Neighbourhood planning has the potential to significantly affect the location and appearance of future development across the AONB.
2. In the last few months there has been an increase in parishes contacting the Unit asking for information about the AONB.
3. The AONB Partnership holds a large amount of GIS data that we would like to share more widely with our stakeholders in a way that is accessible and useful – Neighbourhood planning is one way to do this!

# The context

## A growing movement

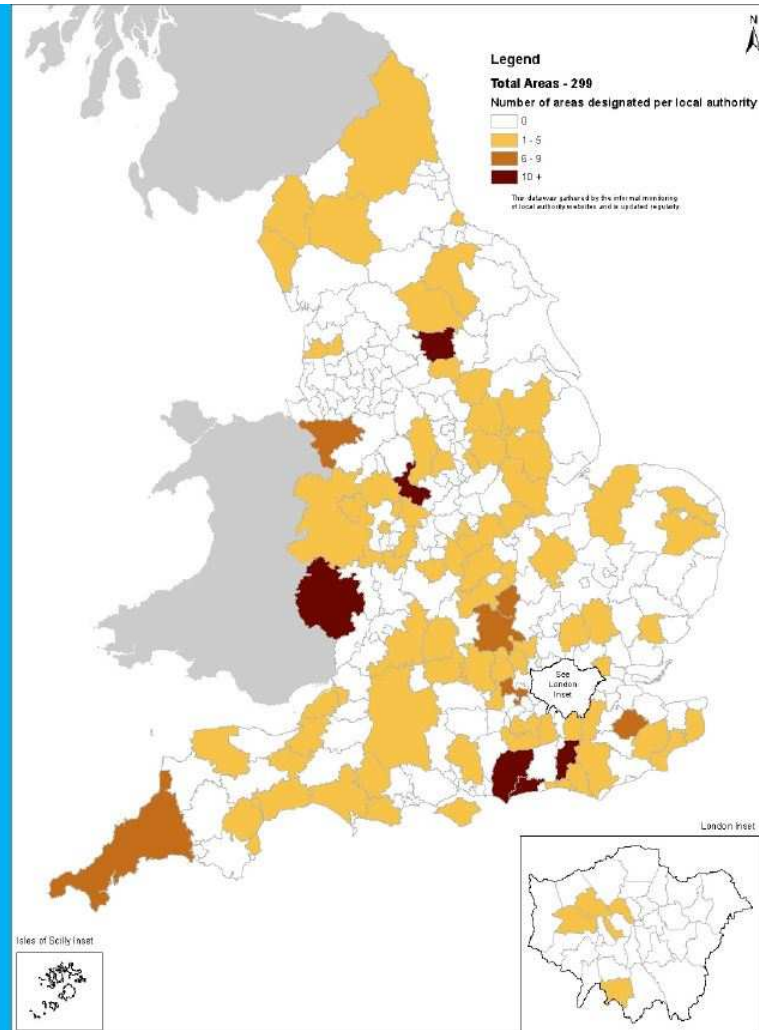
January 2013



# The context

## A growing movement

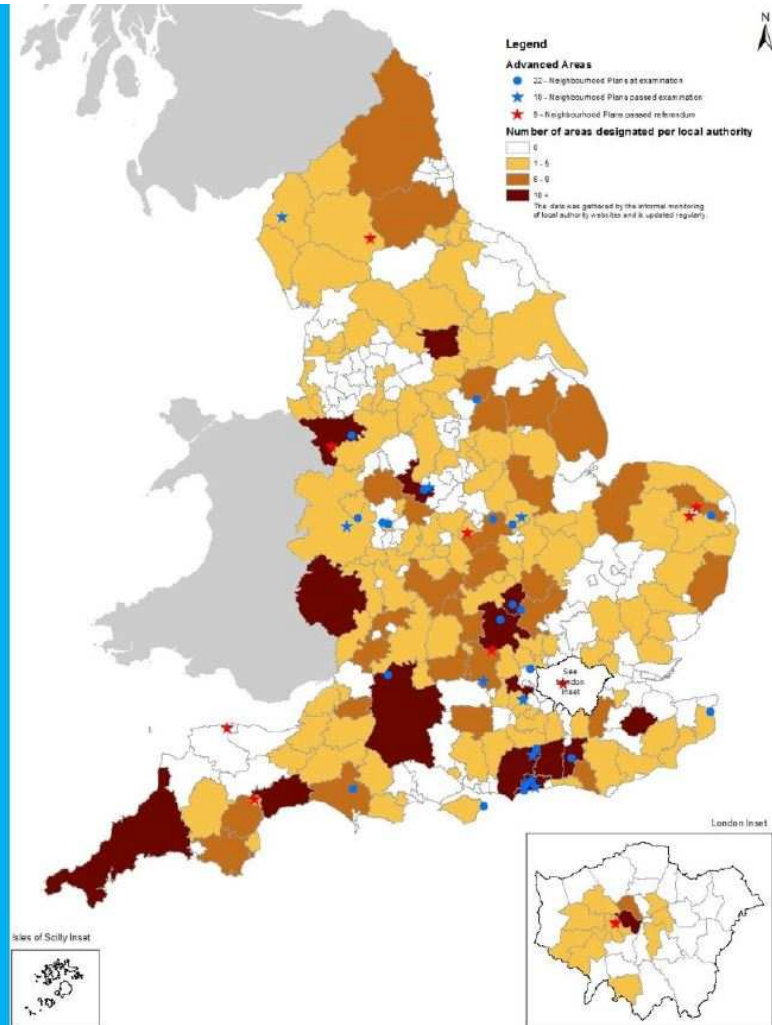
April 2013



# The context

## A growing movement

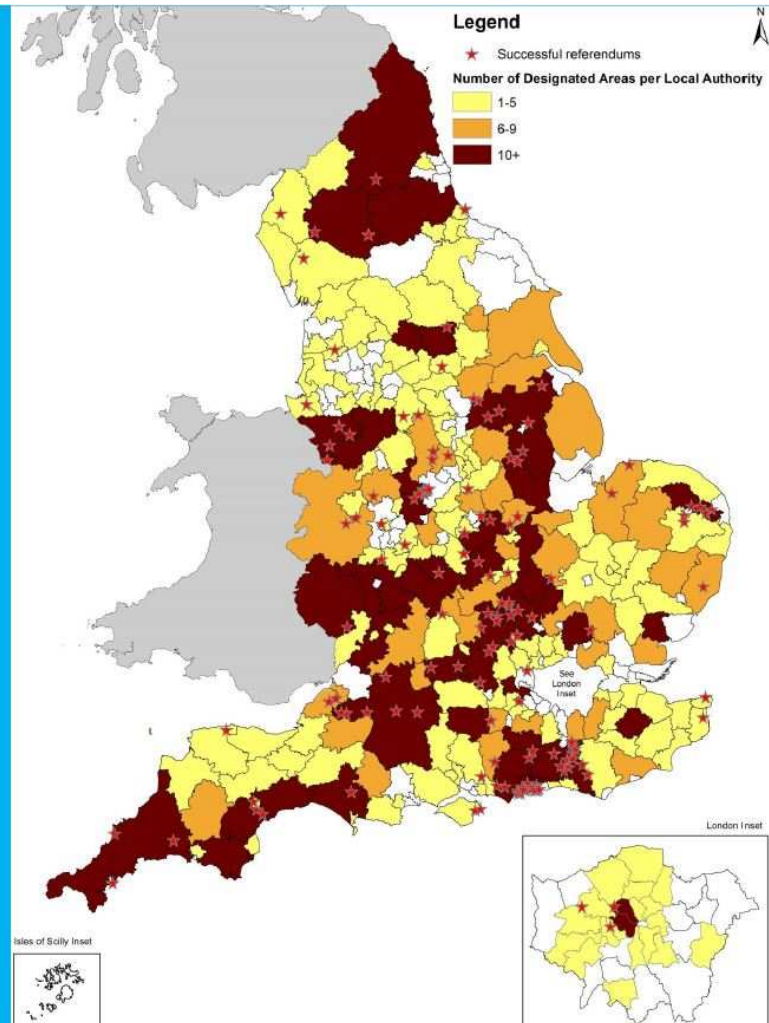
March 2014



# The context

## A growing movement

February 2016

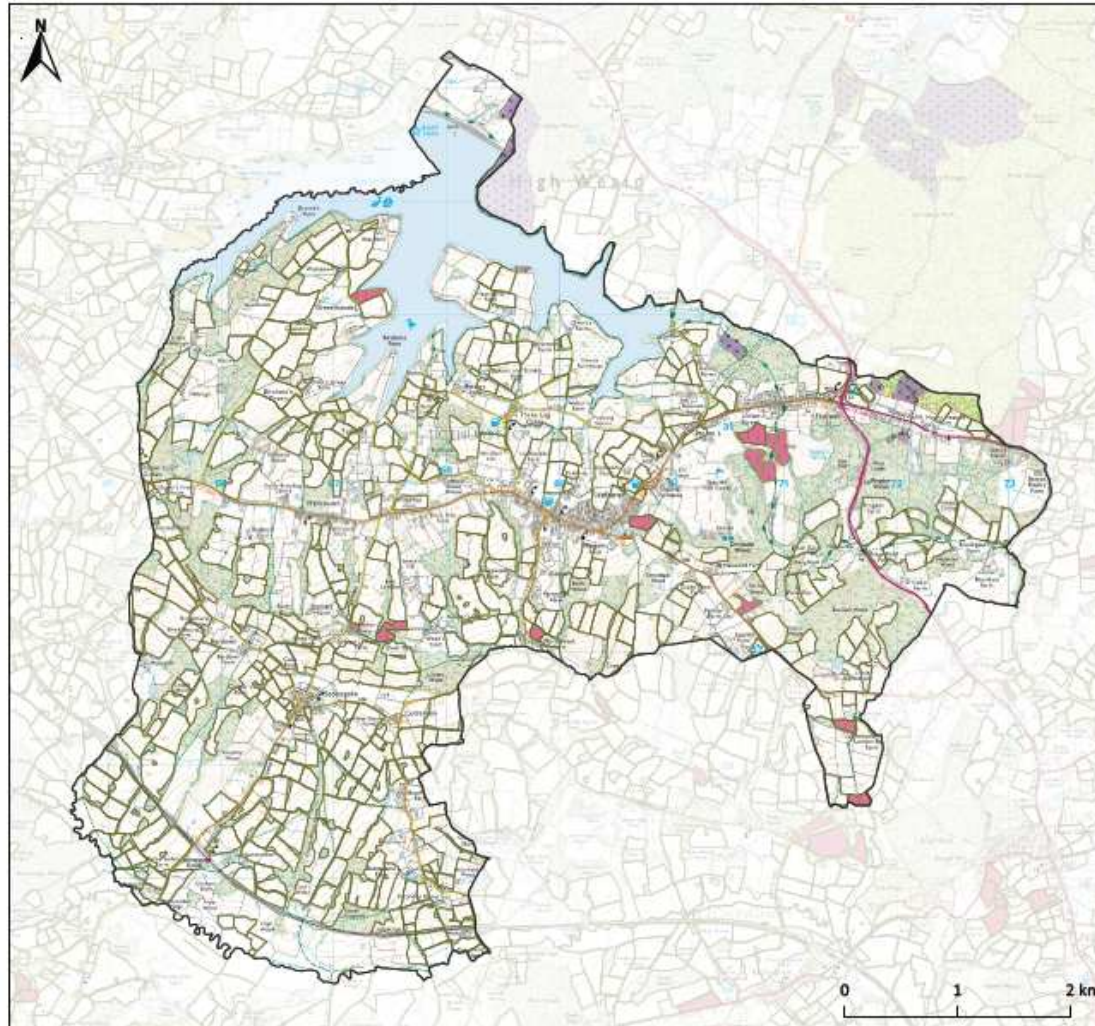


# So what did we do?

With input and advice from the Officer Steering Group and Management Board, we've produced a guidance note on considering the AONB in Neighbourhood Plans.



# So what did we do?



## High Weald AONB Landscape Character: Field & Heath Ticehurst Parish

### Key

- Historic fields boundaries (FH2)
- Heathland (FH3)
- Known wildflower meadows (FH3)

### Summary Character Description:

The High Weald AONB is characterised by small, irregularly shaped and productive fields often bounded by (and forming a mosaic with) hedgerows and small woodlands, and typically used for livestock grazing; small holdings; and a non-dominant agriculture; within which can be found distinctive zones of heaths and inned river valleys.

### Management Plan Objectives

**FH1 Objective:** To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management.

**FH2 Objective:** To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodland.

**FH3 Objective:** To enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.

**FH4 Objective:** To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.

For further info please refer to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, which may be downloaded from our website (see address below).

Researched and produced by the  
High Weald AONB Unit



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# So what did we do?

## High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty GIS character component data



*NB: It should be noted that these data are not a comprehensive inventory – or a complete record – of the most valuable features in the AONB, rather they should be treated as indicative and based on currently available information. These data are therefore provisional and may be subject to update or change without notice. They are intended to be used as an alert to the potential presence of significant features in the landscape.*

### metadata: ancient woodland

#### Our woodland data

Woodland, and particularly ancient woodland, is an integral part of the High Weald landscape. Ancient woodland – defined as land that has been continuously wooded since 1600 AD – is estimated to cover 27,276ha, or 19% of the entire AONB. By comparison the national average is just 2.68%. Of this total area, around 67% is thought to be Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, with the remaining 33% constituting Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites. Our ancient woodland data describes the geographic extent, location, density, distribution and pattern of ancient woodland across the High Weald AONB.

For more information on the history, management and ecological value of ancient woodland in the High Weald, have a look at [The Woodland Story](#).

#### How it was created

Our ancient woodland data is a subset of the Natural England's National Ancient Woodland Inventory (for more information on this data and to download a complete copy, visit [Natural England's GIS boundary datasets page](#)). The data itself was created using a peer reviewed method that involved a combination of checking for the presence or absence of woods on historic maps (a method often referred to as "map regression"), botanical surveys of plants indicative of ancient woodland (known as ancient woodland indicator species), examination of aerial photography, and by gathering information about the wood's name, shape, internal boundaries, and location relative to other features.

Historic maps used for this comparison include the [Ordnance Surveyors' Draft \(OSD\)](#), which dates from c.1800, [the parish title maps](#), and the [OS Landmark Epoch series](#), which dates from between 1843 to 1893, depending on the location. The resulting dataset illustrates the distribution and pattern of ancient woodland across the AONB.

# What we're going to do

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## Learn more about us

We aim to maintain and improve the area's ancient landscape of it by current and future generations.

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Landowners

Schools / Education

Local Authority Policy Makers

Welcome to the High Weald

A medieval landscape of wooded, rolling hills studded with sandstone outcrops; small, irregular-shaped fields; scattered farmsteads; and ancient routeways. The 1461km<sup>2</sup> area covers parts of Kent, Sussex and Surrey at the heart of South East England.

[View a more detailed map](#)

Latest Events

- Wed Mar 16 - 01:00PM  
Scotney Castle - Winter estate walk
- Wed Mar 16 - 01:00PM  
Scotney Castle - Winter estate walk
- Wed Mar 16 - 03:30PM  
Scotney Castle - Winter estate walk
- Wed Mar 16 - 03:30PM  
Scotney Castle - Winter estate walk

New grants scheme to improve High Weald landscape

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- Community Landscape Fund
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## Publications

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National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative Area Map ( pdf, 2.00 MB )	15 Mar 2016
Punnetts Town Welly Walk ( pdf, 975 KB )	29 Jan 2016
6 November 2015 - JAC Minutes appended information ( pdf, 12.51 MB ) <small>JAC Presentations and workshop material</small>	18 Jan 2016
6 November 2015 JAC Minutes ( pdf, 80 KB )	18 Jan 2016
Rother & Romney Catchment Partnership Map ( jpg, 173 KB )	13 Jan 2016
TOKA Kent Countryside Award Application Form 2016 ( pdf, 503 KB )	16 Nov 2015
6 November 2015 - Joint Advisory Committee Agenda & Reports ( pdf, 842 KB )	12 Nov 2015
ASSR Tithe Map 1841 ( pdf, 12.52 MB )	27 Oct 2015
ASSR Roman roads ( pdf, 6.19 MB )	27 Oct 2015
ASSR historic features ( pdf, 2.27 MB )	27 Oct 2015
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