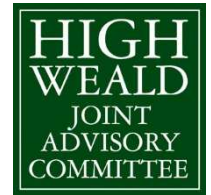


# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee



**A meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee will be held at 10.30am on Wednesday 29 March 2017 at Holy Cross Priory, Lewes Road, Cross-in-Hand, Heathfield, TN21 0DZ, followed by lunch.**

1. Presentation  
By Jeremy Lake on the character of the AONB's historic routeways
2. Apologies
3. Members' Interests  
Members and officers are invited to make any declarations of any interest that they may have in relation to items on the agenda and are reminded to make any declaration at any stage during the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.
4. Urgent matters  
Members are asked to raise any urgent matters at this stage and not at the end of the meeting. The Chairman will decide whether the JAC should discuss any items so raised but asks members to give her prior notification of such matters unless urgency prevents it.
5. Minutes of the JAC meeting  
To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the JAC held on 16 November 2016 (page 3)
6. Minutes of the Management Board Meeting  
To note the matters arising from the Management Board meeting held on 1 March 2017 (page 8)
7. Minutes of the Officer Steering Group  
To note the minutes of the Officer Steering Group meeting held on 22 February 2017 (page 14)
8. Revenue Budget 2017/2018 and Business Plan 2017-2018  
To consider a report by the Treasurer (page 23). Core Budget and Self-funding Projects Budget and Business Plan attached as appendices (page 26).
9. AONB Evidence and Guidance Strategy and Planning Issues  
To consider a report by the Planning Adviser (page 28).
10. Management Plan Review  
To consider a report by the AONB Co-Director on progress and issues (page 33) with attached appendices Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appendix A and a copy of the official notification letter to Natural England, Appendix B (page 39).
11. External Funding – Sussex Lund  
To consider a report by the AONB Business Manager (page 56).
12. Risk Management and Staffing  
To consider a report by the AONB Business Advisor on external funding (page 64). Risk Log attached as an appendix.

13. Any other business

Next Joint Advisory Committee Meeting – November 2017.

To: ALL MEMBERS OF THE HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Samantha Nicholas

Clerk to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee  
Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex TN5 7PR  
E: [s.nicholas@highweald.org](mailto:s.nicholas@highweald.org); T: 01424 723011

# High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

## Minutes of Meeting



Held at 10.30am on Wednesday 16 November

Holy Cross Priory, Lewes Road, Cross-in-Hand, Heathfield, TN21 0DZ

### Members present:

Mrs J Davison	Sevenoaks District Council, Chairman
Cllr B Kentfield	Rother District Council, Vice Chairman
Cllr L Kitchen	Horsham District Council
Cllr M Sydney	Surrey County Council
Cllr Mrs L Lockwood	Tandridge District Council
Cllr M Balfour	Kent County Council
Cllr Mrs J Soyke	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Cllr A Pickering	Ashford Borough Council
Cllr R Street	Hastings Borough Council
Mrs L Newland	Natural England
Mr T Bamford	CLA

### Officers present:

Mr J Lavender	AONB Co-Director, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms G Sherwin	AONB Business Manager, High Weald AONB Unit
Ms C Tester	AONB Planning Adviser, High Weald AONB Unit
Mr C Winchester	AONB Landscape Adviser, High Weald AONB Unit
Mrs V Pullen	County Landscape Architect, East Sussex County Council, Vice-Chair OSG
Mr T Alty	Finance Manager, East Sussex County Council
Mr M Davidson	Environmental and Natural Resources Manager, Hastings Borough Council

### 1. PRESENTATION: Using Medieval Field Information in Planning

Due to the absence of Sally Marsh, AONB Co-Director, the presentation was deferred to the next meeting.

### 2. APOLOGIES

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

Cllr Mrs S Tidy, Cllr B Acraman, Cllr C Hersey, Cllr H Rogers, Mrs A Field, Mr J Leggett.

Ms S Marsh, Mr T Dyer, Mr D Marlow, Mr D Greenwood, Mrs H French, Mrs J Hollingum, Mr D Scully, Mrs J Hollingum, Mr M Nouch, Ms M Killip.

### 3. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

### 4. URGENT MATTERS

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

5. **MINUTES OF THE JAC MEETING – 23 March 2016**

5.1 RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting of 23 March 2016 as a correct record.

6. **MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD – 12 October 2016**

6.1 RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Management Board held on 12 October 2016 as a correct record.

7. **MINUTES OF THE OFFICER STEERING GROUP – 28 September 2016**

7.1 The Committee considered a verbal report on the Officer Steering Group (OSG) by the OSG Vice Chairman, Virginia Pullen.

7.2 Virginia Pullen highlighted that the presentation on Environmental Colour Assessment had been well received and would be of interest to development control staff.

7.3 It was confirmed that the OSG had agreed to develop a more informal design group to discuss design principles and research which would meet before the next OSG meeting in February.

7.4 RESOLVED to note:

The Minutes of the Officer Steering Group held on 28 September 2016 as a correct record.

8. **REVENUE BUDGET 2017/2018**

8.1 The Committee considered a report by Finance Manager, Thomas Alty, who presented the Draft Revenue Budget for 2017/18.

8.2 Thomas Alty advised that maintenance of the Defra contribution at the 15 /16 levels with an annual inflationary increase enabled a balanced budget for 17/18.

8.3 Budget pressures, from increases in office rent and salary inflation and increments, were highlighted.

8.4 Thomas Alty reminded members that local authority contributions were essential for maintaining the Defra contribution.

8.5 It was confirmed that the reserves of £113,100 would, in a worst case scenario, cover all staff redundancies.

8.6 Cllr J Davison asked members whether the local authority contribution requests would be considered favourably. Cllr L Kitchen confirmed that Horsham District Council was committed to supporting the Partnership to enable cost-effective production of the AONB Management Plan. Cllr Mrs L Lockwood advised that Tandridge District Council as a small authority was struggling financially but that she would request ongoing support. Jason

Lavender highlighted the value of a single management plan rather than multiple plans for the AONB.

8.7 RESOLVED to note the report and:

(1) approve the Draft Revenue Budget for 2017/18.

(2) commence budget consultation with the local authorities and Defra.

## **9. AONB PLANNING ADVICE**

9.1 The JAC considered a report by Claire Tester, Planning Advisor, on AONB Planning Advice.

9.2 Jason Lavender advised that the guidance was a response to the Unit's experience with planning related matters over the last three years and the need to provide more guidance, in addition to the Management Plan, on what aspects of the High Weald's landscape need to be conserved and enhanced.

9.3 Cllr J Davison stated that she had found Appendix 2 particularly useful in clarifying what aspects of the National Planning Policy Framework were relevant to the AONB.

9.4 Cllr L Kitchen stated that in her experience Planning Inspectors seemed to be ignoring AONB and local authority experts, who were working to Government guidance, at appeal. This was an issue that needed to be addressed. Cllr M Balfour agreed that there was an increasing need to raise the profile of AONBs as there was an increasing desire amongst some decision makers to ignore or dismiss their value. Cllr Mrs L Lockwood stated that a glossy brochure with simple messages produced by the Gatwick Airport Community Group had been a good tool for communicating with MPs about the impact of a second runway. Cllr M Balfour advised that grass roots lobbying was the way forward. Cllr M Sydney confirmed that a large local action group had gained significant support at recent Tandridge District Council elections.

9.5 RESOLVED to note the proposed publication and the intention to produce more advice notes to support the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

## **10. MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW TIMETABLE**

10.1 The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender, AONB Co-Director.

10.2 Jason highlighted that the approach to the Plan would again be light touch but still involve a considerable amount of work.

10.3 RESOLVED to note the report.

## **11. WORK PLAN UPDATE**

- 11.1 The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on the Unit's work programme with a presentation by Charles Winchester on Historic Routeways and Gerry Sherwin on the developing Fields of Dreams Landscape Partnership Scheme.
- 11.2 The Historic Routeway's presentation was well received by the JAC who recognized the value of historic routeways and the potential threats to them. There was a discussion around the causes of 'lost routeways'. Cllr M Balfour advised that they had been lost because they were no longer used and therefore an outcome of the work shouldn't be their designation as public rights of way. Charles Winchester advised that lost routeways weren't identified as part of the project.
- 11.3 Cllr M Balfour stated his support for the developing Fields of Dreams Scheme and highlighted a new Sport England report/initiative that highlights the value of the country parks for well-being. He also referred to the issue of Ash Dieback and the impact that would have on land management and resources in the coming years.

11.4 RESOLVED to note the report.

## **12. AONB SIGNAGE**

- 12.1 The JAC considered a report and presentation by Charles Winchester on AONB Sign Guidance.
- 12.2 The guidance was well received by Committee members and there was clear support for consistent signage/branding. There were questions and suggestions on signage material and lettering font with concerns raised about the theft of metal signage and the long term appearance of timber signs. Adding the web address, trade marking the signs and considering the scope to extend the guidance to include sustainable transport modes were also suggested as areas for consideration.
- 12.3 There was a consensus that parishes were most likely to find resources for sign installation. Cllr M Sydney stated that he had provisionally allocated funds for the installation of signs in his area.

12.3 RESOLVED to note the report.

## **13. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 13.1 The JAC considered a report by Jason Lavender on risk management and the associated risk management matrix.
- 13.2 Jason highlighted that though Defra had offered secure contribution until 2020 funding was still an issue, and that Rory Stewart, the MP who had played a part in this decision, had a new role and there was a need to develop a relationship with his successor.
- 13.3 Gerry Sherwin highlighted that the other key risk was not having skilled staff in place to deliver the work programme and that the Land Management Officer, Tamara Taylor, had

tendered her resignation after a year in post due to relocation to Sheffield. Recruitment to the vacant post was planned but the land management programme would be affected.

13.4 RESOLVED to note the report and;

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

**14. AOB**

14.1 There will be a Management Board Meeting on 1 March 2017 and the next JAC meeting is to be held on 29 March 2017. The Chairman apologised for being unable to attend the March meeting.

**HIGH WEALD JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Management Board  
Minutes – 10.30am, 1 March 2017, Acorn Tourism, Woodland Enterprise  
Centre, Hastings Road, East Sussex, TN5 7PR.**



Samantha Nicholas  
Clerk to the High Weald AONB  
Joint Advisory Committee

Present:           Members:  
Mrs Jill Davison           Sevenoaks District Council (Chairman)  
Cllr Brian Kentfield       Rother District Council (Vice-chairman)  
Cllr Christopher Hersey   Mid Sussex District Council  
Cllr Mrs Sylvia Tidy       East Sussex County Council  
Cllr Bill Acraman          West Sussex County Council  
Cllr Michael Sydney       Surrey County Council  
Cllr Mrs Rowena Moore   Weald District Council

Also Present:  
Sally Marsh                AONB Director (job share)  
Claire Tester              AONB Planning Advisor  
Gerry Sherwin             AONB Business Manager

Apologies

1. The following persons gave their apologies for absence:  
David Marlow; Cllr M Balfour

Members' Interests

2. There were no declarations of interest from the Members of the Management Board.

Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on 12 October 2016

3. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 12 October 2016 were agreed as a correct record.
4. Cllr Acraman raised an issue that, although the minutes were well reported, the agenda did not have enough information to make informed decisions at the Management Board Meetings.
5. **The Members agreed that if it is appropriate and viable to have reports sent to the Members prior to the Management Board meetings they would be circulated electronically. However, due to limited team resources, a short summary under the agenda items would be acceptable.**

Matters arising from the minutes

6. Cllr Moore asked whether the application to Heritage Lottery Fund 'Fields of Dreams' had been successful. Gerry Sherwin confirmed that the application had not been successful but she had attended a meeting with Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) panel to clarify any issues with the AONB application. The HLF officers confirmed that under the current scheme the AONB is unlikely to be successful as the High Weald in comparison with other landscapes was not under as much threat. The successful landscape schemes in the South East included Chiltern

AONB around High Speed 2 and Culver Valley near Heathrow. However, HLF was extremely impressed by the quality of the application submitted by the Unit and has encouraged us to apply to the main Heritage Lottery Grant Scheme. The Unit are planning to submit an AONB wide application to start, if successful, when the Management Plan is launched in 2019.

7. **Cllr Hersey thought it would be useful to include officers in the development of the next HLF application and this was agreed.**

#### Officer Steering Group Update (OSG)

8. Sally Marsh updated the Members in the absence of the OSG Chairman, David Marlow, on the actions from the Officer Steering Group (OSG) held on 22 September 2017. The Sustainable Housing Study had been commissioned as a report to inform the Unit about current thinking on design of sustainable and affordable housing. The OSG Meeting focused on design and the AONBs strategy for developing future design guidance. Officers with design roles within the local authorities also attended the meeting to enable a robust discussion on the options.
9. This discussion also highlighted that due to the high turnover of local authority staff and time pressure the High Weald AONB Landscape Component data was often not being used to evaluate planning application sites. The Unit agreed to provide, on request, further training for planning officers at local authorities' offices. The training would develop officers' general understanding of the management plan and how to use it in planning applications as well as technical training on the component datasets.
10. Cllr Moore enquired whether the Sustainable Design Study could be published. It was explained that officers were concerned that some of the information included in its current format may be misleading in the public domain. It was suggested that the key principles could be pulled out with additional explanation paragraphs and circulated electronically as an internal document
11. **It was agreed that the Members were supportive of the Sustainable Housing Study and would like to see it published subject to minor revisions to be agreed with officers.**
12. Cllr C Hersey commented that he was pleased that an expert in urban design such as Will Dorman was invited to the meeting and asked what the outcome of the discussion was.
13. Sally Marsh confirmed that there was a consensus from the officers that High Weald design guidance and principles would be useful and this will be progressed in collaboration with a design sub-group. They were also keen to hold a design conference to develop understanding on urban and rural design options which could be run in conjunction with the design sub-group. David Scully of Tunbridge Wells BC, was asked to chair the sub-group and initiate a brief for a design consultant to develop AONB design principles. Cllr Tidy commented that it was important to look at all aspects of design especially layouts and boundaries.
14. **It was agreed that the design sub-group should move ahead with producing a brief for a design consultant.**
15. The requirement for further planning advice notes, following the general advice note was encouraged as it supported the evaluation of developments.
16. Sally Marsh briefed Members about the Public Inquiry at Pashley Road Ticehurst, that she had been asked by Rother DC to give evidence at. She reported that although public enquiries were time consuming for the Unit, this site was significant for the AONB and the process

highlighted key areas where the forthcoming review of the Management Plan could make useful changes. For example a robust glossary of terminology is to be included to reduce challenge to key terms. It also highlighted that the appeal process is increasingly significant as so many applications are going to appeal.

17. The Members were informed that a 600 housing development with a hospice within the AONB boundary at Pease Pottage, Mid-Sussex DC, had been approved, and that the development was the largest approved in AONBs in recent years. Sally Marsh informed members that the AONB Directors had written to Mid Sussex about their concerns and a reply had been received which would be circulated. Cllr Hersey confirmed that Mid Sussex Members were under extreme pressure to push the application through due to exceptional circumstances to meet the planned target of 800 houses per annum. However, the Inspector had now increased the housing numbers from 800 per annum to 1026. Cllr Hersey also pointed out Members felt that the site was poor quality, despite being designated, and was used for a Sunday car boot sale and therefore was not considered a high quality part of the AONB.

#### Budget and external funding

18. Gerry Sherwin informed the Members that there were no issues so far with the formal consultation on the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee Draft Budget 2017/18, which is managed by East Sussex County Council. Most local authorities have engaged with the process but they are still waiting from a couple of authorities due to their internal processes.
19. The Unit has been involved with securing a £10,000 Heritage Lottery Fund for Crowborough Festival – The Lost World, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Part of these funds has secured High Weald Hero workshops and Adventure Quest Welly Walks for Crowborough Schools. This will be provided by the AONBs Education Officer, Rachel Bennington. The main festival day is to be held on 1 May 2017.
20. The Sussex Lund grants programme, £250,000, was launched by Lisbet Rausing in 2016. The Unit has been approached to manage the fund in 2017. It supports community, small-scale, practical projects that improve the ecology and landscape of the High Weald. The Unit will be funded to manage the process which will also include an advisory service and support for pre-applications. The Unit sought agreement from the Members of the Board to be able to engage with this Fund. Cllr Mrs Sylvia Tidy has agreed to join the Sussex Lund Scrutiny Panel. The Management Board may also be required to have final sign off of the approved applications.
21. **The Members agreed for the Unit to proceed with the management of Sussex Lund with immediate effect.**
  1. **Proposed by Cllr Moore,**
  2. **Seconded by Cllr Kentfield**

#### Workplan

22. Gerry Sherwin confirmed that the Unit produces a 3 year workplan for Defra but due to the uncertainty with the future plans it was decided that the workplan would be broken down into annual work-streams. At the JAC Meeting in November 2016 the workplan for the Landscape Enhancement Initiative was presented. At the Joint Advisory Committee to be held in 29 March the Planning Strategy will be reported on by Claire Tester.

## Planning Update

23. Claire Tester took the Members through the main points of the draft Planning Strategy Paper, which were:
  - i. The Unit will produce further advice notes following the General Advice Note published on the High Weald Website. This will be supported with training, communication and factsheets for officers and Members.
  - ii. Early involvement of the Unit with Local Plans and planning applications are encouraged. This has worked successfully with the Wealden DC Local Plan. Pre-application advice will also be offered to support the local authorities and if the Unit find that it is viable may charge for this service in the future.
  - iii. Stronger responses to planning applications may be required after the experience with Pease Pottage and Pashley Road. The Unit was criticised for not using stronger language to 'object' to the development.
24. The Members further discussed the use of 'object' when responding to major applications that would have significant harm on the AONB landscape character. The Members supported the Unit's use of this language, where significant harm was evident.
25. Claire Tester confirmed that the Unit would like to offer more expertise at the earlier stages of Local Plans, recognising the need for confidentiality, and will assess the uptake of this over the next year.
26. Cllr Sydney cited an example of a development of a golf course in Dorking, Surrey. The Surrey Hills, AONB objected to the application with the support of CPRE and it was thrown out at the High Court. However, at the appeal process the Inspector reversed the decision.
27. Sally Marsh reminded the Members that when the JAC was initiated the decision was taken not to have a separate Planning Committee and the current planning protocol required that comments would be officer level only. It was suggested that the Members may wish to consider setting up a JAC Planning Committee in the future.

## Management Plan Review

28. Sally Marsh apologised to the Members for not circulating the Context Baseline and Scoping Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the draft report of the High Weald AONB Management Plan review 2019 – 2024, Issues and principles prior to the meeting.
29. The Members were informed that a light touch approach to the objectives and targets within the Management Plan and SEA scoping document were expected. However, due to external pressures and lessons learnt through the appeal at Pashley Road, Ticehurst, specific areas would also require a deeper review. These are highlighted in the draft report of the Issues and Principles of the Management Plan Review which will be presented to the JAC.
30. Cllr Kentfield attended the National Association of AONBs Chairman's Meeting in November 2016 with Sally Marsh. The meeting was informed that the Welsh independent review panel has now reported with recommendations that are being taken forward in Wales. These are based on the agreed principle that AONBs have a clear role in the future, and are well placed to deliver the current priorities for the Welsh government including sustainable management of natural resources and sustainable economic development. The implications for England are

that the 1949 Act is unlikely to be challenged and the purpose of AONB designation will remain unchanged over the next High Weald Management Plan period.

31. However, of more concern, was the new gov.uk website formed by amalgamating websites from government agencies and departments. Vital policy documents underpinning the AONBs' designation, have been removed and are not easily accessible, without a freedom of information request. This process is cumbersome and the loss of access to this information has wide ranging implications for the future of AONBs.
32. **It was agreed that a letter should be produced by the Unit explaining the concerns they have over these vital policy documents not being readily available. This letter will be signed by all Councillors who wish to, present at the next JAC meeting, and sent to all Members of Parliament (MPs) in the AONB.**
33. **It was also suggested that the Unit may be able to approach a MP who would be supportive of asking this question in Parliament.**
34. The upcoming Management Plan review will take account of the increasing government focus on a natural capital approach. This approach has been championed by the independent advisory Natural Capital Committee, chaired by Dieter Helm. This may be a central theme of Defra's upcoming 25 year plan. The AONB Management Plan is already largely structured around the area's natural capital as it emphasis physical landscape components rather than "special qualities" and therefore the changes required will largely be minimal. For example, greater emphasis being placed on the role of the High Weald's grasslands and woodlands in carbon sequestration and storage.
35. This also includes the importance of the landscape in supporting peoples' wellbeing through ecosystem services that the key components deliver. Although there is no duty for AONBs to include this within the Management Plans unlike conservation boards.

#### National Association of AONBs update

36. Brexit and Defra's potential move towards a Natural Capital approach may lead to the removal of the single payment system which would have a significant impact on small farms that are already significantly challenged.
37. There is an ongoing discussion at the NAAONB that new Agri-environmental payments based on a natural capital approach could be administered through the AONBs who would be able to tailor funding to landscape priority areas.
38. It was suggested by Cllr Tidy that we ask NFU or CLA to present at the next JAC from a farming perspective. By the next JAC meeting in November the Unit should have a better understanding of Defra's approach and Brexit's impact on agriculture in the AONB.

#### Risk Management

39. Although 2017/18 funding is secured, Defra is looking to an additional 6% cut to their funding which may be passed onto AONBs.
40. Staff retention remains the key risk for the current year.

## AOB

41. The items for JAC agenda were discussed and the Members were informed that Jeremy Lake has been commissioned to look at routeways in the context of national significance following the Pashley Road Appeal. Jeremy Lake will be presenting his findings at the JAC Meeting on 29 November 2017.
42. Other areas on the agenda will focus on Management Plan Scope; the JAC letter to the Members of Parliament with regard to the missing information from the Government website; and the external funding report.
43. The Unit are holding a series of landscape component Management Plan Meetings during May 2017. The meetings are aimed at experts for field, heath, woodland, routeways, settlements, and public engagement focussing on prioritising key issues and targets.
44. The Members were also asked to consider whether they wished to apply for Chairman and Vice-chairman Positions which are due for election in November 2017.
45. Cllr Sydney informed the Members that Dormansland Parish Council were still interested in producing High Weald AONB Boundary signage but unfortunately he was unable to grant money through the County Councillors grant. However, The Parish could approach the Gatwick Community Trust who has money available. The deadline to submit is 22 March 2017.
- 46. It was agreed that the Parish Council could contact Charles Winchester if help was required with submitting their application to Gatwick Community Trust.**
47. The Unit informed the Members that they are also submitting a grant application to the Gatwick Community Trust to support the High Weald Heroes scheme through Welly Walks in West Sussex and Horsham.
48. The JAC Meeting is to be held on 29 March 2017, 10.30am at Holy Cross Priory. It was confirmed that Cllr Kentfield will chair the meeting in Jill Davison's absence.

Agenda item: 7

## High Weald Officer Steering Group



Notes of a meeting of the High Weald Officer Steering Group held on Wednesday 22 February, at 10.30am Acorn Tourism, Woodland Enterprise, Hastings Road, Flimwell, TN5 7PR

Clerk to JAC: Samantha Nicholas

### PRESENT:

David Marlow, Rother District Council (Chairman)  
Virginia Pullan, East Sussex County Council (Vice-chairman)  
Natalie Bumpus, Wealden District Council  
David Scully, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
Tim Dyer, West Sussex County Council  
Jennifer Hollingum, Mid Sussex District Council  
Jenny Knowles, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council  
Helen French, Sevenoaks Borough Council  
James Overall, Horsham District Council  
Katy Wiseman, Hastings Borough Council  
Sally Marsh, Co-Director High Weald AONB Unit  
Jason Lavender, Co-Director High Weald AONB Unit  
Claire Tester, High Weald AONB Unit  
Charles Winchester, High Weald AONB Unit

### ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES:

Rebecca Lamb, Sevenoaks Borough Council  
Lizzie Ashworth, Sevenoaks Borough Council  
Will Dorman, Mid Sussex District Council  
Diane Russell, Rother District Council

	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>
1.	<b>MINUTES</b>  The Minutes of the meeting held on the 28 September 2016 were agreed as a correct record. Matters arising from the Minutes were as follows.	
1.2	1.3 Jason Lavender thanked the local authorities that were able to contribute £300 towards the financial support for the Environmental Colour Assessment (ECA) for the AONB. 10 of the 15 Local Authorities have committed financially to the project to date. However, the AONB Unit agreed to make up the financial shortfall as the work required completion in the winter months. This is because it is easier to assess the tonal colour schemes within this season.	

The timeline for completion of stage one of the ECA is Spring 2017. There would be further opportunities for the officers to comment on the information gathered at this stage.

It was explained that the sum of £300 was excellent value to the local authorities as the benefits would be appropriate within a wider landscape context and to pro-rotate the contributions would not be cost effective for the Unit to manage within the timeframe set.

ECA Stage two will involve the design and printing of the guidance document which may require further financial support from the participating local authorities.

- 1.3 Alan Legg, Tunbridge Wells BC, enquired whether the Malvern Hills ECA has been adopted by the local authorities. Jason Lavender confirmed that the local authorities have committed to using the guidance and are promoting it within their organisations. The NFU is also fully supportive of the guidance.
- 1.4 David Marlow urged the local authorities that may not have had the opportunity to contribute, to do so.
- 1.5 **It was agreed that the Unit will contact the officers when stage one of the ECA is ready for comment.** Unit
- 1.6 2.2 David Marlow confirmed that the Rother DC Equestrian Policy was now available on the Rother DC website.
- 1.7 4.2 Sally Marsh confirmed that Fieldsystems in the High Weald project had been approved by Historic England, including the character statement and assessment framework, and will be ready to publish once HE's final comments were incorporated. A discussion took place on the importance of the Fieldsystems data, an essential landscape component to be evidenced, which will be required as part of the assessment of future housing developments.
- 1.8 **It was agreed that the 3 core documents will be circulated electronically to the officers prior to publication.** Sally Marsh
- 1.9 Samantha Nicholas confirmed that the GIS contacts within the local authorities had received an email informing them of how to download an updated version of the High Weald AONB component dataset, including the revised historic routeways data. Several of

the local authorities have still not responded to whether the data has been uploaded and officers were asked to check that this had been completed within their local authorities.

David Marlow asked the officers, more importantly, whether this data was being used by the officers when assessing sites. A discussion highlighted that this data was not always being used, due to the turnover of staff and the time constraints on assessing the sites. It was re-iterated that training has been offered to the local authorities in the past but with the changes in staff it would be good to have the opportunity to hold training sessions on the High Weald Character Component Dataset at the local authority premises.

**1.10 It was agreed that the Unit will contact the local authorities to set up High Weald Character Component Dataset training sessions.** Claire Tester/Charles Winchester

1.11 7.3 The General Advice Note is now uploaded onto the High Weald AONB website and is available for general circulation within the local authorities.

## **2. Sustainable Housing Study**

2.1 David Marlow welcomed the officers who have been invited to the meeting to discuss future design guidance to the meeting and thanked them for their support.

2.2 The Sustainable Housing Study had been commissioned as a report to inform the Unit on current thinking of new sustainable design principles available. This was circulated to the officers prior to the presentation as a basis of discussion at the meeting.

2.3 Sally Marsh introduced the topic for discussion with a brief overview of settlement history in the High Weald.

The officers were presented with a series of examples of housing developments for the officers to consider against the landscape characteristics of the AONB. These included sites at Pashley Road, Ticehurst, Etchingham school, Jefferies Farm, Horsted Keynes and Bells Yew Green.

The officers commented that housing designs presented did not give enough consideration to the characteristics of the AONB and that

early intervention is essential, but often the opportunity is not presented. A robust discussion took place on many aspects of these developments including; road layout; scale of layout and of buildings within the site; different building types including agricultural occupancy dwellings; and off the shelf development packages which include as cul-de-sacs; all of which have significant impact on the landscape characteristics when not in context.

Other areas discussed were the lack of local building materials such as timber with developers saying the costing was prohibitive.

The discussion turned to the concern with developer's wanting to maximise their profits through larger 4 bedroom properties

Will Dorman, Mid-Sussex DC Urban Design officer commented that the developers have used efficiency costs and standardisation to submit sub-standard designs and that this should be challenged.

He informed the Group of the example of South Cambridgeshire District Council Design Enabling Panel which is held in high regard by the developers due to the stringent design guidance leading to a higher standard of designs submitted.

2.4 There was a consensus that due to the AONBs special landscape qualities even more weight must be given to design when assessing developments. In order to achieve this AONB design guidance is essential.

2.5 **It was agreed that the design sub-group should be reinstated to produce a brief for a design consultant. David Scully of Tunbridge Wells BC, was asked to chair the sub-group supported by Claire Tester and initiate a brief for a design consultant to develop AONB design principles. It was requested that if any officers were particularly interested in being part of the sub-group then to contact Claire Tester as 5/6 officers would be required.**

David  
Scully/Claire  
Tester

2.6 Tim Dyer asked whether he would be able to circulate the Sustainable Housing Study document internally as at present it was marked confidential. A further discussion on the Sustainable Housing Study highlighted that although the principles and design challenges in the paper could be shared internally further work was

needed before the report could be published for a wider audience.

- 2.7 It was agreed that that a design conference could be held to develop understanding on urban and rural design options which could be run in conjunction with the design sub-group.** Unit

**Organisations that may be contacted to speak could include Heritage Wind Ltd and South Cambridgeshire District Council Design Enabling Panel.**

**3. Management Plan Review**

Sally Marsh confirmed that the draft Scoping document for the Strategic Environment Assessment has been circulated to officers for comment.

Diane Russell, Rother District confirmed that from the Public Inquiry at Pashley Road, Ticehurst, highlighted key areas where the forthcoming review of the Management Plan could make useful changes. For example a robust glossary of terminology is to be included to reduce challenge to key terms. It also highlighted that the appeal process is increasingly significant as so many application are going to appeal.

- 3.1 It was agreed that the documents would be circulated internally within local authorities to Strategic Environmental Assessment officers for comment to Claire Tester.** Officers

**4. Planning Appeal Summary Document**

- 4.1** Claire Tester informed the officers of the Appeal Summary Paper which had been circulated prior to the meeting looking at the trends of appeals within and surrounding the AONB. This highlighted Inspectors handling of paragraph 116 in appeal decisions and the definition of major development.

- 4.2 It was agreed that officers will update Claire Tester with any further appeals within their local authorities** officers

- 4.3** Will Dorman commented that since the Pease Pottage application was approved several medium sized developments within the AONB have been submitted. However, as a point of interest at a recent development appeal, for a site in Horsted Keynes, the outcome has been delayed until the Neighbourhood Plan was completed, thus

reinforcing the necessity of having robust design guidance.

- 4.4 Jason Lavender confirmed that the Unit had written to Mid Sussex DC to express concern at the decision by Mid Sussex DC to approve a major development of 600 houses in the AONB. A discussion took place on the use of 'significant harm' when relating to housing applications and the importance of objecting to the principle versus the nature of development. Claire Tester commented that each individual scheme has to be given due consideration to the 'harm' it may have on the AONB and also pointed out that the Unit also supports appropriate development within the AONB.
- 4.5 It was agreed that this letter and the response from Mid Sussex DC Chief Executive to the Unit on this matter will be circulated to the officers.** Jason Lavender
- 4.6 Jason Lavender informed the officers of recent research by Ian Mulheirn of Oxford Economics questioning the conventional and widely held view that there isn't enough housing in the UK, that housing costs are high as a result, and that building more houses will solve the problem. This will be circulated to the officers for information.
- 4.7 Jennifer Hollingum put forward that it would be useful to have a fact or key questions sheet that could be part of the induction process for officers. This might hold summaries of individual advice notes and links.
- 4.8 It was agreed that the Unit will look at the best method to develop training material for Development Managers as well as for Members.** Unit
- 4.9 Sally Marsh briefed the Group about the Public Inquiry at Pashley Road Ticehurst that she had been asked by Rother DC to give evidence at, alongside David Marlow, Diane Russell of Rother DC. The setting of the settlement and 'sense of place' was seen as significant and the process highlighted key areas where the forthcoming review of the Management Plan could make useful changes including the importance of ensuring the terminology used is consistent and has clarity.

- 5.0 The outcome of the Pashley Road Public Inquiry will be circulated to the officers when known.** David Marlow
- 5. AONB Project updates**
- 5.1 Jason Lavender informed the officers of other projects that the Unit are managing, including:
- Taste of Kent Awards** - The Unit has been visiting Kent farms within the AONB with excellent environmental stewardship as part of the Kent Countryside Awards. This is managed by Produced in Kent. The results will be announced beginning of March 2017.
- 5.2 **Restocking the Weald** - Lucy Carnaghan has been recruited as a Restocking Coordinator to work with non-farming landowners, farm entrants and a range of organisations to progress the recommendations of the Restocking the High Weald reports. 12 farm entrants have registered as potential graziers and a growing number of landowners (currently five) interested in participating in the project.
- 5.3 It was agreed that an update of Restocking in the Weald should be presented at the next OSG to be held in September 2017** Unit
- 5.4 **Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund** - A five year stewardship grant has been awarded to the Unit from Natural England. The Unit is working with the Upper Rother and Dudwell Landowner Group. This has around 25 Landowners of varying farm sizes. The Fund supports mid-tier Countryside Stewardship Scheme applications as well as providing training workshops on specific Group priorities such as species habitat enhancement and unimproved grassland management.
- 5.5 **Sussex Lund** - The Sussex Lund grants programme, £250,000, was launched by Lisbet Rausing in 2016. The Unit have been approached to manage the fund in 2017. It supports community, small-scale, practical projects that improve the ecology and landscape of the High Weald.
- 6. National Association AONB (NAAONB) update**
- 6.1 Sally Marsh updated the officers of the key areas that the NAAOB have been working on:

NAAONB Chairman's Meeting - Cllr Kentfield attended the National Association of AONBs Chairman's Meeting in November 2016 with Sally Marsh. The meeting was informed that the Welsh independent review panel has now reported. Its recommendations are based on the agreed principle that AONBs have a clear role in the future, and are well placed to deliver the current priorities for the Welsh government including sustainable management of natural resources and sustainable economic development. The implications for England are that the 1949 Act is unlikely to be challenged and the purpose of AONB designation will remain unchanged over the next High Weald Management Plan period.

6.2 The government's focus on a natural capital approach, championed by the Natural Capital Committee, chaired by Dieter Helm may be a central theme of Defra's upcoming 25 year plan.

6.3 There is an ongoing discussion at the NAAONB that new Agri-environmental payments based on a natural capital approach could be administered through the AONBs who would be able to tailor funding to landscape priority areas

## **8. Items for Management Board and JAC**

8.1 Jeremy Lake has been commissioned to research the routeways story in the context of their national significance, supporting the current update of the historic routeways dataset. Jeremy Lake will be presenting his findings at the JAC Meeting on 29 November 2017.

## **9. A.O.B**

9.1 The officers reported back on key activities within their local authorities:

**Mid Sussex DC** – the District Plan has been submitted for examination.

**Tunbridge Wells BC** - Site Allocations Development Plan Document was challenged and the decision was upheld.

**Sevenoaks BC** – the Local Plan is to be available for comment in Summer 2017. Sevenoaks BC have several specific heritage assets with developments within the AONB, such as Penshurst area. These will require site visits.



Agenda Item: 8

**Committee:** High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Date:** 29 March 2017

**Title of Report:** Revenue Budget 2017/18

**By:** Treasurer to the Joint Advisory Committee

**Purpose of Report:** To approve the Revenue Budget 2017/18

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to approve:

1. approved the Revenue Budget for 2017/18;
2. thank Defra and partner authorities for maintaining their contributions.

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 This report sets out the budget for 2017/18 following a consultation approved by this committee in November 2016.
- 1.2 The budget supports the High Weald AONB Work Plan 17/18 which sets out how the High Weald AONB Unit will deliver its core functions and enable implementation of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2014-2019.

## **2. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL**

- 2.1 Appendix A summarises the forecast out-turn for 2016/17, the proposed budget for 2017/18 and the indicative budget for 2018/19. Appendix B summarises the project budgets.
- 2.2 The Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) contribution for 2017/18 includes an inflationary increase of £4500 and is forecast to be £264,500.
- 2.3 Other income of £5,000 and an allocation of 84% of the Defra single pot contribution to core activities has achieved a balanced budget for 2017/18.

## **3. BUDGET 2016/17**

- 3.1 The High Weald core budget is forecast to have a surplus of £6100 in 2016/17 arising from vacant posts and reduced PR activity. The forecast reserve at 31 March 2017 is £119,200.

#### **4. BUDGET 2017/18**

##### Core Budget – Expenditure

- 4.1 The budget for 2017/18 is presented in Appendix A. It is based on the 2016/17 figures with inflation at the ESCC applied rate of 1% for salaries and 0% for other costs. The budget allows for:
- (i) Staff costs: a budget for a core team of 5 FTE staff which has increased to accommodate incremental progression, contributions to the pension fund of 20.30% and estimated inflation of 1% for Single Status and LMG salaries.
  - (ii) Accommodation/office equipment costs: a budget for office rent, rates, office equipment, office maintenance and running costs and which has increased to accommodate the increased rental costs following office lease renewal.
  - (iii) Partnership running costs: a standstill budget that covers NAAONB membership fees, JAC meetings, representing the partnership at regional and national forums, producing the annual review and miscellaneous public relations costs.
  - (iv) Support services: East Sussex County Council's charges for IT, personnel and financial support.

##### Core Budget – Income

###### **Defra**

- 4.2 The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has a funding agreement with AONBs which provides for a flexible 'single pot' contribution for core, projects and the sustainable development fund (SDF).
- 4.3 Following the last Comprehensive Spending Review Defra advised that National Parks and AONB budgets will be protected in real terms. The contribution to the High Weald will increase by £4500 to £264,500 in 2017/18.
- 4.4 The 2016/17 contribution of £260,000 was allocated as follows: £209,150 to Core and £50,850 to Projects.
- 4.5 Defra's total contribution for 2017/18 is shown in appendix A. It shows the contribution of £264,500 allocated as £222,200 to Core and £42,300 to Projects.

###### **Local Authority Contributions**

- 4.6 The respective levels of support from each authority are shown in Appendix A.
- 4.7 In respect of core costs, all authorities have confirmed their contributions at 2016/17 levels.

## **Self-funding projects**

- 4.8 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects is presented at Appendix B and is estimated to be £490,500 in 2017/18. Appendix B indicates contributions from local authority partners to projects, including High Weald Heroes.
- 4.9 It is proposed to allocate £42,300 from the Defra 'single pot' to Projects.
- 4.10 All projects have a balanced budget over the total life of the project. Income is allocated on a pro rata basis over the relevant number of financial years to give a net balance of zero.
- 4.11 Successful grant applications, and inclusion of Sussex Lund as a new programme, has resulted in a significant increase in expenditure on self-funding projects.

## **5. FINANCIAL ISSUES 2018/19 AND BEYOND**

- 5.1 Maintenance of the Defra contribution to the JAC in real terms until 2020 is very welcome.
- 5.2 An annual contribution for the management of Sussex Lund will ensure the JAC's Other Income target is met enabling a balanced core budget until 2020.
- 5.3 The project budget is sufficient for producing the management plan and associated evidence and guidance, delivering the JAC's education programme - High Weald Heroes, and enabling land managers and communities to develop and deliver landscape enhancement projects.
- 5.4 No new expenditure pressures for 2018/19 and beyond are currently forecast.
- 5.5 Most of the estimated reserves at 31 March 2018 of £119,200 will be required in a worst case scenario of all staff being made redundant.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 The 2017/18 core budget is a balanced budget which provides the JAC with the capacity to deliver its core functions.
- 6.2 The project budget has increased significantly from 2016/17 and reflects successful grant applications and inclusion of a new large-scale programme, Sussex Lund.
- 6.3 On this basis the JAC is recommended to agree the budget.

Mark Whiffin  
Treasurer to the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

2015/16

Actual

£'000

Actual Details

Expenditure

	2016/17		2017/18					2018/19
	Budget £'000	Outturn £'000	Original Budget £'000	Inflation £'000	Budget Pressures £'000	Other £'000	Budget £'000	Indicative Budget £'000
<b>215.8 Staff costs</b>	224.7	221.2	224.7	2.2	0.0	8.9	235.8	239.8
44.0 Accommodation/office equipment	34.2	35.2	34.2	0.0	3.0	0.0	37.2	37.2
7.2 Partnership running costs	11.5	8.1	11.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.5	11.5
27.3 Support services	27.3	27.3	27.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.3	27.3
<b>294.3 Total Core Expenditure</b>	<b>297.7</b>	<b>291.8</b>	<b>297.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>311.8</b>	<b>315.8</b>
69.6 JAC expenditure on self-funding projects	65.3	53.4	65.3	0.0	0.0	382.9	448.2	448.2
40.9 Defra expenditure on self-funding projects	56.0	50.9	56.0	0.0	0.0	(13.7)	42.3	44.6
-12.5 Project Enabling Fund expenditure on self-funding projects	28.9	0.0	28.9	0.0	0.0	(28.9)	0.0	0.0
<b>98.0 Total JAC expenditure on self-funding projects</b>	<b>150.2</b>	<b>104.3</b>	<b>150.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>340.3</b>	<b>490.5</b>	<b>492.8</b>
<b>392.3 Total Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>447.9</b>	<b>396.1</b>	<b>447.9</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>349.2</b>	<b>802.3</b>	<b>808.6</b>
<b>Core Contributions</b>								
214.7 Defra	204.0	209.1	204.0	0.0	18.2	0.0	222.2	224.4
22.4 East Sussex County Council	22.4	22.4	22.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.4	22.4
10.0 Kent County Council	10.0	10.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0
9.3 West Sussex County Council	9.3	9.3	9.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.3	9.3
2.9 Surrey County Council	2.9	2.9	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	2.9
7.2 Wealden District	7.2	7.2	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2	7.2
7.2 Rother District Council	7.2	7.2	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2	7.2
5.6 Mid Sussex District Council	5.6	5.6	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.6	5.6
6.7 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	6.7	6.7	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.7	6.7
4.7 Horsham District Council	4.7	4.7	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.7	4.7
3.6 Sevenoaks District Council	3.6	3.6	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	3.6
0.8 Ashford Borough Council	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8
1.5 Hastings Borough Council	1.5	1.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.5
2.2 Tandridge District Council	2.2	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.2
0.3 Crawley Borough Council	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
0.3 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
3.6 Other Income	9.0	4.1	9.0	0.0	0.0	(4.0)	5.0	6.7
<b>303.0 Total Core Contributions</b>	<b>297.7</b>	<b>297.9</b>	<b>297.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>(4.0)</b>	<b>311.9</b>	<b>315.8</b>
(12.5) Project Enabling Fund: (to)/from balances	28.9	0.0	28.9	0.0	0.0	(28.9)	0.0	0.0
<b>-12.5 Total Local Authority Project Enabling Fund Contributions</b>	<b>28.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>28.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(28.9)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
40.9 Defra contributions to self-funding projects	65.3	50.9	56.0	0.0	0.0	(13.7)	42.3	44.6
69.6 JAC contributions to self-funding projects	56.0	53.4	65.3	0.0	0.0	382.9	448.2	448.2
<b>401.0 Total Contributions</b>	<b>447.9</b>	<b>402.2</b>	<b>447.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>336.3</b>	<b>802.4</b>	<b>808.6</b>
<b>8.7 Transfer (from)/to reserves</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(2.2)</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>(12.9)</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>
(8.7) Total (surplus)/deficit for year	0.0	(6.1)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	(0.1)	0.0
104.4 Reserves Brought Forward	113.1	113.1	119.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	119.2	119.2
8.7 Transfer (from)/to reserves	0.0	6.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>113.1 Reserves Carried Forward</b>	<b>113.1</b>	<b>119.2</b>	<b>119.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>119.2</b>	<b>119.2</b>

**HIGH WEALD AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**SELF FUNDING PROJECTS BUDGET 2016/17 & INDICATIVE BUDGET 2017/18**

	Budget 2016/17			Outturn 2016/17			Indicative Budget 2017/18		
	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Exp £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
<b><u>1 Community Outreach</u></b>									
JAC expenditure	36.8			13.2			18.8		
Defra		(18.4)			(13.2)			(14.2)	
Local authorities		(18.4)	0.0		0.0			(4.7)	
Other					0.0	0.0			(0.0)
<b>High Weald Heroes</b>									
JAC expenditure	21.0			23.0			23.7		
Defra		(10.5)			(17.1)			(11.9)	
Local authorities		(10.5)			(2.3)			(11.9)	
Other		0.0	0.0		(3.7)	(0.0)		0.0	0.0
<b><u>2 Management Plan Evidence and Guidance</u></b>									
JAC expenditure	17.2			23.7			18.7		
Defra		(17.2)			(14.1)			(10.7)	
Other			0.0		(9.6)	0.0		(8.0)	0.0
<b><u>3 Landscape Enhancement</u></b>									
JAC expenditure	65.3			35.3			190.6		
Environment Agency		0.0			(5.2)			(29.0)	
Local authorities		(65.3)			(12.7)			(38.1)	
Other			0.0		(17.4)	0.0		(123.6)	0.0
<b><u>4 Project Development</u></b>									
JAC expenditure	9.9			9.0			13.6		
Defra		(9.9)			(6.5)			(5.5)	
Local authorities			0.0		(2.5)	0.0		(8.1)	0.0
<b><u>5 Sussex Lund</u></b>									
JAC expenditure	0.0			0.0			225.0		
Charities Aid Foundation		0.0			0.0			(225.0)	0.0
JAC expenditure (to Appendix A)	150.2	(94.2)		104.2	(53.4)		490.5	(448.2)	
Expenditure funded by Defra (to Appendix A)		(56.0)			(50.9)			(42.3)	
<b>TOTAL JAC expenditure/income</b>	<b>150.2</b>	<b>(150.2)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>104.2</b>	<b>(104.2)</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>	<b>490.5</b>	<b>(490.5)</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Agenda item: 9

**Committee:** High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Date:** 29 March 2017

**Title of Report:** Management Plan Evidence and Guidance Programme  
- Planning Approach 2017-2020

**By:** AONB Planning Advisor

**Purpose:** To consider and agree the approach to planning matters

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Advisory Committee is recommended to approve the approach to planning matters as set out in section 3 below.

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### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Planning has been a rapidly changing area in the last few years. The introduction of the Localism Act in 2011; the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012; and the abolition of regional spatial strategies in 2013 significantly altered the way that planning policy is developed and implemented in this country, resulting in both increased opportunities and resource pressures for local authorities. At the same time local authorities have seen their budgets significantly reduced. As a result many local authorities have needed to reduce staffing levels, including managing their planning function with less planning officers and related specialists such as conservation officers, urban designers, landscape architects and ecologists.
- 1.2 In the last year the country has decided to leave the European Union and there is considerable uncertainty about what this means for the future of many areas of legislation and funding which impact on the use of land. In particular, Strategic Environmental Assessments for plans, Environmental Impact Assessments for planning applications and Habitats Regulations Assessments for both are all European derived legislation which may be subject to change over the next few years. In rural areas such as the High Weald, the approach to agricultural subsidies also has the potential to significantly change land use in the area which could have planning implications.
- 1.3 The NPPF has a presumption in favour of sustainable development and seeks to significantly boost housing supply to meet 'objectively assessed housing needs' and address affordability issues. Whilst Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty remain protected in theory by the NPPF, in practice the pressure to increase housing supply has resulted in more development in AONBs both through plan allocations and speculative planning applications which take advantage of a lack of five year housing supply. Very few local planning authorities in the High Weald can currently demonstrate a five year supply. In some cases this is because they have up to date Local Plans but allocations have not come forward as quickly as anticipated. In other cases it is because the Local Plan is not up to date and, in these circumstances,

Government guidance is that the five year housing supply should be measured against objectively assessed housing need, which is not constrained by designations such as AONBs.

- 1.4 As a result of this pressure there is a clear local trend for large allocations in the AONB (such as at Cranbrook and Pease Pottage) and a significant increase in major planning applications for sites of 20-200 homes in and around the towns and villages of the High Weald.
- 1.5 In February the Government published the Housing White Paper with the intention of ‘fixing the broken housing market’. Proposals include:
- Requiring developers to start building within two years of securing planning permission;
  - Incentivising older people to downsize to smaller properties;
  - Incentivising build to let;
  - A £3bn fund to help small builders deliver more homes;
  - Requiring local planning authorities to allocate more small sites;
  - Requiring local planning authorities to provide neighbourhood planning groups with a housing requirement; and
  - Requiring local and neighbourhood plans to set clear design expectations.
- 1.6 In the context of the above changes this report considers how the High Weald AONB Unit can best approach planning matters to conserve and enhance the AONB and support local authority partners.

## 2.0 SWOT Analysis

- 2.1 In considering how the High Weald Unit should respond to the current planning context the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been identified.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Unit has collected and maintains a significant resource of GIS data and other evidence about the High Weald landscape;</li> <li>• The Team can provide expert advice on the High Weald landscape and how it can be conserved and enhanced;</li> <li>• The Planning Advisor can provide planning knowledge and experience;</li> <li>• The national protected landscapes network can share knowledge and best practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Unit has an advisory role only, no planning powers;</li> <li>• It is a small Unit with limited capacity to engage with planning issues over a large area;</li> <li>• There are 15 local authority partners to work with as well as other bodies such as Natural England and Historic England – the high number of partners dilutes the influence of the Unit over planning decisions.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make information about the High Weald more accessible to decision-makers and the wider public;</li> <li>• Well-placed to facilitate joint working to tackle AONB issues Potential to fill some of the gaps left by loss of specialist officers in local authorities;</li> <li>• Potential to influence direction of change at</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainty about legislative and funding context post Brexit;</li> <li>• Increasing pressure for development in AONBs;</li> <li>• Pressure on local authority budgets reducing their capacity to deal with planning matters.</li> <li>• Pressure on the High Weald</li> </ul>

<p>national and local level through NAAONB and other partners;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to promote good practice in location, scale and design of development in the AONB.</li> </ul>	<p>budget reducing its capacity to support local authorities (Planning Advisor now 0.8FTE not 1 FTE).</p>
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### 3.0 Proposed Approach

3.1 The High Weald AONB Unit has a part-time Planning Advisor and is a small team with many other functions. It is primarily an advisory body. In order to assist local authorities, applicants, agents and communities the Unit provides web based advice on how to assess the effect of proposals on the key components of AONB character in line with the AONB Management Plan. The Unit's advice is based on the evidence collected about the history and condition of the High Weald AONB including the GIS data and studies on geology and watercourses; routeways; settlements; woodland; and field and heath. The challenge over the next few years is how to make this information more accessible to decision-makers and the wider public.

#### Advice Notes and Factsheets

3.2 As noted at the last Joint Advisory Committee, the Unit, in collaboration with the Officers Steering Group, has produced an Advice Note which aims to assist all those involved in development proposals, including developers and their agents as well as members of the public, consider the impact of the proposed changes on the AONB. This Advice Note is now on the website and is being sent regularly to correspondents asking for help with making or responding to planning applications.

3.3 Work has recently started on a second Advice Note which will focus on the design of new housing developments. This is in response to the increased number of such developments coming forward in the AONB as set out in paragraphs 1.3-1.4 above, and the concern that most of these applications propose standard volume housebuilder layouts and house types. The Design Advice Note will focus on layouts and house types that would more appropriately reflect High Weald characteristics and landscape components, and make best use of local resources.

3.4 Over the next three years the Unit will look to produce further Advice Notes and short factsheets as they are needed by the changing circumstances. These will be produced in consultation with the Officers Steering Group and may be adopted by individual local planning authorities as Supplementary Planning Documents where appropriate. The Unit will also seek to increase communications about the Management Plan and AONB landscape through training sessions and other events. The Joint Advisory Committee will be kept up to date as this work progresses.

#### Local Plans

3.5 The High Weald Unit will respond to formal consultations on Local Plans as invited by the local planning authorities. However, it has also increasingly got involved in discussing and commenting on draft evidence and policy documents at an earlier stage. Whilst this could become a resource issue, it is considered that such informal collaboration is valuable and

avoids potential conflict later in the process. The Unit therefore encourages such early engagement and will respect the confidentiality of such draft discussions and documents.

### Neighbourhood Plans

- 3.6 About 20 (or one fifth) of the parishes in the High Weald are currently engaged in Neighbourhood Planning and this proportion is likely to rise over the next three years. The Unit has sought to support these groups where possible, and particularly to encourage these Plans to include information about the High Weald AONB characteristics within their Neighbourhood Areas and develop policies that conserve and enhance those characteristics. Following the Housing White Paper's recommendation that Neighbourhood Plans should include robust design policies, this is likely to be a growing area where the Unit could assist in ensuring that such policies are appropriate for the High Weald AONB.

### Planning Applications and Appeals

- 3.7 The Unit would encourage local planning authorities to use the team's expertise in pre-application discussions for major development in the AONB to ensure that such developments are designed to conserve and enhance the special nature of the area. However, it will only get involved in pre-application advice in liaison with the local planning authority and will avoid separate discussions with applicants about the detail of their schemes. This is to avoid the Unit spending time on proposals which may have little chance of gaining planning permission and to ensure that applicants get 'joined up' advice from the Unit and the relevant Council.
- 3.8 If the Unit's advice is requested by the local planning authority determining the planning application, or where the Unit considers that a planning application may have a significant impact on the AONB, the Unit will undertake its own assessment of impact. This will be, in the first instance, a desk assessment using available GIS layers and other evidence sources. Where resources allow a site visit may be made. If the proposal is considered significant, and additional evidence is needed, external experts may be commissioned to assist. There may be a cost associated with this work.
- 3.9 The Unit gives independent advice on whether a proposal is likely to conserve and enhance the AONB. In its assessment of impact (or harm) to the AONB the Unit will use phrases which will indicate the degree of harm to the AONB such as 'this application will cause significant harm to the character of the AONB'. The Unit will, on most occasions, also make it clear whether it objects to, does not object to or supports planning permission being granted for the development. In the event that the Unit's objection to an application is endorsed by the Council and the applicant appeals, then the Unit will support the Council at appeal so far as it can within limited resources. Responses to planning applications always make it clear that they are advisory and are the professional views of the AONB Unit's Planning Advisor on the potential impacts on the High Weald landscape. They are not necessarily the views of the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

## **4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 4.1 The next three years will be challenging for local authorities and it is considered that the High Weald AONB Unit can best assist in meeting these challenges by:

- Providing clear and unambiguous advice on how planning proposals would impact on the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB;
- Engaging with local authorities at an early stage in policy-making and planning applications;
- Proactively producing Advice Notes and Factsheets to address specific issues; and
- Working with national and regional partners to influence Government policy and practice in AONBs.

4.2 Members are asked to endorse the approach set out in the report.

Contact: Claire Tester, High Weald Planning Adviser [claire.testers@highweald.org](mailto:claire.testers@highweald.org)

Agenda Item: 10

**Committee:** High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Date:** 29 March 2017

**Title of Report:** AONB Management Plan Review 2017: Progress and issues

**By:** AONB Director

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Support the principle of a 'light touch' review'
  2. Support the allocation of AONB Unit staff resources to the review set out in paragraph 2.1 & 2.2
  3. Support the recommendations for the scope of the review set out in paragraph 6.1
  4. Agree the SEA scoping paper attached at Appendix A
- 

### 1. Background

- 1.1 Originally published in 2004 as a 20-year strategy, the High Weald Management Plan (HWMP) was deliberately concise and structured around the statutory purpose – to conserve and enhance natural beauty. It was envisaged that major revisions of the management policy objectives would not be necessary during this period. Indeed, despite significant changes to planning policy, sustained public spending cuts and the abolition or 'transformation' of many public sector functions, AONB purpose endures and currently remains supported at the highest level in government. The decision to limit HWMP reviews to relatively minor revisions in 2009 and 2014 was taken with this context in mind, and a further decision to restrict the 2019 to a minor review would be similarly consistent.
- 1.2 Pressure remains high on AONB Unit and partner authorities' resources and anything more than a limited review of the HWMP will place considerable pressure on the delivery of other activities during the review period. However, while the 2009 and 2014 reviews were undertaken in a relatively stable political climate, that is not the case now and the ramifications of this – from a new simplified government web-portal stripped of decades of landscape policy documents to planning by appeal and the impact of Brexit on agri-environmental policy – will affect the scope and scale of the 2019 review. While the character components and management policy objectives, the most important aspects of the HWMP, remain appropriate other aspects of the Plan may need more substantive re-considering.

### 2. Resources

- 2.1 The review process is a major project and will be a key focus of the Unit's work plan over the next two years. It will be carried out primarily by the AONB Landscape Advisor under the direction of the AONB Director, and with support from the AONB Planning Advisor. The Team Support Officer will provide day to day assistance and be responsible for organising

events. All other members of the AONB Unit will be involved at various stages. It will be helpful if officers and member can make additional time available to contribute to workshops and comment on draft documents.

- 2.2 We are not anticipating any significant additional expenditure on core but an allowance will be made in the budgets for 2017/18 and 2018/19 for consultation events and limited data analysis; and in 2019/20 for printing limited copies of the Plan. We will be seeking additional funding for the Plan launch in 2019 which will coincide with national celebrations commemorating 70 years since the 1949 Act paved the way for designation of National Parks and AONBs.

### 3. Progress to date

- 3.1 The timetable for the review was presented to the JAC in November 2016. A scoping paper for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) [Appendix A] has been prepared by the AONB Planning Advisor and was shared with the Management Board at their meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March. The Board also discussed the context and issues set out below, and the need to extend the 'light touch' review for some sections of the Plan.
- 3.2 Formal notice of the intention to review the HWMP was sent to Natural England on 22<sup>nd</sup> March as required by Section 90, Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 [Appendix B]. Initial consultation with partner local authorities and key stakeholders on the key component issues and targets is planned for May 2017 and invitations to JAC and OSG members will be circulated in April.

### 4. Purpose of this paper

- 4.1 This paper sets out the context and issues for the HWMP review which may have an impact on the scope of the review. Members are asked to consider the recommendations below which will then shape the review process.

### 5. Context and issues for the HWMP review

#### **National policy for protected landscapes (National Parks and AONBs)**

- 5.1 When the last HWMP was launched in March 2014 we were anticipating a review of designated landscapes in Wales, the outcome of which may have affected AONBs policy in England. The independent review panel have now reported and the recommendations that are being taken forward in Wales are based on the principle that AONBs have a clear role in the future, and are well placed to deliver the current priorities for the Welsh government including sustainable management of natural resources and sustainable economic development. The implications for England are that AONB legislation is unlikely to be challenged and we can expect the purpose of AONB designation to remain unchanged over the next HWMP period.

#### **Politics and the public sector**

- 5.2 Political pressure to shrink the state in terms of a reduction in resources, regulation, policy and leadership on the environment, continues. All public sector bodies operate under these conditions and indications suggest that this situation will persist through the plan period. The impact is already significant across the sector with a reduction in resources, staff and expertise within our traditional partner organisation such as Natural England, Historic England and the Forestry Commission, as well as local authorities. Most notably the new Gov.uk website, which has merged government departments and agencies into one 'simpler'

site, has at a stroke removed decades of accumulated policy and past knowledge about AONBs. Rother DC's QC for the Pashley Road planning appeal reported finding no details about AONB policy on the government website and had to rely on text provided by the National Association for AONBs, a charity. Another example is that of Natural England's 'Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or AONB in England' which is no longer available on Natural England's web pages.

- 5.3 The loss of regional bodies along with agencies dealing with rural issues (for example, the abolition of the Commission for Rural Communities in 2013) means AONB interests are no longer reflected to the extent they once were in the policy of others. National landscape policy and research, already marginalised with the loss of the Countryside Agency in 2006, has seen further ongoing decline as Natural England, the Governments' landscape advisor, deals with budget cuts and ongoing re-organisation. Less regulation and a reduction in agencies able to scrutinise the impact of policy has led to an increase in work load for the remaining 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and local government bodies dealing with landscape and the environment. If the ongoing political commitment to reducing public sector funding persist as is likely the HWMP and supporting documents will need to be produced in such a way as to be usable to multiple audiences with minimum interpretation.

#### **The evidence base**

- 5.4 With completion of the High Weald Field system project and routeway research this spring the High Weald will, for the first time, have data sets for all key components of character, supported by metadata and peer reviewed research reports. There will be some notable gaps; primarily habitat and species data especially for meadows and boundaries. Data sets will remain AONB scale in nature and provisional for individual sites but the data and associated research will enable a comprehensive and consistent approach to be taken to application of the Section 85 duty (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) on public bodies; consideration of the AONB Management Plan in planning decisions (Planning Practice Guidance), and the proper application of the tests for harm to the AONB required under paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF.

#### **Planning and development**

- 5.5 Increasing local plan housing targets together with the loosening and fragmentation of the planning system suggests that the pressure for new housing and development in the AONB is unlikely to abate. The threat to AONB character from inappropriately sited and poorly designed housing is considerable with green field sites adjacent to existing settlement most vulnerable. The Housing White Paper includes a range of recommendations which will increase development pressure on the AONB along with others that may be helpful. An example of the latter is the strong support for the contribution played by small sites (not just for the benefits they can bring for sensitive settlement extension but in facilitating small local housebuilders into the market) and, in addition the anticipation that plans should set out clear design expectations – 'using visual tools such as design codes that respond to local character'.
- 5.6 The lack of affordable housing in the AONB is already prompting communities to explore alternative delivery methods such as community land trusts. The HWMP will need to take a fresh look at this issue and how targets are set to support appropriate affordable housing provision.
- 5.7 The decision to use the phrase 'landscape and scenic beauty' when dealing with AONB purpose in the NPPF, rather than 'natural beauty' as in the 1949 Act, continues to have

repercussions. Planning Inspectors and others appear to be confused about how the former relates to the statutory AONB management plan (which defines natural beauty and the objectives for its conservation) and the review will need to consider how to better communicate this relationship. The South Downs National Park Authority has sought legal opinion on this matter.

- 5.8 The increasing tendency for developers to appeal decisions especially where authorities lack a five-year housing supply together with greater participation by local people in planning means AONB information is more visible, shared and scrutinised at all levels of the planning process. This is unlikely to change through the Plan period and the review will need to reflect the additional research and intelligence developed since the last plan in a way that stands up to this scrutiny.

### **The external funding environment**

- 5.9 All of our traditional sources of external funding continue to decline and competition for funding in the environmental sector continues to intensify. One of our most significant potential funders, Heritage Lottery Fund, have indicated that for one of their larger schemes - the landscape partnership scheme - the High Weald is unlikely to score highly, however excellent the application, against other 'more threatened areas'. Priorities are also changing for the scheme as a whole to a more people centred scheme which will be challenging for the High Weald with its relatively wealthy population.

### **60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1949 Act**

- 5.10 The HWMP launch in 2019 coincides with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act which paved the way for AONB designation. National Parks and AONBs are discussing with Defra and others how this event could be celebrated.

### **Brexit, natural capital and Defra's 25 year environment plan**

- 5.11 We have insufficient information at the moment to properly understand how Brexit will affect the AONB. However, we do know that the UK's departure from the EU will prompt a raft of new legislation and will be accompanied by significant changes in agri-environment and rural development schemes which currently underpin AONB land management. These changes are likely to reflect a growing interest in a natural capital approach. The National Association for AONBs is working on behalf of all AONBs to influence the shape of new environmental legislation and to explore the opportunities for protected landscape bodies to deliver new rural support measures tailored to local areas. Whatever the outcome of these discussions the role of the HWMP will continue to be important in identifying what is distinctive about the area and the priorities for its conservation.
- 5.12 Any change in agricultural support mechanisms particularly loss of Single Farm Payment will have an impact on the viability of small family farms, the bedrock of the High Weald landscape. The Plan review will need to take a particularly close look at this issue through the review period to ensure targets for the 2019-2024 period support small family farms.
- 5.13 Natural capital refers to the elements of the natural environment which provide valuable goods and services to people and its approach requires natural assets to be assessed and changes valued and accounted for in a systematic way to help ensure better informed decisions. The Natural Capital Committee was set up by the government to advise on how it might achieve its objective of "being the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than that in which we found it". The role of designated landscapes

in improving natural capital is recognised by the UK Government's Natural Capital Committee set up to inform Defra's 25 year environment plan.

- 5.14 Defra's 25 year plan for the environment is yet to be published. We know it is likely to emphasise the principles of natural capital and focus on catchments and landscapes to target scarce resources and provide a focus for local engagement and identity.

### **Climate change**

- 5.15 Climate change remains a significant threat to the AONB and is overlooked in current policy. The HWMP will need to more closely consider impacts across the character components including new threats such as tree diseases.

### **Empowering communities**

- 5.16 Current Government thinking expressed through reports such as the 'State of the State' (Deloitte 2016/17) suggests that the government is retreating to focus on work that no-one else can do and that 'empowering communities' is part of this re-balancing. The HWMP review will need to be conscious of this, ensuring that messages setting out why the designation is important to all are clear and consistent. It will need to demonstrate that AONBs are living and working landscapes and that the designation is not a barrier to all development but a practical tool to enable the right development which supports viable and sustainable industry (and health and wellbeing) to be guided to the right place and designed so that the area remains one of England's finest landscapes.

## **6 Conclusions**

- 6.1 The following recommendations for the scope of the review arise from consideration of the issues above:
- The focus for the HWMP should remain on the purpose of the designation.
  - The principle of a short, concise and readable management plan remains valid but further work will be needed to:
    - Properly reference underpinning research and evidence, including national policy, and make reports available on the High Weald's own website if they do not exist elsewhere.
    - Reduce and prioritise the number of targets relying on public sector resources for their delivery.
  - An additional short section on HW component data should be provided with datasets and supporting metadata properly referenced and accessible on the HW website.
  - AONB component character statements should be expanded to reflect the new research into sub-characteristics with supporting research referenced and accessible on the HW website.
  - The implications of increasing affordable housing provision should be carefully considered.
  - The glossary should be expanded to define all common AONB terminology.
  - The review will need to consider how appeal decisions that support AONB interests and are relevant to paragraphs 115 and 116 in the NPPF can be referenced in the Plan.
  - Targets which rely on significant external funding should be carefully reviewed.
  - Consideration should be given to making the priorities for heritage and biodiversity conservation clearer.
  - The HWMP review consultation and launch should be planned to contribute to the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1949 Act.
  - Threats to family farms and vulnerable farm habitats should be specifically considered.

- Key facts and data about the High Weald (currently set out in pages 9 – 13 and gathered in more detail as a supporting document) should be reviewed and set out in the context of a natural capital approach.
- The implications of climate change should be considered as a separate topic together with enhanced targets to maximise resilience.
- The Public Understanding and enjoyment section should be expanded to consider locally distinctive details and perceptual qualities such as dark skies, views and tranquillity.

JAC members are asked to support this approach.

Sally Marsh, AONB Co-Director ([s.marsh@highweald.org](mailto:s.marsh@highweald.org))



# Context Baseline and Scoping Report

for the

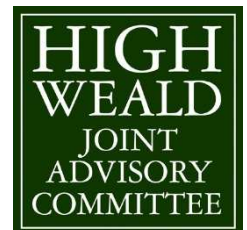
## Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

of the

### High Weald AONB Management Plan review 2019

Prepared by the

High Weald AONB Unit  
Woodland Enterprise Centre  
Hastings Road  
Flimwell  
East Sussex  
TN5 7PR



March 2017

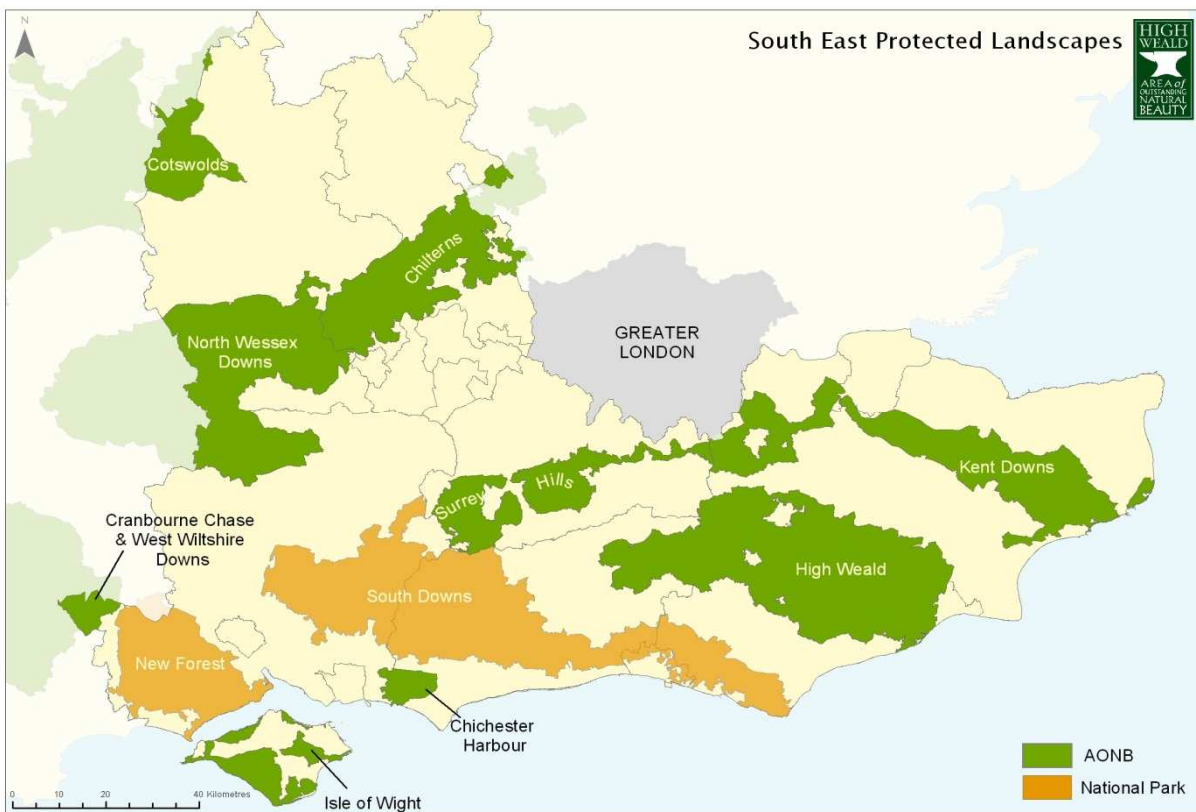
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Table 1: Quality Assurance Checklist for Scoping Report

The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies at the heart of South East England, covering 1,457km<sup>2</sup> (570 sq miles), across four counties. It is an historic countryside of rolling hills draped by small irregular fields, abundant woods and hedges, scattered farmsteads and ancient droeways and sunken lanes. The distinctive character of the High Weald arises from a long history of human interaction with the natural environment, and the exploitation of its resources – wood, iron and food. The landscape of the High Weald is essentially medieval and its present form was fundamentally established by the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and has survived major historic social and technological changes. Its future evolution and conservation is dependent on understanding and reinforcing the traditional interactions between people and nature that are responsible for the landscape we value today.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities to have regard to ‘the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs’ in making decisions that affect the designated area. Local authorities with land in an AONB, acting jointly in the case of AONBs crossing administrative boundaries, are legally obliged under the same Act to prepare and publish a plan which ‘formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it’, and to review this plan every five years. To assist the local authorities in meeting these statutory duties a High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was established. This is a partnership of the 15 local authorities covered by the designation plus Natural England and other organisations representing farming, forestry, business and recreation interests. The Partnership is supported by the High Weald AONB Unit, a strategic, specialist team that advises on the management of this nationally valued landscape.



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## 2.0 The High Weald AONB Management Plan

The High Weald AONB Management Plan was first published in 2004 as a twenty year plan until 2024. It was reviewed in 2009 and 2014 but these reviews were limited in scope and did not change the fundamental basis of the Management Plan.

The High Weald AONB Management Plan identifies and sets management goals for the key features of the landscape that have survived and form the essential basis of its natural beauty. These key components of Natural Beauty are being actively researched and understood to inform best practice in caring for and managing them, and to inform the choices for its future conservation and enhancement. The High Weald AONB Management Plan identifies the key issues for the High Weald landscape and defines Natural Beauty as being comprised of 5 basic components (see below).

Each component has specific features and sub elements defined for it which exist in the landscape - sandstone outcrops, historic farmsteads, scattered settlements, droveways and sunken lanes, ancient woodland, meadows and heathland, for instance. These are the features that uniquely combine to create the special, locally distinctive character of the High Weald. By concentrating effort on the management, conservation and enhancement of these features, the High Weald AONB will be best preserved and protected. These five components are therefore the principle policies of the plan.

When assessing the impacts of an action on Natural Beauty, those impacts should be assessed against the criteria and guidelines for management of each of these components. The Plan sets objectives and targets for the conservation and enhancement of each of these features which other plans and stakeholders should be seeking to integrate with their own programs to meet their obligation under Section 85 to have regard to the designation. An additional section of the Management Plan, Public Understanding and Enjoyment, details the objectives for peoples involvement and interaction with the landscape.

In this way the Management Plan seeks to set the framework against which stakeholders and decision makers can set their own actions and programs. Where their actions meet and complement the objectives and targets for each component then natural beauty should be conserved or enhanced.

Activities that adversely affect the components will have a negative effect on the quality and integrity of the natural and historic environment and hence the landscape and overall environment.

The High Weald AONB Unit produces guidance and expert advice on the care and management of the individual features of the components to inform and guide stakeholders on the appropriate management regime and approaches to each feature of the components of natural beauty for the High Weald.

As such the plan does not set explicit policies about individual issues such renewable energy or flooding etc, but sets the context and background against which these issues can be judged in terms of their impact on natural beauty as defined by the components of natural beauty. Thus the plan does not set rules for land management but gives a framework of features and management advice against which decisions on the type and form of land management can be assessed. This allows stakeholders and agents to measure their activities against these components and effectively audit their actions against the duty under section 85 of the CRoW Act.

### Components of High Weald Natural Beauty

- ◆ Geology, & Water Systems;
  - Sandrock outcrops
  - Ghyll streams
- ◆ Settlements;
  - Dispersed settlement pattern
  - Historic farmsteads
- ◆ Routeways;
  - Droveways
  - Sunken lanes
- ◆ Woodland;
  - Ancient woodland
  - Archaeological remains
- ◆ Field and Heathland
  - Unimproved grassland (meadows)
  - Heathland
  - Historic Field boundaries

### 3.0 Scope of Management Plan Review 2019

The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004 was prepared and reviewed in 2009 and 2014 as required under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. As the 2004 Management Plan was a twenty year strategy, the 2009 and 2014 reviews were 'light touch'.

Similarly the 2019 Review will not seek to significantly change the fundamental vision, statement of significance or the five key landscape components identified in the 2004 Plan. Rather it will seek to update where necessary the baseline information, evidence and key issues for the period 2019-2024 to take account of changes in the national and local context and additional research undertaken on the landscape components since 2014. It will then test the objectives and targets to assess whether they are fit for purpose.

Therefore this SEA will also be limited in scope to:

- Updating the review of relevant plans, policies and programmes;
- Updating the baseline information and indicators;
- Updating the key issues and environmental problems; and
- Testing the objectives and targets and their reasonable alternatives against the environmental objectives as set out in section 8.

[-----Retained as Existing (minor edits only)-----] [-----Scope of Review-----]

Vision	Statement of Significance	Geology etc	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Baseline Information, Evidence and Key Issues</b>
		Settlement	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Targets</b>	
		Routeways	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Targets</b>	
		Woodland	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Targets</b>	
		Field & Heath	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Targets</b>	

#### 4.0 Methodology and Timetable for Strategic Environmental Assessment

The requirement to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment is set out in the European Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment', known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA Directive. This was incorporated into English law via 'The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (Statutory Instrument 2004 No.1633)'.

In broad terms a SEA requires;

- consultation on the scope of the SEA, including the policy context and baseline environmental data available, the identification of environmental issues and problems and the proposed framework for the SEA; and
- the preparation of an environmental report which will test the proposed Management Plan Review and its reasonable alternatives against environmental objectives. This report will be consulted on, in parallel with the Management Plan, and will be finalised and published alongside the final Management Plan. The expected timetable is as follows.

Dates	Plan Review	SEA process
November 2016 – January 2017	Scoping review.	Draft Scoping Report
February – March 2017	Scoping report to OSG. Scope of review approved by JAC.	Finalise Scoping report. Report Scoping Report to OSG and JAC.
April 2017	Statutory consultees alerted.	Carry out consultation on Scoping Report with statutory bodies (5 weeks).
April- June 2017	Issues and options report to OSG & MB Plan drafting.	Preparation of Environmental Report. Informal consultation with statutory bodies and OSG.
October 2017	Progress report to OSG & MB & JAC.	Progress report to OSG & MB & JAC.
January – February 2018	Consultation Draft approved by OSG, MB & JAC.	Present draft Environmental Report to JAC Management Board.
March – April 2018	Public consultation on Consultation Draft MP.	Public consultation on draft Environmental Report.
June-July 2018	Scope of revisions agreed by OSG Amendments & modifications and preparation of final draft MP.	Scope of revisions agreed by OSG. Revise and complete Environmental Report.
September - October 2018	Present final report of modifications / draft revised MP to JAC for approval.	Present Environmental Report to JAC for approval.
November 2018 – February 2019	Local authority & partner consultation and approval of revised MP.	Environmental Report circulated and approved by local authorities.
March – April 2019	Final adoption of revised plan by JAC. Send to SoS. Publication and dissemination of revised MP.	Final approval of Environmental Report by JAC. Send to SoS.

## 5.0 Policy Context – Relevant Plans, Policies and Programmes

In preparing, developing and reviewing the Management Plan, regard will be had to the objectives and directions of other relevant plans, policies and programmes. The following policies are relevant in setting the context and parameters for the scoping stage of this strategic environmental assessment and setting out the areas in which the Management Plan may have an impact or needs to respond to, in setting the management guidelines and issues for Natural Beauty.

Title	Date	Purpose of Document and Links with Other Documents	Relevance to Management Plan & SEA
<b>International</b>			
Agenda 21	1992	Adopted by more than 178 governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Promotes a balanced and integrated approach to environment and development issues.	The Management Plan will need to have regard to this Agenda by considering the social, economic and environmental impacts of its objectives, policies and targets.
The EU Habitats Directive 92/42/EU (amended 2001)	1992	To conserve habitats in Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	Ashdown Forest SAC is within the High Weald AONB and the Management Plan will need to avoid damaging this area.
Convention on Biodiversity	1993	The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) entered into force on 29 December 1993. It has 3 main objectives: 1. The conservation of biological diversity 2. The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity 3. The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources	The Management Plan will need to have regard to this Convention in its biodiversity objectives, policies and targets.
The Aarhus Convention - UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters	1998	Acknowledges the need for public participation in environmental issues and grants the public's rights to access to justice and information on the environment.	Public participation in the preparation and implementation of the Management Plan will be required.
Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC	2000	To promote cleaner rivers, lakes, groundwater and promotion of sustainable water management and use	The Management Plan will need to have regard to this Directive as watercourses are one of the key landscape components of the High Weald.
The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42/EC	2001	Aims to identify and mitigate significant environment effects arising from certain plans and programmes.	The Directive requires that an SEA be carried out on the Management Plan and an Environmental Report produced.
EC Directive 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information	2003	Sets out the right of the public to view environmental information held by public authorities.	All environmental information relating to the Management Plan must be disseminated and made available to the general public.
European Landscape Convention	2006	To integrate landscape considerations into any policies with possible impacts on landscape.	Defines landscape as "an area perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human factors". The Management Plan should take account of people's

			perceptions and how the landscape is affected by people.
Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories, IUCN	2008	Promotes the conservation of biological diversity particularly where conservation objectives need to be met over a large area with a range of ownership patterns and governance.	AONBs are recognised as Category V Protected Landscapes under IUCN's (International Union for Conservation of Nature) global protected area framework.
Birds Directive 2009/147/EC	2009	To prevent habitat loss and degradation especially to Special Protection Areas (SPA)	Ashdown Forest SPA is within the High Weald AONB and the Management Plan will need to avoid damaging this area.
2020 European Biodiversity Strategy	2011	To halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020.	The Management Plan will need to have regard to this Strategy in its biodiversity objectives, policies and targets.
<b>National</b>			
National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949	1949	Statutory basis for AONBs and National Parks	Sets purpose of AONB designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty, which the Management Plans defines for the High Weald.
Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended)	1981	Principal legislative mechanism for the protection of wildlife in Great Britain. Affords certain protection to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).	The Management Plan will need to have regard to this Act in its biodiversity objectives, policies and targets.
The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000	2000	Statutory basis for AONBs	Gives public bodies the 'duty to have regard to conserving and enhancing the AONB'. Sets statutory requirement for AONB Management Plans.
Securing the future: Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy	2005	Sets out sustainable development principles and priority areas for action. It gives five 'guiding principles' of sustainable development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•living within the planet's environmental limits;</li> <li>•ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;</li> <li>•achieving a sustainable economy;</li> <li>•promoting good governance; and</li> <li>•using sound science responsibly.</li> </ul>	This Strategic Environmental Assessment focuses on the significant environmental effects of the AONB Management Plan. However, the Plan itself will also take into account the wider social and economic effects.
Climate Change – The UK Programme	2006	Details approach to meeting targets for the UK.	Management Plan should complement this programme and consider how the High Weald can make a positive contribution.
The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act	2006	Sets up Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities and imposes a duty on public bodies to have regard to conserving biodiversity.	Management Plan should have regard to this Act, particularly in relation to its biodiversity objectives, policies and targets.
Principles Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of Historic Environment	2007	To support the quality of decision-making, creating a management regime for all aspects of the historic environment.	Management Plan should have regard to this guidance in its historic objectives, policies and targets.
Climate Change Act	2008	Makes provision for the development and promotion of a	Management Plan should have regard to this Act and consider how the High

		sustainable energy policy.	Weald can make a positive contribution.
Securing Biodiversity - Natural England	2008	To enhance the recovery of priority habitats and species in England.	The Management Plan should consider this guidance in relation to its biodiversity objectives, policies and targets.
Defra's Climate Change Plan	2010	Sets out the actions Defra is taking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across its policy areas.	Management Plan should have regard to these actions and consider how the High Weald can make a positive contributions.
The Natural Environment White Paper	2011	To support a more integrated landscape scale approach to the protection of wildlife.	Management Plan should complement this strategy particularly in relation to its biodiversity objectives, policies and targets.
Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services	2011	Provides aims for reducing biodiversity loss, improving networks and guiding development.	Management Plan should complement this strategy particularly in relation to its biodiversity objectives, policies and targets.
Localism Act	2011	Sets out new community rights including neighbourhood planning and community land trusts.	The Management Plan should consider whether any of these new mechanisms can help to achieve its objectives.
Healthy Lives, Healthy People White Paper - Department for Health	2011	Sets out the key principles for supporting the public to make better and more informed choices with regards to their health.	The Management Plan should consider whether and how the AONB can contribute to people's health and wellbeing.
UK Forestry Standard - Forestry Commission	2011	Sets out the standard for sustainable forest management in the UK.	The Management Plan should have regard to this standard in relation to its approach to woodland management.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2012	To set out the government's planning policies.	The Management Plan should have regard to these policies.
National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)	Ongoing	To provide further detail and application of policies in the NPPF.	The Management Plan should have regard to this guidance.
Improving Natural Capital Natural Capital Committee	2017	An assessment of progress Fourth report to the Economic Affairs Committee	The Management Plan should take account of this report.
Housing White Paper	2017	To set out proposals for 'fixing the broken housing market'.	The Management Plan should take account of the direction of travel of Government housing policy.
<b>Regional/Local</b>			
Environment Agency Catchment Flood Management Plans for the Cuckmere and Sussex Havens; the Ouse; the Rother and Romney; and the Medway.	2009	Considers all types of inland flooding, from rivers, groundwater, surface water and tidal flooding. Shoreline management plans consider flooding from the sea.	Management Plan should have regard to but also influence these plans.
Local Plans produced by the 15 local planning authorities in the High Weald and their supporting assessments and evidence.	Various	Set out local planning policies for the area.	The Management Plan should have regard to but also influence these plans.
Local Transport Plans produced by the 4 local highway authorities in the High Weald.	Various	Set out the transport strategy and priorities for the area.	The Management Plan should have regard to but also influence these plans.

## 6.0 Baseline Environmental Information and Indicators

Extensive data and GIS resources are used regularly to develop our understanding and advice relating to each of the features of the components of natural beauty. A wider range of statistical and data sources are available to assist in our understanding of the features and qualities of the landscape. The following data is available to inform the SEA process and Management Plan review in general.

Data sources for Management Plan review and SEA		
<b><i>Landscape - Key components of natural beauty from AONB Management Plan</i></b>		
Geology , Water Systems & Climate	Sandrock outcrops Geology Gill Streams	British Geological Survey Environment Agency – Flood Maps and Water Quality High Weald AONB datasets Soil Classification System for England and Wales
Settlement	Built development (settlement pattern) Historic Farmsteads Listed Buildings Historic Parkland	Heritage England – Extensive Urban Surveys High Weald AONB datasets Historic Landscape Characterisation Ordnance Survey Tithe Maps Historic Farmstead mapping
Routeways	Historic Droeways Public Rights of Way Roman roads	High Weald AONB datasets Ordnance Survey Tithe Maps
Woodland	Ancient Woodland Other woodland (not ancient) Woodland Archaeology	Ancient Woodland Inventories
Field and Heath	Unimproved/semi-improved grassland (Meadows) Heathland Historic field boundaries Archaeology of field and heath	High Weald AONB High Weald AONB datasets Fieldsapes Study
<b><i>Other data sources</i></b>		
Biodiversity	SSSI SAC SPA Sites nature conservation importance	Defra <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about/statistics">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about/statistics</a> Natural England – MAGIC data sets and Monitoring Information <a href="http://www.magic.gov.uk/">http://www.magic.gov.uk/</a> Natural England <a href="http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/">http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/</a> Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre <a href="http://sxbrc.org.uk/">http://sxbrc.org.uk/</a> Kent Wildlife Trust <a href="http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/">http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/</a> Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre <a href="http://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/SBIC">http://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/SBIC</a>
Cultural Heritage	Archaeological sensitive areas Scheduled ancient monuments	County Councils – Historic Environment Records Historic England – <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/</a>
Material Assets	Farm Holdings	Defra June Agricultural Census
	Public Rights of Way Network	Local Highway Authorities
	Farmed Area	Defra June Agricultural Census
	Farm Size	Defra June Agricultural Census
Population Statistics and Human Health	Population of the AONB Health of the population	Census 2011
Air Quality		

## Summary of Baseline Information

### **Landscape**

The High Weald was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1983. It is one of 34 AONBs in England. 20% of Britain's finest countryside in England and Wales is protected by law as National Parks or AONBs. The High Weald also lies almost entirely within the High Weald National Character Area, which in places extends beyond the AONB boundary.

Time depth and objective analysis has defined the High Weald AONB as characterised by dispersed settlement particularly historic farmsteads; ancient tracks and routeways; an abundance of ancient woodland, wooded heaths and shaws with a heritage of woodland industries and iron working; and small, irregularly shaped and productive fields. These are all draped over a deeply incised and ridged landform of clays and sandstones with numerous gill streams, and are closely related to socio-economic characteristics that have roots extending deep into history.

### **Geography**

The High Weald AONB covers 1461 sq km. It extends across four counties, 11 districts and 100 parishes.

### **Population**

The AONB has a population of 127,000 with a density of 86 people per sq km. An additional 70,000 people live in urban areas – Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough and Heathfield – excluded from the designation but within the outer AONB boundary. A further 873,000 people live in wards wholly or partly within 5km of the AONB boundary.

### **Settlements**

The High Weald AONB has no urban areas but has 17 market towns and villages with populations greater than 2000, the largest being Battle with a population over 6000. Adopted Green Belt covers 7.7% of the area.

### **Economy**

13% of High Weald businesses are land based businesses compared with 3% in the South East. 38% of employment in the High Weald is in Micro-Businesses compared to 17% in the South East. 29% of the High Weald population are retired compared with 21% of the South East. Average house prices in the High Weald are higher than in the South East.

### **Agriculture**

There were 1563 registered farm holdings in the AONB in 2010 down from 3192 in 2008. The total area used for agriculture fell by 10% in the same period with farms under 5 ha showing the greatest fall in numbers down from 1363 to 128. The number of farms engaged in livestock production remained steady while horticulture declined and those engaged in general cropping quadrupled. The number of people employed in agriculture also fell from 4698 in 2008 to 3708 in 2010.

### **Soils**

The majority of High Weald soils are relatively poor and highly variable over short distances. There is no Grade 1 agricultural land in the High or Low Weald. Grade 2 covers 2.5% of the High Weald with 85% being Grade 3 and 4 compared to 3.7% Grade 2 in the Low Weald and 90% Grade 3 and 4.

### **Water**

The High Weald covers part of the headwaters of eight river catchments: the Arun; the Adur; the Ouse; the Mole; the Medway; the Teise; the Rother; and the Cuckmere.

**Cultural Heritage**

The essential character of the High Weald was established by the 14th century and has survived major historical events, and social and technological changes. It is considered to be one of the best surviving coherent medieval landscapes in Northern Europe: this fundamental and largely immutable character is the essence of the natural beauty of the AONB.

The High Weald is also renowned for the site of the 1066 Battle of Hastings. There are 5274 listed buildings; 105 Scheduled monuments; 57 medieval parish churches and 50 registered historic parks and gardens. Historic parkland especially medieval deer parks and 'designed landscapes' are a distinctive feature of the High Weald.

**Biodiversity**

Nearly 15% of the High Weald is publically owned, owned by conservation organisations or designated under international or national law to protect wildlife. Internationally important sites for nature conservation (SPAs and SACs) cover 6415 ha of the High Weald compared with 437 ha of the Low Weald. In the High Weald 51 SSSIs cover 5538 ha and in the Low Weald 43 SSSIs cover 2670 ha. The High Weald AONB offers a highly interconnected ecological infrastructure network with a mosaic of intermingled semi-natural habitat.

## 7.0 Statement of Key Environmental Issues

The following key environmental issues are relevant to the High Weald landscape and its management plan. These are scoped in terms of the key components of natural beauty identified by the management plan, and then a range of other external factors that may have impacts on the environment of the AONB. Additionally any predicted trends that may occur in the absence of any intervention (or inappropriate intervention) are outlined.

Key Issues for High Weald Management Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment		
Topic	Key Issues	Predicted trends and impacts without intervention
<b>Key components of natural beauty</b>		
Geology , Water Systems & Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flooding</li> </ul>	Extended hard engineering management of rivers and flood defences with damage to environment and landscape quality around river basins
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor aquatic systems – failing to meet their potential for water quality, biodiversity and amenity</li> </ul>	Degradation of river and stream quality, reduction in biodiversity and natural function of small scale water systems essential to gill woodland
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River restoration policies that can utilize natural processes to reduce flooding, improve the aquatic systems, and reduce costs of maintaining the current systems</li> </ul>	Hard engineering river defences inappropriate in scale and function to the landscape and traditional interactions. Archaeological impacts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threats to sandstone outcrops – inappropriate use, management, and neglect of key geological features and the ecology that they support</li> </ul>	Loss of, or continuing damage to the resource leading to erosion of the features
Settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for greater understanding – e.g. of the dispersed settlement pattern of the High Weald, and the connections between settlements and the countryside</li> </ul>	Inappropriate development and artificial expansion of key settlements to the detriment of the rural areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suburbanization – erosion of AONB character through extension of curtilages, and inappropriate modifications, or treatments, of boundaries and buildings</li> </ul>	Unsustainable patterns of development dependent on local key services not providing services to local rural areas and small scale settlement typical of the Weald. Impact on settlement archaeology.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suburbanization – introduction of non-native species inappropriate boundaries and gates, and intrusive highway engineering</li> </ul>	Gradual decline in landscape quality and traditional indigenous species and distinctive features
Routeways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor understanding – of the resource and the management needed to conserve the roads and non-vehicular routeways, for their ecology, archaeology, and their potential for informal recreation and non vehicular transport</li> </ul>	Threat to localised habitats dependent on the routeway character and loss of biodiversity. Threat to the quiet enjoyment and character of the country lanes and paths through inappropriate management
Woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neglect – e.g. lack of management and poor stock and deer control</li> <li>• Increased commercialization and archaeological impact</li> </ul>	Degradation of existing woodland, loss of biodiversity and development of scrubby woodland and inappropriate species
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of non-native species. Non-native species include invasive rhododendron, cherry laurel, sycamore, and grey squirrels</li> </ul>	Spread of invasive species leading to degradation of biodiversity and decline in landscape quality
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmentation – the poor connectivity, increasing isolation, fragmented ownership, and small size of many woodlands is degrading their ecological value</li> </ul>	Reduction in quality and spread of woodland and links between them, further degradation of biodiversity value.
Field and Heath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining extent of agriculture – land falling out of productive use into amenity and residential use, with consequent suburbanization and neglect</li> </ul>	Loss of biodiversity, particularly plant species common to flower rich meadows, reduction in finite resource of un-improved grassland
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental degradation – neglected fields scrubbing up, increasing run-off and agrochemical inputs, loss of key habitats</li> </ul>	Continued scrubbing up of fields, decline in biodiversity and loss of specialist habitats, heathland and unimproved grassland. Threat to field boundaries and historic and archaeological features of these

	(e.g. meadows and heaths), and damage to historic features (e.g. field boundaries/pattern, and archaeological sites and monuments)	landscape features.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental degradation – neglected fields scrubbing up, increasing run-off and agrochemical inputs, loss of key habitats (e.g. meadows and heaths), and damage to historic features (e.g. field boundaries/pattern, and archaeological sites and monuments)</li> </ul>	Continued scrubbing up of fields, decline in biodiversity and loss of specialist habitats, heathland and unimproved grassland. Threat to field boundaries and historic and archaeological features of these landscape features.
Climate Change	Temperature rise, threat to species, hotter summers, migration or loss of habitats	Threat to local indigenous species and habitats, loss of biodiversity, fundamental change in land cover and locally distinctive species
	Sea level rise	Risk to coastal areas, challenge of managed retreat or hard engineering sea defences
	Higher rainfall, wetter winters, risk of flooding	Damage to water courses, risk of flooding, threat of need to engineer against high water levels in water courses
	Extreme weather events.	Threat of damage to sensitive or vulnerable habitats and features, storm damage, flash flooding
	Approaches to and types of mitigation against the effects of climate change	Need to understand and scope the possible effects and impacts of any actions to mitigate for climate change in terms of their impact on landscape character and locally distinctive features. E.g. renewable energy – effects of woodfuel, bio crops etc.
	Approaches to and types of adaptation against the effects of climate change	Need to understand and scope the possible effects and impacts of any actions to adapt to the effects of climate change in terms of their impact on landscape character and locally distinctive features. E.g. need to understand the effects of temperature rise on specific species and ability of habitats to migrate.
Farming	Intensification of farming, concentration of holdings,	Intensive farming is a threat to biodiversity and traditional land management. Trend to increase farm holdings threatens to break down the traditional small scale approach to farming in the high weald. Intensive farming may lead to larger field sizes, loss of boundaries and features and degradation of landscape quality. Archaeology impacts.
	Agricultural profitability	Low or non profitable farming, especially traditional farming practices, is a threat to the continued use of the land. Holdings are going out of production and management leading to a degradation of landscape quality, and habitats.
	Hobby farming, loss of traditional farming families & traditions	Small scale buying up of farm holding and hobby farming is a threat to the integrity of holdings and the traditional structure of agriculture in the high weald, leading to a break down in land use, management and biodiversity/habitat maintenance
Development	Housing development	High levels of house building threaten major development potential in the AONB, and inappropriate scale and form of housing generally. Inappropriate development threatens local character and distinctiveness and traditional settlement patterns. Significant Archaeological impacts, particularly in unsurveyed areas.
	Sustainable development (rural / environmental sustainability)	Inappropriate definition and interpretation of sustainable development and communities threatens to impose uncharacteristic forms and patterns of development on the landscape to the detriment of the built environment and local social and economic patterns in rural areas.

## 8.0 Framework and Methodology

### Objectives

The following objectives have been taken from the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the previous review of the Management Plan. This is because they remain relevant to present day environmental issues and it retains consistency of approach appropriate for a light touch review of a twenty year strategy.

1. To protect and enhance the landscape
2. To protect and maintain cultural heritage (inc. archaeology and architecture)
3. To protect and where practical enhance diverse habitats
4. To protect and enhance flora and fauna
5. To protect water systems and promote sustainable flood risk management
6. To safeguard the quality of soil, air, water and maintain appropriate climatic conditions
7. To protect natural resources and encourage sustainable energy production
8. To safeguard human health, wellbeing and ensure no adverse effects on population
9. To avoid significant adverse effects generated through the interrelationships or cumulative effects of the above criteria.

### Potential conflicts between objectives

It is considered that the most likely conflicts are:

- Between 1 and 7, for instance where sustainable energy development has a significant landscape impact; and
- Between 1-7 and 8, for instance where initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of the population of the High Weald cause other environmental effects such as loss of habitat, landscape or historical feature or other natural resource.

### Scoring methodology

As part of the Environmental Report the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives and targets will be assessed against the nine environmental objectives listed above to identify their likely significant environmental effects. The possible outcomes used will be;

- ++ significant positive effect,
- + partial positive effect,
- ? uncertain effect,
- partial negative effect,
- significant negative effect,
- n/a not applicable

### Consultation

Consultation on this Scoping Report will be carried out with the statutory bodies (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) and the local authority and other partners on the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee. The Environmental Report will be published at [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org) alongside the draft Management Plan Review as set out in the timetable in section 4. The bodies to be consulted specifically are listed in Table 2.

**Table 1: Quality Assurance Checklist for Scoping Report**

<b>Strategic Environmental Assessment Requirements (Scoping Stage)</b>	<b>Where These Are Met</b>
<b>Objectives and Context</b>	
The AONB Management Plan's purpose and objectives are made clear.	2.0 The High Weald AONB Management Plan; and 3.0 Scope of Management Plan Review 2019.
Environmental issues and constraints, including international and EC environmental protection objectives, are considered in developing objectives and targets.	5.0 Policy Context – Relevant Plans, Policies and Programmes; 6.0 Baseline Environmental Information and Indicators; and 7.0 Statement of Key Environmental Issues and Problems.
SEA objectives are clearly set out and linked to indicators and targets where appropriate.	8.0 Proposed Strategic Environmental Assessment Framework.
Links with other related plans, programmes and policies are identified and explained.	5.0 Policy Context – Relevant Plans, Policies and Programmes.
Conflicts that exist between SEA objectives, between SEA and plan objectives and between SEA objectives and other plan objectives are identified and described.	8.0 Proposed Strategic Environmental Assessment Framework.
<b>Scoping</b>	
The assessment focuses on significant issues.	3.0 Scope of Management Plan Review 2019.
Technical, procedural and other difficulties encountered are discussed; assumptions and uncertainties are made explicit.	3.0 Scope of Management Plan Review 2019.
Reasons are given for eliminating issues from further consideration.	3.0 Scope of Management Plan Review 2019.
<b>Baseline information</b>	
Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and their likely evolution without the plan or programme are described.	6.0 Baseline Environmental Information and Indicators.
Environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected are described, including areas wider than the physical boundary of the plan area where it is likely to be affected by the plan.	6.0 Baseline Environmental Information and Indicators.
Difficulties such as deficiencies in information or methods are explained.	6.0 Baseline Environmental Information and Indicators.
<b>Consultation</b>	
Consultation Bodies are consulted in appropriate ways and at appropriate times on the proposed content and scope of the Environmental Report.	4.0 Methodology and Timetable for Strategic Environmental Assessment.

## High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

Woodland Enterprise Centre  
Hastings Road  
Flimwell  
East Sussex TN5 7PR

Tel: 01424 723011  
Email: [info@highweald.org](mailto:info@highweald.org)



[www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org)

*Working together to care for one of England's finest landscapes*

David Henshilwood  
Natural England  
4th Floor, Foss House,  
Kings Pool, 1-2 Peasholme Green  
York, YO1 7PX

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017

Dear Mr Henshilwood,

### High Weald AONB Management Plan Review 2019

I hereby give notice, as required under Section 90, Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, of our intention to publish, adopt and review a Management Plan for the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This notification is being sent on behalf of the following local authorities:

East Sussex County Council  
Kent County Council  
West Sussex County Council  
Surrey County Council  
Ashford Borough Council  
Crawley Borough Council  
Hastings Borough Council  
Horsham District Council

Mid Sussex District Council  
Rother District Council  
Sevenoaks District Council  
Tandridge District Council  
Tonbridge and Malling District Council  
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
Wealden District Council

The timetable for the production of the plan is as follows:

April 2017 -	Launch of the Management Plan review
March – May 2018	Formal Public Consultation
November 2018 – February 2019	Adoption by Local Authorities
March 2019	Plan sent to the Secretary of State

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jill Davidson'.

AONB Director

On behalf of Mrs Jill Davidson, Chairman of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

Anglesey  
Arnside and Silverdale  
Blackdown Hills  
Cannock Chase  
Chichester Harbour  
Chilterns  
Clwydian Range  
Cornwall  
Cotswolds  
Gower  
Cranbourne Chase and Dee Valley  
West Wiltshire Downs  
Dedham Vale  
Dorset  
East Devon  
Forest of Bowland  
Howardian Hills  
**High Weald**  
Isle of Wight  
Isles of Scilly  
Kent Downs  
Lincolnshire Wolds  
Llyn  
Malvern Hills  
Mendip Hills  
Nidderdale  
Norfolk Coast  
North Devon  
North Pennines  
North Wessex Downs  
Northumberland Coast  
Quantock Hills  
Shropshire Hills  
Solway Coast  
South Devon  
Suffolk Coast and Heaths  
Surrey Hills  
Tamar Valley  
Wye Valley

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HIGH WEALD  
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Agenda Item: 11

**Committee:** High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Date:** 29 March 2017

**Title of Report:** Sussex Lund

**By:** AONB Business Manager

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to:

1. Welcome the collaborative approach to Sussex Lund, agree the decision-making process and approve the risk management strategy.
  2. Thank Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing for their ongoing interest in and support for the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 

### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Sussex Lund is a grants programme launched in March 2016 by Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing, co-founder of Arcadia, one of the UK's largest philanthropic foundations. Sussex Lund aims to improve the present day landscape of the High Weald AONB by making contributions to small, practical projects that have immediate effect and inspire wider change.
- 1.2. Managed by the Sussex Community Foundation in 2016, with technical advice from the AONB Unit, grants totalling £223,758 were awarded to parish councils, charities, community groups and landowners for 37 projects which included planting and managing hedgerows, enhancing wildflower meadows and heaths, and improving paths.
- 1.3 In February the Lund Trust invited the High Weald AONB Partnership to submit a proposal for running Sussex Lund in 2017 and beyond.
- 1.4 At the High Weald Management Board meeting of 1 March, members agreed that, in principal, the Partnership could take on the role. This enabled further discussion with the Lund Trust and an application to the Charities Aid Foundation requesting approval of the JAC as a body eligible to receive the charitable funds.
- 1.5 Approval from the Charities Aid Foundation has been secured and an agreement with the Lund Trust for management of the Scheme reached.
- 1.6 This report provides further information on the Scheme and sets out how risks will be managed and mitigated.

## **2.0 Managing Sussex Lund**

### Activities

- 2.1 Managing Sussex Lund will involve: promoting the Scheme; encouraging applications; promoting successful projects to inspire change; providing advice and support to applicants; processing and assessing applications; providing grant recommendations; administering grant awards; monitoring, evaluating and reporting on grant-aided projects; and liaising with Lund Trust and Charities Aid Foundation.

### Outputs

- 2.2 As a result of these activities the following outputs will be produced: criteria and guidance; a grant application form; individual application summaries and assessments; a scheme summary; annual audit and Sussex Lund Annual Report 2018; eight project case studies; four media releases and a social media presence; approximately 30 advisory sessions; and 30-60 grant awards.

### Outcomes

- 2.3 The Scheme will be managed to achieve the following outcomes:
- Creation, enhancement and management of important landscape features, particularly habitats
  - A greater awareness of activities that benefit the High Weald landscape
  - More people inspired to undertake projects to conserve and enhance the AONB
  - More people able to develop and deliver practical projects
  - Other philanthropists inspired to support the natural environment.

### Timescale

- 2.4 The timescale for managing Sussex Lund is attached as Appendix 1.

## **3. Decision-making**

- 3.1 AONB Unit staff will assess the grant applications and make funding recommendations to the Sussex Lund Grant Panel.
- 3.2 Lisbet Rausing will make decisions on the grant awards supported by an Advisory Panel of five individuals including Councillor Sylvia Tidy, as a member representative of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee and East Sussex County Council, and Jason Lavender as an officer representative.
- 3.3 As the grant contracts will be between the High Weald AONB Partnership (East Sussex County Council) and the successful grant applicants it is proposed that the grant decisions are ratified by the Management Board at their meeting in June which will be held shortly after the Sussex Lund Grant Panel meeting.

## **4. Resources**

- 4.1 A sum of £250,000 p.a. is available for Sussex Lund grant awards.

- 4.2 Promoting, administrating and advising on Sussex Lund will be a shared team responsibility, mainly drawing on the skills and expertise of the AONB Business Manager, Clerk to the JAC, Outreach Officer and the newly appointed Communications Officer.
- 4.3 A contribution of 10% of the Fund's grant value will be available for management of Sussex Lund i.e. £25,000. This sum will be a valuable contribution towards staff costs and will help balance the Unit's core budget.

## **5.0 Risks**

- 5.1 A risk assessment of the Scheme is attached as Appendix 2. The Unit has a track record in administering funds for environmental bodies on behalf of other organisations. Many of the risks are familiar to the Unit and the team has considerable experience of mitigating actions.
- 5.2 The greatest risk, common to all of the Unit's work, is the loss of skilled staff which would reduce the Unit's capacity to manage the workload to a high standard within the agreed timescales.

## **6.0 Conclusions and Recommendation**

- 6.1 Sussex Lund is an exciting community-focused scheme with objectives that align with the High Weald AONB Management Plan, particularly those relating to biodiversity.
- 6.2 As a philanthropist-led scheme focused on a protected area Sussex Lund sets a national precedent which could be promoted to encourage similar approaches elsewhere.
- 6.3 The scale of the Scheme is significant, equating to the average annual sum available for the rural economy through LEADER partnerships, or for capital works through a Heritage Lottery Fund supported Landscape Partnership Scheme.
- 6.4 Enabling Sussex Lund will help meet Defra's expectation that AONB partnerships will capitalise on the 4-year maintenance of their central government funding to develop new collaborations to achieve conservation and enhancement of protected landscapes.
- 6.5 The risks from managing the Scheme are generally low and the Unit has experience of managing the risks.
- 6.6 Members are therefore recommended to welcome the Scheme, agree the decision-making process and approve the risk management strategy.

Contact: Gerry Sherwin, AONB Business Manager [g.sherwin@highweald.org](mailto:g.sherwin@highweald.org)

## Appendix 1 Sussex Lund Timescale

<i>Milestones</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
Contractual agreements in place	Early March 2017
Launch of Sussex Lund 2017	Mid-March 2017
Closing date for applications	Tuesday 2 May 2017 (6 week application window)
Processing and assessment of applications	Thursday 25 May 2017 (within 1 month of closing date)
Meeting agenda and papers circulated	Thursday 8 June 2015
Sussex Lund Grant Panel meeting	Thursday 15 June 2017
High Weald Management Board meeting	By Friday 30 June 2017
Applicants notified of decision	Monday 17 July 2017 (within 4 weeks of decision)
Grant awards accepted	Thursday 28 July 2017
Promotion of grant awards 2017	Thursday 28 July and ongoing
Projects delivered	July 2017 - June 2018 (one year delivery)
Sussex Lund celebration event	7 October 2017
Monitoring reports returned	Ongoing with deadline of 30 June 2018
Sussex Lund Annual Report 2017 submitted to the Lund Trust	July 2018

**Appendix 2 Sussex Lund Risk Management Strategy**

Likelihood	5					
	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
		1	2	3	4	5
		Consequence				

Likelihood 1 = Improbable (<10%); 2 = Unlikely (10-30%); 3 = Less than Likely (30-50%); 4 = More than Likely (50-80%); 5 = Probable (>80%)

Consequence 1 = Minor; 2 = Moderate; 3 = Significant; 4 = Substantial; 5 = Grave

<b>Control Rating</b>
1.Excessive
2.Optimal
3.Adequate
4.Inadequate

Risk - what can go wrong	Cause - How it can go wrong	Risk before			Preventative & reactive mitigation measures	Control Rating	Risk after		
		Likelihood	Consequence	Matrix Zone			Likelihood	Consequence	Matrix Zone
Low uptake by the community - schools, parish councils, volunteer groups etc.	1. Fund focus not a close match with groups needs/interests. 2. Application process viewed as too complicated. 3. Groups have limited understanding, skills and resources to develop environmental projects.	3	3	Orange	1. Fund recognises community needs/interests and criteria broad enough to accommodate many projects. 2. Simple application form/process created. 3. Unit staff offering practical support to inspire and facilitate projects.	3	2	2	Green

Low uptake by landowners and managers	1. Fund focus not a close match with group's needs or interests. 2. Application process viewed as too complicated. 3. Landowners don't want to be 'tied' by a requirement to maintain the outcomes. 4. Landowners with limited time or expertise to develop and implement projects. 5. Farmers/foresters time undertaking works ineligible.	3	5	Red	1. Fund recognises landowner needs/interests and criteria broad enough to accommodate many projects. 2. Simple application form/process created. 3. Unit staff offering practical support to inspire and facilitate projects. 4. Long term monitoring not required by donor. 5. Mechanisms for funding landowner's time explored if required.	3	3	4	Orange
Scheme oversubscribed resulting in disappointed applicants and a negative view of Sussex Lund /Partnership.	1. Broad criteria and geographical scope elicit too many applications. 2. Lack of alternative funding mechanisms for landscape improvements.			Orange	1. PR targeted geographically and to priority audience/projects. 2. Geographical scope and criteria tightened if required to reduce number of eligible projects. 3. Applicants expectations managed through communication on Fund priorities/likely success rate.				Green
Fund replaces other grant aid programmes and doesn't add value	1. Fund viewed as the 'easy' alternative to bureaucratic, government-led grant schemes due to broad criteria and eligible costs and simpler application form and process.	4	4	Red	1. Applicants required to explain why their project is ineligible for other grant-aid, in particular Countryside Stewardship. 2. Unit staff expert enough to identify projects suitable for other programmes.	3	3	3	Orange
Funded projects <u>perceived</u> as resulting in landscape/environmental damage leading to negative PR for Sussex Lund/Partnership.	1. Some habitat management works e.g. gorse cutting, coppicing are perceived by the public as environmental damaging.	3	4	Orange	1. Project managers required to set out how they will promote project benefits during and after project in the application form. 2. Unit staff aware of risk and able to deal with arising queries. 3. Applicants supplied with site information boards if required.	2	2	2	Green

Approved projects do not go ahead.	1. Match funding not secured 2. Project driver leaves 3. Permissions not achieved.	3	3	Orange	1. Timescale for project delivery flexible. 2. High risk project paid in arrears. 3. Applicants required to repay grant.	3	2	2	Green
Applicants unable to evidence the benefits of their project	1. Applicant unable to set up a system for monitoring benefits. 2. Contractual monitoring requirement given low priority by applicant.	3	3	Orange	1. Simple monitoring system requiring before (as part of application process) and after photos (as part of project report) in place. 2. Professional support with monitoring benefits, if needed, an eligible cost. 3. High risk projects paid in arrears.	3	2	2	Green
Projects do not achieve their intended benefits/cause damage to the landscape/generate negative PR.	1. Poor project management. 2. Best practice not known/followed/disseminated. 3. Risks not identified through application assessment.	3	4	Red	1. & 2. Application form questions constructed to elicit information on project manager's expertise. 3. Applications assessed by 2 Unit staff prior to consideration by Grants Panel and additional expert advice sought if required. 4. Grant conditions to manage identified risks proposed for Grants Panel consideration. 5. Practical support provided by Unit staff to guide and support high risk projects following approval.	3	1	4	Orange
Limited number of high priority/good quality project proposals received.	1. Not enough publicity. 2. Potential applicants have limited time to develop and manage projects. 3. Applicants unable to present their projects effectively in a written format.	3	1	Green	1. PR aimed at inspiring potential applicants 2. PR timely recognising the timescales involved with project development and form filling. 3. PR targeted, including attendance at events and working with the environmental network. 4. HW staff providing practical support with form filling if required.	2	2	1	Green

Unable to assess applications due to insufficient information.	1. Applicant does not supply information required. 2. Simple application form doesn't allow sufficient detail for assessing complex/high risk projects.	3	4	Red	1. Applications rejected if information incomplete. 2. Practical support provided by Unit to pre-assess and guide projects prior to application providing assurance for proposals. 3. Applicants contacted as part of the assessment process for complex/high risk projects.	3	2	4	Orange
Project applications balanced towards low priority themes/spend.	1. Broad criteria. 2. Fund able to support projects ineligible under other grant schemes.	2	3	Orange	1. Criteria narrowed to exclude projects with low priority theme/spend (if required) 2. Cap placed on proportion of funding allocated to certain themes/spend (if required).	2	1	1	Green
Delivery costs for land management projects highly variable with a risk that actual costs will be less or more than the costs set out in the application form.	1. Actual project costs are greater/less than forecast costs set out in application form 2. Payment in advance means unspent funds will need to be returned by applicants or applicants will have insufficient funds with a risk that the project cannot then go ahead.	3	4	Red	1. Applicants required to supply quotes in support of application. 2. Payment made in arrears based on actual costs for complex/high risk projects.	2	1	1	Green

Agenda Item: 12

**Committee:** High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Date:** 29th March 2017

**Title of Report:** Risk Management

**By:** AONB Director

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to:

1. Note the report and;
  2. Request that the Management Board continue to meet to review significant risks as required and develop options for their management.
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### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 For some years following a requirement put in place by the Audit Commission, the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee's annual external accounts were audited by an external and third party organization (in addition to the annual audit undertaken by ESCC) and the accounts were assessed against ten control objectives. One of those control objectives was to record and assess significant risks to the achievement of the High Weald JAC objectives and review the adequacy of arrangements to manage the risks.
- 1.2 On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 the Audit Commission was closed and although there is now no requirement for the external audit, we will continue the biannual report on recording and assessing the significant risks facing the High Weald JAC as this has proven to be of value and is a generally accepted form of 'good practice'.
- 1.3 The key risks to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) are set out in Appendix A.
- 1.4 The JAC is a strong partnership supported by the AONB Unit, a small specialist team providing advice and guidance on the conservation and enhancement of a nationally important landscape. The work of the JAC relies on three things: partnership contributions to the core budget; success raising external funds to the project budget and; retaining/recruiting staff with the appropriate skills and experience to do this work. Given this, the most significant risks to the work of the JAC are constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit.
- 1.5 Members will be aware that since 2010 the AONB Unit has accommodated cuts of £70,000 in the Defra contribution to the core budget but over the same period the local authority partners on the JAC have worked very hard to maintain the local

authority contributions to the core budget, albeit without an increase in line with inflation.

## **2.0 Key risks 2017/18 and beyond**

- 2.1 Although further cuts to the Defra contribution for 2016-2018 were expected to follow the 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review and Autumn Statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced towards the end of January 2016 that the funding in real terms for Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty partnerships (and National Park authorities) would be protected for the next four years up until 2019/20.
- 2.2 This decision was welcomed and gives the necessary breathing space to continue to innovate against a backdrop of greater certainty and support and contribute to the role and remit of the local authorities with an interest in the High Weald AONB. However, it should be noted that local authority contributions towards the core business of the JAC will remain under pressure during this period and there remains the risk that the current Chancellor of the Exchequer may at any time choose to revoke the funding settlement for AONB partnerships made in January 2016.

## **3.0 Risk mitigation**

- 3.1 The High Weald AONB Unit's current business strategy (2014-2018) responds to the risks to the work of the JAC caused by the constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit. This strategy is tailored to the local circumstances and specific needs of the High Weald and it covers the first four years of the revised AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019.
- 3.2 Unlike previous business plans, which proposed ambitious work programmes and sought external funds to realize them, the 2014-2018 strategy is informed by the financial cuts since 2010 and the likely budget constraints for the current business strategy period and focuses on maintaining effective delivery of the JAC's core activity. Raising external funds to support the work is still difficult and it has become increasingly competitive and the pragmatic approach has been a move during 2015-2016 to a smaller, more resilient core team that is competent across a range of disciplines. However, the AONB Unit needs to retain a capacity for responding positively to opportunities to secure new resources and develop new partnerships to achieve AONB management plan objectives and support the work of others in the AONB.
- 3.3 The development of secure and alternative long-term income streams adequate enough to support the core remit of the JAC may be possible (although the difficulties achieving this are often under-estimated) but they are unlikely to address any shortfall in contributions within the strategy's timescale. The potential for charitable trusts and social enterprise companies to play a role in the future has been considered and will be kept under review but the focus for this business plan period is to remain a local authority supported partnership with a close relationship to government bodies whose policies influence management of the AONB landscape.

- 3.4 During the preparation of the current business strategy a risk assessment was undertaken in 2014 to identify priorities and make further decisions on financial, staff and other resource allocation. Following this, a report considering the impacts of the cuts and options to safeguard the service the JAC provides was presented to and approved by the Management Board in March 2014.
- 3.5 This report has informed and shaped the current business strategy and the AONB Unit has actively pursued a variety of options to address the risk of declining financial and personnel resources. To date the following measures have been put in place and/or considered:
- A significant reduction in accommodation and office costs;
  - A reduction in ESCC support service costs;
  - A reduction in the communications budget including the loss of the High Weald Anvil magazine;
  - The use of project reserves to support an expanded project programme that encourages financial contributions from new partnerships and organizations;
  - Testing the viability of an AONB consultancy to undertake contract work e.g. events management, Good Woods Project, Sussex Walks Festival;
  - Charging for hosting and/or managing self-financing projects;
  - The use of internships to support the core work programme and provide valuable work experience for the successful applicants;
  - Continuing to apply to external sources of funds from private businesses, charitable trusts, government agencies to support community, research, and demonstration projects;
  - Sharing/secondment of staff with partner organizations and other AONB Units and National Park Authorities;
  - Restructuring of the AONB Unit to ensure staff have the appropriate skills and experience to achieve the statutory AONB Management Plan and support the JAC partnership;
  - Narrowing of the scope of the work undertaken by the AONB Unit;
  - Investigating the feasibility of establishing a 'charging policy' for pre-application advice;
  - Looking at the opportunities for a closer relationship with the High Weald Landscape Trust (set up by the AONB Unit in 2004);
  - Investigating further the opportunities for corporate sponsorship;
  - Investigating the opportunities for encouraging philanthropic donations towards the work of the JAC;
  - Investigating alternative funds to support the work of the JAC e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility, corporate investment;
  - Investigating the viability of setting up a company or social enterprise limited by guarantee (such as High Weald Design, established by the AONB Unit in 1994).

#### **4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 4.1 Risk management systems are in place and conform to the appropriate East Sussex County Council policy.

- 4.2 The years 2017 to 2018 will continue to be characterised by constraints on both the financial and personnel resources of the AONB Unit and this remains the most significant risk to the core work of the JAC.
- 4.3 The High Weald AONB Unit's current business strategy (2014-2018) is tailored to the High Weald's local circumstances and specific needs and aims to address the risk to the work of the JAC associated with declining financial contributions to the core work for 2017/18 and beyond.
- 4.4 The business strategy will ensure that by the end of the period the JAC will remain as a strong partnership supported by a small dedicated team providing specialist technical advice to conserve and promote the value of this nationally protected landscape. An appropriate organisational structure has been established to manage self-funded projects supporting AONB Management Plan objectives, and develop income generating activities.

**Contact:** JD Lavender AONB Co-Director [j.lavender@highweald.org](mailto:j.lavender@highweald.org)

## Risk Log

<b>Likelihood Ranking</b>	1 = Improbable (<10%); 2 = Unlikely (10-30%); 3 = Less than Likely (30-50%); 4 = More than Likely (50-80%); 5 = Probable (>80%)
<b>Consequence Ranking</b>	1 = Minor; 2 = Moderate; 3 = Significant; 4 = Substantial; 5 = Grave

<b>Likelihood</b>	5	4	3	2	1
	1	2	3	4	5
	<b>Consequence</b>				

<b>Control Rating</b>	
1. Excessive	Controls exceed the level required to manage the risk
2. Optimal	Controls are comprehensive & commensurate with the risk. All controls are working as intended.
3. Adequate	Some shortfall in level of controls but these do not materially affect the level of residual risk.
4. Inadequate	Weaknesses & inefficiency in controls do not treat the risk as intended.

Unit ref	Risk no	Risk What can go wrong	Root Causes How it can go wrong	Owner	Inherent Risk			Controls / Mitigating Actions Preventative & reactive control measures	Control Owner	Residual Risk					
		Format: EVENT leading to CONSEQUENCE resulting in EFFECT ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES								Format: What action; How frequent					
	1	Reduced activity/service due to declining budgets. JAC with a lower profile as a champion for the High Weald. Less proactive work to enable public understanding, management and enjoyment of the AONB.	Public sector spending cuts affecting Defra and local authorities leading to a further reduction in the JAC's budget.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Unit to continue to take into account direction of government and local authorities. JAC members and officers involved in and supportive of partnership and able to lobby robustly for funds internally and externally. JAC Chairman, on behalf of partnership, to lobby robustly for maintaining contributions. Alternative sources of core income sought. Options to reduce expenditure without adversely affecting on service explored. Planned change in scope of JAC's core work programme.	AONB Director	2	4	Red			

2	Unit unable to attract external funding for the implementation or coordination of projects that meet AONB Management Plan objectives.	Public sector cuts resulting in difficulties securing funds to match external grants e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund. Without commitment from 'local' partners bids for external funds are rarely feasible and considered weak by potential donor organizations. Unit objectives do not align with grant-aiding bodies objectives. Increased competition for fewer and smaller grants. Target audiences for grant-aiding bodies do not exist within the High Weald.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Partnership organizations and others consider identifying funds to ensure local matched funds can be used to attract external grants and allow partnership projects to be developed. Keep a clear understanding of grant-aiding bodies objectives. Unit to take into account direction & remit of grant-aiding bodies. Fundraising expertise within the Unit developed and maintained. Alternative fundraising options explored.	AONB Director	2	3	4	Red
3	IT needs not met, Unit unable to work efficiently and undertake research activity, fewer outputs, direction of JAC work programme compromised	Poor links to computer network/server results in slow machine operation, inability to download GIS data, update website etc.	AONB Director	3	3	Amber	Technical advice sought and recommendations/solutions implemented.	AONB Director	3	3	3	Amber
4	Loss of grant aid due to self-financing project outputs not being met.	Project staff seeking and moving to new jobs as the current contract end date approaches. Project objectives not completed, undue workload on the remaining AONB core staff to complete project work. Adverse affect to the AONB core work remit and much reduced capacity and time to raise funds to support core work.	AONB Director	2	2	Green	Support and funding secured for retention bonuses. Longer notice periods for project staff. Projects developed and managed to ensure that the completion of key/complex outputs are not planned for the end of the contract. Flexibility built into core staff work programmes in order that there is a capacity to finish self-financing projects if required.	AONB Director	2	2	2	Green
5	AONB advice given by Unit staff not up to date and opportunities missed to ensure AONBs remain at the forefront of national policy.	A rapidly changing external policy environment in terms of planning and land use affecting the AONB.	AONB Director	4	4	Red	Continue the close liaison with SEEPL colleagues in the region, NAAONB and local authority colleagues to share information. In the short term scrutinize national policy and consider and examine potential future issues, opportunities and developments.	AONB Director	3	3	3	Amber
6	Future possibility that what is being implemented and coordinated by the AONB Partnership is not valued by Defra and/or the current Secretary of State. National Election and/or Cabinet re-shuffle resulting in the loss of supportive Defra Minister.	Total loss or severe reduction of national government funding and commitment to AONB Partnerships.	AONB Director	3	5	Red	Continued and concerted engagement with Defra and Natural England and ongoing liaison with and reporting on NAAONB/SEEPL work programmes. Active engagement with Defra Ministers directly and in conjunction with NAAONB and SEEPL. Active engagement of High Weald AONB Patrons and supportive High Weald MPs.	AONB Director	2	3	5	Red

