



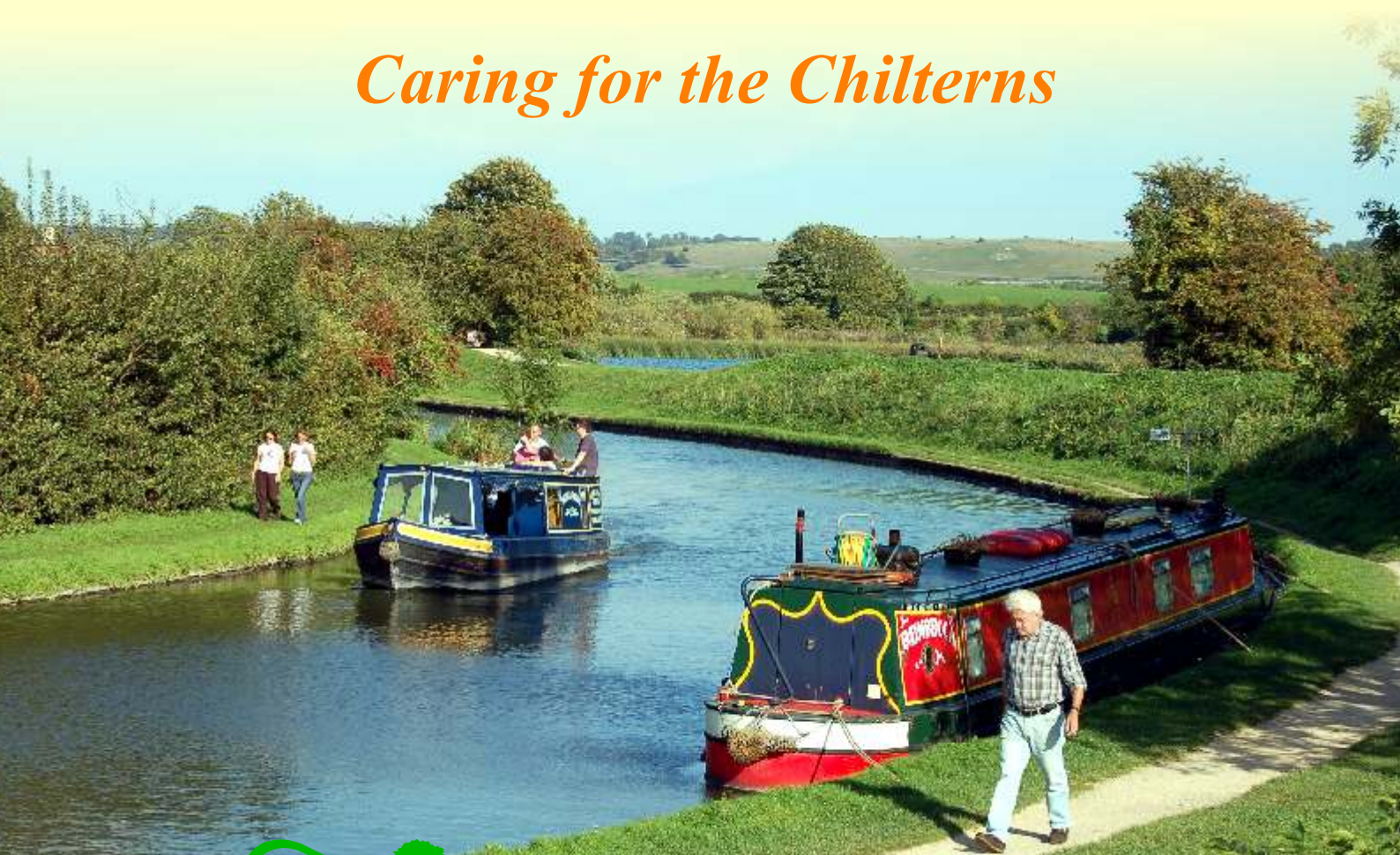
2006/2007

ANNUAL REVIEW

OF THE

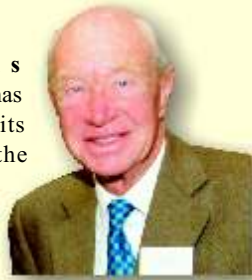
Chilterns Conservation Board

Caring for the Chilterns



CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

The Chilterns Conservation Board has firmly established its credentials to work for the conservation of our special landscape and to give residents and visitors alike a big share in it. The small team of officers in Chinnor has implemented policy decisions with assurance and is bringing forward new ideas for our future. An example is the adoption of a Climate Change group to review the challenges ahead.

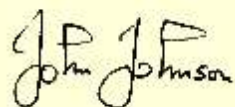


I pay tribute to the work of volunteers in the Chilterns. The Chiltern Society is an invaluable partner in maintaining our cherished heritage; in particular, its volunteers keep open the network of rights of way which enables so many of us to gain benefits in health and spiritual renewal.

I want to highlight the Sustainable Development Fund which has helped the Board to work with local communities in improving their environment. A good example is at Blows Down above Dunstable where local people are protecting wildlife habitats on the chalk scarp and working to deter occasional vandalism.

The Board holds events every year on chalk streams, on recreation and access, on planning and building design and, with the Chiltern Woodlands Project, on woodland issues. This year we have added a new initiative, the Chilterns Wildlife Conference bringing together many local bodies and experts on biodiversity. Our Annual Forum filled the theatre in Henley and was addressed by a Board Member from Natural England.

The new agency, Natural England, has brought together the work of English Nature, The Countryside Agency and most of the Rural Development Service. It was created to adopt integrated policies for conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. It has been set a new purpose to ensure that areas like our own Chilterns are managed for the benefit of present and future generations. As a Board we will work closely with Natural England to give the public a full understanding of the qualities of this special part of England's finest countryside and enable them to enjoy it to the full



Sir John Johnson, Chairman

REPORT FROM THE CHIEF OFFICER

Each year the Board is provided with fresh challenges in addition to conserving natural beauty. We're now involved with tackling climate change, improving the health and well being of local communities, providing new learning opportunities and doing what we can to help the local economy.

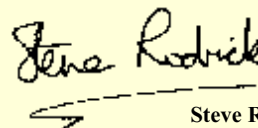


One of the Board's most important challenges is to make sure everyone who lives in and visits the Chilterns knows just what a special place it is. Can we ever get tired of soaring Red Kites, majestic beech woods, carpets of bluebells or the magnificent views from the ridge? It seems the public has a great appetite to know more and to explore the area. They can't get enough of the Board's extensive range of publications, ever popular website and enormous variety of events, everything from walks and talks to horse carriage rides and cruises on the Thames.

It all adds to the sense of place which is so important. We were delighted that the HLF approved a grant for our People and Places project to highlight the association of so many renowned figures with the Chilterns.

For the first time we undertook a major survey of land use, which will give us a snapshot in time against which we can make comparisons of how the landscape has changed in future years. We also surveyed the condition of hundreds of hedges, only half of which are in good condition. On the other hand our vulnerable chalk streams have returned following a wet winter and spring.

It was a reminder of how changeable the climate has become. The Board will be in the vanguard of those organisations raising awareness of the impacts of climate change and what can be done about it. We have improved the loft insulation in the Board's offices, reduced electricity use and plan to have solar PV cells installed by late summer. Our aim is to be carbon neutral by 2010.

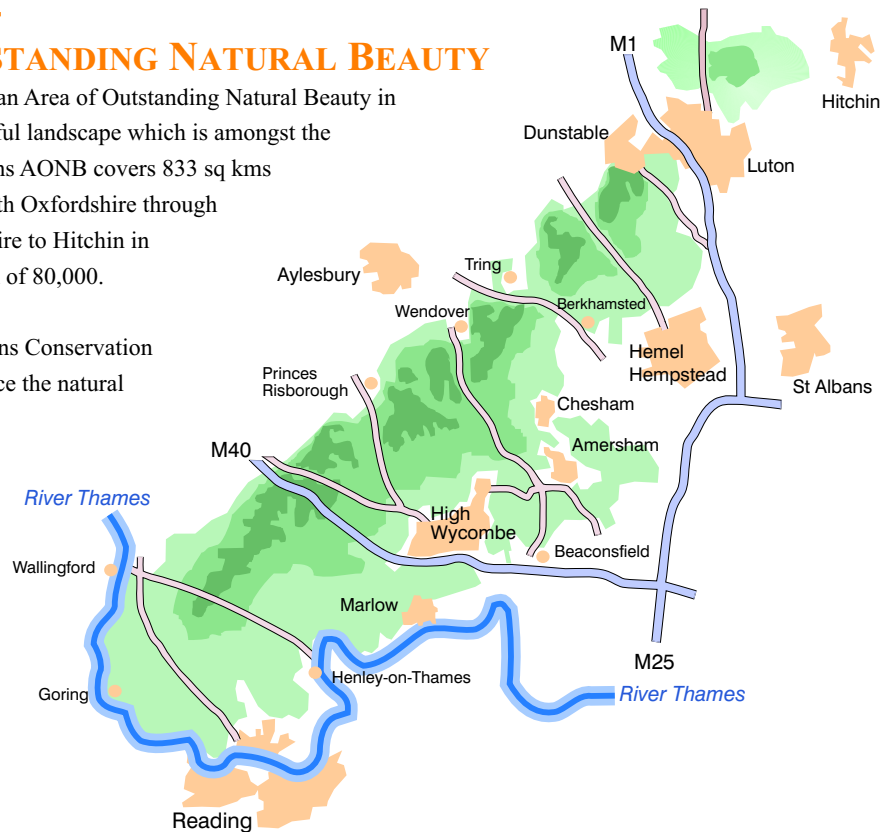


Steve Rodrick, Chief Officer

THE CHILTERNs - AN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

The Chilterns was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1965, in recognition of its beautiful landscape which is amongst the finest in the country. The Chilterns AONB covers 833 sq kms and stretches from Goring in south Oxfordshire through Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire to Hitchin in Hertfordshire. It has a population of 80,000.

The primary duties of the Chilterns Conservation Board are to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and, in so doing, to increase the understanding and enjoyment by the public of its special qualities and to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.



TRENDS IN THE CHILTERNs ENVIRONMENT 2006-2007

During 2006-07 the Chilterns had a taste of possible climate changes to come, with a hot dry summer and a mild, wet winter. There is no doubt that the likely consequences of high carbon emissions are starting to have a big impact on policies and plans affecting the area.

One field of work particularly affected by climate change was planning and development. There was a growing move to make development more sustainable which added to the need to review the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide. There was also a growing trend for renewable energy projects. The challenge was to ensure that both environmental and landscape quality objectives are met.

The most obvious effect of the weather in 2006-07 was on the status of flow in chalk streams. Consistently above average rainfall over the winter enabled groundwater levels to rise from record low levels and eventually saw flow return to all streams. The question now is how long it will take for chalk stream wildlife to re-colonise.

Fragmentation of habitats such as chalk grassland and woodland received increased recognition as a challenge to be tackled to help wildlife cope with pressures like climate change and human development. There is hope that agri-environment schemes will help make a difference.

The activities of people on a local scale continued to have the most pronounced impact on the Chilterns. The trend for farmland to be sold to non-farming landowners persisted, and with it the proliferation of horses and other non-agricultural activities. In similar fashion, the management of woodlands for timber production decreased and there was increasing emphasis on their importance for recreation and wildlife.

The effect of people was most clearly seen in the volume of traffic on roads in the Chilterns, which continued its upward trend. One of the consequences of traffic growth was many instances of speed limits being lowered, but this was often accompanied by a greater number of signs, increasing clutter and suburbanisation of the countryside.

Despite the pressures on the Chilterns its countryside was enjoyed by a more diverse range of people than ever before. This was partly because of a growing recognition at national level of the benefits to health and well-being that the countryside can offer, and the resulting promotion of schemes such as healthy walking. The work of the Board in offering an increasing amount of information online and a greater range of public events and activities must also take some of the credit.

REPORT ON AREAS OF WORK

Chalk Streams

At the beginning of 2006-07 groundwater levels fell to record low levels in many areas, following months of below average rainfall. The Hughenden Stream and Hamble Brook had no flow during the summer. The R. Misbourne lost flow throughout much of its course and the R. Ver barely maintained any flow through to St. Albans. However, although the trend for lower than average rainfall continued, a particularly wet May, and the asserted effort of the general public and water companies to economise on water use, helped to stabilise the situation.

Although the summer proved to be dry, fears of a third successive dry winter proved to be unfounded and heavy rainfall fell throughout much of the winter, replenishing the aquifer. The winter provided more rainfall than the previous two added together. With a significant increase in groundwater levels flows in all the chalk streams improved, with both the Bulbourne and the Chess flowing from their winterbourne heads by the end of March and all others showing significant stream extension and increased flow.

- The third phase of work at the Bulbourne Restoration Project in Berkhamsted was carried out in March. The willows at the southern end of the site were pollarded.
- A great deal of progress was made on the Meades Water Gardens regeneration plan in Chesham. Working in partnership with Chesham Town Council and the Environment Agency a costed plan was developed and £52,000 was provided by: the Chilterns Sustainable Development Fund; Veolia Environmental Trust; Chiltern District Council and Bucks County Council. The first phase of work in March involved pollarding willows and other tree surgery work.
- The Chiltern Society, with support from the Chalk Streams Project, carried out some more pollarding work at the Ewelme Watercress Beds. On the R. Misbourne at Higher Denham pollarding and tree management work was carried out on a heavily shaded section of the river. Willow pollarding work was also carried out on the R. Gade at Water End Meadows near Great Gaddesden.
- A new promoted walk in Berkhamsted was created by Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service in partnership with the Chalk Streams Project. The Walks in the Misbourne Valley leaflet was updated and re-printed.
- The programme of walks and talks continued. One of the highlights was a guided walk of the R. Chess, as part of the Chesham Heritage Weekend, in September 2006.
- Over 60 delegates attended the Chalk Streams Annual Forum at the Environment Centre in High Wycombe in June. In the afternoon they walked along Hughenden Stream to consider restoration proposals.
- Over 500 people attended a family fun day and water event at the Environment Centre in High Wycombe in August.



Hughenden Stream in April 2006 and in February 2007

Farming and Land Use

Declining profitability, particularly in the livestock sector, continued to have an impact on the Chilterns with a decrease in the number of dairy and beef cattle. Land no longer used for grazing scrubbed over or, if it adjoined settlements, was frequently sold to non-farming landowners. They typically used it for horse grazing or as an extension to their garden which resulted in suburbanisation of the landscape.

The area given over to horse pasture increased, with the attendant fencing, storage and stabling having an impact on the landscape.

Chiltern farmers took advantage of the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme launched in 2005 which led to more wildlife friendly farming. For example, more biannual cutting of hedgerows was introduced together with a strip of grassland along the field boundary.

- 420 people in total attended 16 walks for the public held on a number of farms across the Chilterns. Three Chilterns farms opened to the public on Farm Sunday on June 9th.
- A guide for non-farming landowners, containing information and advice on sympathetic land management in the Chilterns, was launched in November 2006. 214 Landowners' Guides were distributed to landowners, planning authorities and partners.
- Six advisory visits were made to farmers, three of which led to Higher Level Scheme applications. Eight advisory visits were made to non-farming landowners to advise on various matters including tree planting and improving botanical interest of grassland.
- A training day was organised on Higher Level Stewardship which was attended by 38 farmers and landowners. A workshop on managing set aside for wildlife was attended by 15 farmers.
- In November, the Chilterns Farmers' Forum was held in Tring on the theme of planning and diversification. It was attended by 35 farmers, landowners and planners.
- 340 public information panels on different aspects of farming and farm wildlife were produced in conjunction with the Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) Project. These were distributed to 21 farmers for display on their farms.
- An annual survey of land use was initiated in 2006. Surveyors recorded the different land uses in 105 randomly selected 1km squares across the Chilterns to provide a baseline of information. In future years the survey will record any changes to build up a picture of land use trends in the area.
- A £4955 Defra grant was obtained to carry out a survey of hedgerow condition in 33 of the 105 squares used for the Land Use Survey.



Brian Shaw of Barton Hills Farm with his public information panels

Woodlands

The Chilterns is one of the most heavily wooded areas in the UK with 21% cover and the management of that woodland remained a high priority for the Board in 2006-07. The area of private woodland covered by Forestry Commission grant schemes was approx. 6,500 hectares (out of a total of 16,500 hectares) but with reduced levels of grant-aid available from the Forestry Commission, concerns about the consequences of certification and a long term decline in prices for timber, a significant increase in the area actively managed was unlikely. The area covered by grant schemes may now be gradually declining.

Increasingly the emphasis for management was for biodiversity, amenity landscape and recreation. These aims were all incorporated in an accord between the Conservation Board and Forestry Commission. A significant example of joint working was the assistance the Board provided the Forestry Commission when it prepared its design statement for all its holdings in the Chilterns. Over 15,000 copies of the FC consultation leaflet were distributed with the Board's newsletter, Chalk and Trees.



The signing of the local Accord between the Conservation Board and the Forestry Commission in June 2006

- The Board provided significant support including office premises to the Chiltern Woodlands Project. With this support the Project was able to:
 - provide skills training, on coppicing and woodland archaeology;
 - organise five training courses – over 100 participants;
 - give advice to 39 owners of small woodlands;
 - undertake six archaeological surveys;
 - give talks and lead walks for over 500 people;
 - hold the annual Chilterns Woodland Forum focused on wood fuel from the Chilterns attended by over 80 delegates;
 - publish News of the Woods, available on the AONB website.

- The Board supported the Special Trees and Woods Project which was given a grant of £268,000 by the HLF. The Board provided a grant of £3,000 and office accommodation.

- A major project was the creation of the Chilterns Woodland Web, a special part of the Chilterns AONB web site which allows visitors to explore woods through the seasons and centuries

(www.chilternsaonb.org/woodlandweb/). This initiative was part of the three year partnership with the Forestry Commission which has provided grant aid of over £100,000 over three years.

- Over 2,500 visitors and 30 trade exhibitors attended Woods at Work in April 2006, jointly organised with the Chiltern Woodlands Project and Forestry Commission in Wendover Woods.

- The winner of the 2006 Chiltern Woodland Award, offered jointly by the Board and Forestry Commission, was the Bix Estate in south Oxfordshire, owned by Lord Alvingham and managed by Geoff Hopwood.



Woods at Work April 2006

Conservation

The Chilterns is characterised by diversity – mosaics of woodland, chalk grassland and farmland habitats, amongst others, support a rich variety of wildlife. The concern is whether the wildlife in these relatively small fragments of once more extensive habitats can survive the pressures they face today – not least, climate change, development pressures and reduced viability of the livestock sector.

2006-7 saw increasing recognition of the need to create robust habitat networks to enable wildlife to cope with these pressures. This was a key theme of the very successful Chilterns Wildlife Conference in February 2007. Agri-environment schemes, particularly Higher Level Stewardship, can play an important role - for example, re-creating chalk grassland from arable land adjacent to a National Nature Reserve. However, there are concerns that the benefits of such schemes will be less widespread than had been hoped due to budgetary constraints and rising wheat prices. This is an area which the Board will be monitoring closely.

- The Chilterns Wildlife Conference was held in February - a joint initiative of the Board, The Chiltern Society and the Local Wildlife Trusts. The event was oversubscribed with over 150 attending. It brought together senior figures from Natural England, the National Trust and the local Wildlife Trusts along with many local groups and volunteers, and highlighted achievements, threats and opportunities for continuing to develop joint working.
- The Board continued to support the Chilterns Commons Network – now a thriving network with over 20 groups and organisations actively involved and many more on the mailing list. Activities included:
 - 500 copies each of two editions of the Commons Newsletter distributed;
 - Commons Day; Historical Research Workshop; two commons walks;
 - commons database set up;
 - biodiversity audit of Chilterns commons completed;
 - grant aid provided to various projects including a leaflet, pond management and practical conservation works on four commons.
- The Chilterns Chalk Grassland Day was fully subscribed with over 60 site managers, farmers, researchers and others attending an event on the theme of arable reversion at Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and Greenfield Farm in October.
- Grants were provided to six organisations to support improved management of 14 chalk grassland sites covering a total of 117 ha.
- Over 30 people from partner organisations took part in a scrub bash on Watlington Hill in February, opening up a large area where chalk grassland can be re-established.
- The Board has supported Local Biodiversity Action Planning and county-led Biodiversity Target Area initiatives which focus conservation efforts on biodiversity hotspots. The Board is leading on the Watlington – Woodcote target area and plans to hold landowner meetings in the coming year.
- Ian Waller of Hampden Bottom Farm near Prestwood won the Chilterns Conservation Award for his efforts to boost wildlife and open up his farm to the public.



The Conservation Award judges visit Hampden Bottom Farm, the overall winner

Activities and Education

Activities and events with a specific wildlife theme continued to attract good audiences and usually got better attendance than more general events. Offering new ways of seeing wildlife and the countryside was popular with the public, as indicated by the number of people taking part in Wildlife on the Move.

The advent of programmes like BBC's Springwatch made the use of technology such as CCTV cameras for watching wildlife popular. The public's expectation about the availability of up-to-date information and images grew all the time and the Board kept pace with this.

The red kite remained a potent wildlife symbol despite having been in the area for 18 years. Kites continued to capture the public imagination both locally and nationally and were still a great hook to get people involved with the Chilterns.

- Over 200 people attended 27 guided walks with themes including woodlands, dawn chorus, red kites, dormice and chalk streams. One Access for All walk was held at Tring Reservoirs.
- Over 1,000 people attended 23 talks given to local organisations.
- Three workshops for the public were held on coppice crafts, map reading and compass use.
- 28 'Wildlife on the Move' events were held: nine cruises on the Thames were organised in conjunction with Hobbs of Henley Ltd. New partnerships were forged with the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Steam Railway (eight trips), Country Ways Horse and Cart Rides (six trips) and Grebe Canal Cruises (five trips). Over 1,000 people attended these trips.
- Over 1,500 people visited the Charwood Garden Centre near Stokenchurch to see live images of a red kite nest. This was the fourth year of the Nest Watch project.
- A 'telescope-cam' was installed at BBOWT's College Lake Reserve to help school children observe the wildlife on the reserve and an under-water camera was set up at BBOWT's Warburg Reserve.
- Talks and educational activities were provided for 11 schools, six Bucks Adult Learning lectures and four Bucks MIND mental health groups.
- A Chilterns creative writing competition generated 65 entries.
- Over 2,500 visitors attended the 'Woods at Work' Festival at Wendover Woods and family fun days at The Rye in High Wycombe, Hughenden Manor and Aston Rowant attracted over 1,500 people.
- The range of red kite-themed merchandise generated a net income of over £4,500 which was invested in wildlife awareness-raising work.
- The 'Friends of Red Kites in the Chilterns' donation scheme, combined with donations from walks and talks, generated a net income of just over £5,300.
- The group of 40 active volunteers helped to run the programme of walks, talks and events.



The Green Man entertains children at Hughenden Manor Fun Day

Historic Environment

Public interest in the historic environment was never greater, a fact underlined by the popularity of programmes like Time Team, which visited the site of a medieval manor house in Chesham Bois in March. The huge wealth of historic and archaeological sites in the Chilterns was researched and interpreted to a certain extent, but the need to improve public awareness and understanding of what is often literally under people's feet remained. In addition, it was clear that many landowners were unaware of historic features on their land and the need to protect them for the future.

- The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of the Chilterns was the major piece of work undertaken in 2006-07. This included additional work to include the survey of settlement character, largely undertaken by volunteers from The Chiltern Society, roads and track ways and woodland boundaries.
- The Board published Chilternsaetna, a new newsletter about the historic environment of the Chilterns. 2000 printed copies were distributed and an electronic version was added to the AONB website.
- With support from the Board, The Chiltern Woodlands Project was able to:
 - organise four training courses on woodland archaeology attended by 88 participants;
 - survey six woodlands for their potential as venues for further training events;
 - organise a community woodland archaeology event at Ashridge with the National Trust attended by 29 participants.
- The Board published guidance on the use of brick and roofing materials in new buildings and also repair renovation and extension of vernacular buildings. This was supported by a training workshop in heritage building skills held at the Chiltern Open Air Museum attended by 30 delegates.
- The Board provided grants for a number of community based initiatives including to:
 - Brightwell Baldwin Community History and Archaeology Project for the purchase of surveying and excavating equipment which was used on a dig to uncover a medieval farmhouse.
 - The Chiltern Society for the interpretation of the historic Ewelme Water Cress Beds.
 - Chiltern Open Air Museum for purchase of period clothing and oral history projects.
 - Chilterns Archaeology for development of heritage trails.



Local people excavating a medieval farmhouse site in Brightwell Baldwin, south Oxon

Planning and Development

The challenges posed by climate change meant that much emphasis was given to the promotion of sustainable building techniques. There were limited numbers of renewable energy developments proposed, though it is likely that there will be more in the future. The Board worked on policies to address this issue and also contributed to work at the regional level. At a more local level sustainable building materials and practices were promoted and this had knock-on effects with the need to review the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide.



Learning the skill of flint knapping at the Chiltern Open Air Museum

- The Board published a technical note on roofing materials. It was launched at a special event at Chesham Town Hall and H G Matthews brickyard in March.
- The training course in the use of local, traditional building materials was completed at the Chiltern Open Air Museum in May and was attended by 30 delegates. More education work was undertaken with schools (two talks were given) and universities (Reading and Oxford Brookes) as well as other AONBs.
- The overall winner of the Chilterns Buildings Design Awards was the extended farm house and associated converted barns at Manor Farm, Church End, Bledlow. Two highly commended awards were also given for: a two storey extension to and restoration of Russells Farm Cottage in Hambleton, and the complete rebuilding of an oak framed tithe barn on its existing footprint, at Crown Farm in Amersham. 19 entries were received for the competition which was jointly organised with The Chiltern Society.

- The Board was consulted on 38 development plan documents and the Planning Committee submitted comments on 24 of them, including: two draft Planning Policy Statements; two regional consultations (South East and East of England Plans); eight Strategic Plans (minerals and waste); 10 Local Development Documents, and two site development briefs.

- The Board was consulted on 167 planning applications, and of these 26 of the more major or sensitive cases were the subject of formal representations (25 of these being objections). These included advertising, telecommunication masts, leisure developments, residential development, equestrian use, agricultural buildings, minerals extraction, renewable energy development and employment use. Of those determined only four were not in line with the Board's comments.



Manor Farm, Bledlow, winner of the 2006 Buildings Design Awards

Information and Interpretation

The internet was an ever more important means of disseminating information and collecting public opinion and comments. The year on year increase in usage of the AONB website revealed people's growing expectation that they will find any information they need via the internet. The public become more sophisticated in their use of online media, as evidenced by the increased number of leaflets and other publications downloaded from the website.

- The 40th anniversary of the designation of the Chilterns as an AONB continued to be celebrated in various ways. The photos in H J Massingham's 1940 book *Chiltern Country* were re-taken by the Chiltern Society's Photo Group. The resulting pairs of 'then and now' images were put on display in an exhibition at the Guildhall in High Wycombe visited by several hundred people.

- 36 grants of up to £250 each were offered to AONB parish councils for projects to mark the 40th anniversary. Projects included maps of parish walks, restoration of ponds and wildflower meadows, replacement of stiles with kissing gates and a community archaeological dig.

- The popularity of the AONB website continued its upward trend with 509,070 visits during the year. There were a record 51,468 visits in March 2007. New features such as a news feed and a walks feedback form were added.

- Over 130 delegates attended the Chilterns Annual Forum in November 2006 at the Kenton Theatre in Henley-on-Thames. Roger Clarke, Board member of the newly launched Natural England agency, gave the keynote address.

- 15,000 each of two editions of the Board's magazines *Chalk and Trees* and *What's On in the Chilterns* were distributed. In addition the distribution of a newsletter direct to 30,000 households was planned.

- Over 120,000 walking, cycling and general information leaflets were distributed via libraries, information centres, visitor attractions and at events. In addition at least 30,000 were downloaded in electronic form from the AONB website.



The new Chilterns Gateway Centre at Dunstable Downs



Visitors at the 40th Anniversary 'Then and Now' photo exhibition

- The Board was a joint host, together with the Cotswolds and North Wessex Downs AONBs, of the 2006 Europarc Conference in Oxford in September. Over 250 delegates from protected landscapes across Europe attended the event. 47 delegates took part in three field trips to the Chilterns.

- The Board worked closely with Bedfordshire County Council and the National Trust to develop an interpretation plan, displays and leaflet for the new Chilterns Gateway Centre at Dunstable Downs.

- The Board had stands at 10 major local events during the summer.

- 37 press releases generated at least 120 press articles and mentions, 14 radio interviews and six TV interviews. 17 articles written by the Board were published in the local media.

- Five electronic Board newsletters were circulated during the year. Two editions of a farming newsletter and one edition of a Commons Network newsletter were emailed and posted to distribution lists.

- The Board continued to support the National Association of AONBs and provided materials for the Association's stand at The Outdoor Show and articles for its *Outstanding* magazine.

Recreation and Access

There was increased recognition of the positive effect of the countryside on health and well-being, both physical and mental health. The healthy walking schemes in the Chilterns grew in popularity and the Board worked with Bucks County Council to develop new stile-free health walks.

New provisions regarding the use of rights of way by motorised vehicles came into effect in May 2006 under the NERC Act (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act). The Act put an end to RUPPs (Road Used as Public Paths) and reclassified them as restricted byways which can be used by walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and drivers of horse-drawn vehicles, but not by motorised vehicles. Stretches of the Ridgeway National Trail became restricted byways and should benefit from the ban on off-road vehicles.

The volume and speed of traffic on country lanes continued to exert pressure on recreational users (in particular horse-riders, but also cyclists and walkers). It has led to some of the Chiltern Country walk routes being reviewed.

- Work was completed on the route of the Ridgeway Link, a new 7.5 mile linear walking route connecting the Chilterns Gateway Centre on Dunstable Downs to Ivinghoe Beacon. A series of access improvements was carried out to bring the route up to a high standard and make it stile-free. A leaflet promoting the route and the attractions along it was printed by the end of March.
- The Access for All walks pack was updated and re-printed. There are five completely new walks, bringing the total to 16. The new walks were:
 - Brush Hill National Nature Reserve, near Princes Risborough, Bucks
 - Linky Down, Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, Oxfordshire
 - Watlington Hill, Oxfordshire
 - Common Wood, near Tylers Green, Bucks
 - Totternhoe Knolls, Bedfordshire
- The Chilterns Leisure Visitor Survey commenced in March 2007 and will continue until November 2007, with face-to-face interviews taking place at 11 locations throughout the Chilterns. The 2007 survey will provide valuable information on the value, volume and nature of leisure visits to the Chilterns and enable comparisons with the 1997 survey data.
- The third Chilterns Access Conference was held in November 2006, attracting 82 delegates from local authorities, Local Access Forums, the Chiltern Society, government agencies and a wide range of user groups. In total 36 different organisations with an interest in access to the countryside were represented. The main theme of the conference was 'The countryside on your doorstep: how accessible is it?'
- Childrens' quiz sheets were produced for five Chiltern Country Walks, to make the walks more fun and interactive for all the family. These are downloadable from the Chilterns AONB website.



Walkers at Watlington Hill

- Several of the Chiltern Country Walks were updated and reprinted: the Thames and Chilterns Walk, Henley (10,000 copies); West Wycombe and Bradenham (10,000); Views of the Thames, Goring (5,000); Chinnor Circular Walk (5,000); Seer Green/Beaconsfield Walk (5,000) and Hertfordshire pub walks (Ashridge Drovers, Cholesbury and Beacon View; 5,000 of each)

Roads and Transport

The Chilterns has a high density of roads from motorways to rarely used rural lanes. Many of these roads are hundreds and sometimes thousands of years old and can be considered as part of the historic environment. The inappropriate design and maintenance of roads can have a damaging impact on the rural character of the area and the Board, together with The Chiltern Society and county councils, has been working on a revision to the management guidance published in 1998.

The volume of traffic remained high and growing largely due to the affluence of local people – car ownership is amongst the highest in the country. Across the Chilterns there were speed limit review programmes and limits were lowered on many rural roads. The Board supported this policy, but had to recognise that it resulted in a proliferation of speed limit signs on country roads. However in the area around Ashridge and in the Central Chilterns special authorisation was sought from the Department for Transport for the use of repeater signs to be painted onto the carriageway without the need for upright repeater signs.

- The Board remained a partner in the TranQuil traffic management programme in Wycombe district where village gateways signs and features were installed and mobile speed indicator signs were successfully trialled.
- The Board was also a partner in the Three Counties Traffic Management Project which concentrated on the area around the Ashridge Estate owned by the National Trust and undertook a number of activities:
 - Due to the high number of deer/vehicle collisions research was carried out on a number of preventative measures including deer/vehicle speed activated warning signs.
 - New village entry features were designed incorporating the AONB logo and using local timber. Final clearance from the Department for Transport is awaited.
 - The Project proposed the creation of a link between the end of the Ridgeway at Ivinghoe Beacon and the new Chilterns Gateway visitor centre at Dunstable Downs. The route was finally completed in spring 2007.
 - The designation of rural roads as Quiet Lanes was not pursued after an assessment of the impact of the newly introduced statutory guidance by the Department for Transport. It was thought that the designation of Quiet Lanes was a cumbersome and expensive process which was unlikely to bring the benefits initially hoped for.



Lane near Pitstone

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2006/2007

This report is based on the Financial Statement approved by the Board on 19th June 2007. The Audit Commission had not completed its audit at the time of publication of this Annual Review. A copy of the auditor's report will be available from the Board and will be posted on the Board's website when it is published.

Expenditure	
Countryside Management	£246,484
Recreation and Access	£ 80,171
Planning and Development	£ 66,080
Promotion and Awareness	£157,107
Management and Administration (1)	£266,859
Total	£816,701

Notes

- (1) Includes premises, some staff costs, office costs, IT, members' allowances and finance charges
- (2) Local authority contributions to core costs
- (3) Grant aid from the Natural England for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)
- (4) Includes local authority contributions to projects

The expenditure includes VAT which the Board is not able to reclaim.

Income	
Natural England	£579,377
Local Authorities (2)	£120,070
Natural England -SDF (3)	£ 80,000
Other (4)	£ 56,431
Total	£835,878

Balance carried forward £ 19,177

To Restricted and Earmarked reserves £ 12,197

To General Reserve £ 6,980

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

In its second year the Chilterns AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) proved popular with local organisations and groups.

56 applications were received and 28 projects were funded, the grants awarded totalling £73,151. The total value of projects supported was £199,766. 25 out of the 28 grants went to local community organisations or charities; of the remainder two went to farm businesses and one to a local authority.

Examples of projects supported included:

- £2,682 to Lewknor Parish Council in south Oxfordshire for village information boards promoting local facilities and rights of way plus a display on local countryside in the church.
- £5,000 to Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust for new fencing and water troughs on the Blows Downs Nature Reserve near Dunstable. This is part of a project to maintain the chalk grassland on the Reserve and involve local people in conservation tasks.
- £4,000 to the residents of Chartridge near Chesham for a project to clear out a neglected pond and restore it as a thriving wildlife habitat.
- £500 to Tring Environmental Forum towards Tring's Own Apple Fayre, a two week long celebration of local products and the countryside, involving the whole community.



Gill Bindoff of Lewknor Parish Council with the display in the church



An open orchard day during the Tring's Own Apple Fayre

- £500 to farmer Ian Waller for a leaflet promoting the public walks and events he holds on his farm, which is part of the Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) Project.



Members and staff from the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs meet on the bridge at Goring-on-Thames, Nov. 2006

CONSERVATION BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2006/2007

Sir John Johnson*
Cllr Mr W A Storey*

Chairman
Vice Chairman

Appointed by Local Authorities

Cllr Mr R Goodwin*
Cllr Mr R Pushman*
Cllr Mr W A Storey
Cllr Mr D Nimmo-Smith
Cllr Mr C Richards+
Cllr Mrs S Howkins+
Cllr Mr I Reay
Cllr Mr A Strange
Cllr Mr B Golby+
Cllr Mr D Barnard+
Cllr Mrs M Mustoe
Cllr Mr A Walters*
Cllr Mr J Thomson
Cllr Mr D Brearley*
Cllr Mr R Emmett+

Nominated by

Bedfordshire C C
Buckinghamshire C C
Hertfordshire C C
Oxfordshire C C
Aylesbury Vale D C
Chiltern D C
Dacorum B C
Luton B C
Mid Beds D C
North Herts D C
South Beds D C
South Bucks D C
South Oxfordshire D C
Three Rivers D C
Wycombe D C

Appointed by Parish Councils

Mrs M Goldsmith
Mrs S Judges*
Mrs B Wallis+
Mrs M Jarrett+
Mr J Griffin*
Mrs J Wells

County

Bedfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Buckinghamshire
Hertfordshire
Oxfordshire
Oxfordshire

Executive Committee

Board members marked with an asterisk * plus:
Steve Rodrick Chilterns Conservation Board
Richard Brown Hertfordshire County Council
Mike Woods Buckinghamshire County Council

Planning Committee

Board members marked with a + plus:
Mike Stubbs National Trust
Richard Bossons Architect
Gill Gowing Chiltern District Council
Robin Peirce The Chiltern Society

Appointed by the Secretary of State

Mrs Heather Barrett-Mold (started 01.04.07)
Mr M Fox Mrs B Kirkham+
Sir J Johnson Dr S Mortimer
Mr K Mayne* Mr J Willson+
Dr M Render

STAFF

Chief Officer	Steve Rodrick
Planning Officer	Colin White
Countryside Officer	Kath Daly
Activities and Education Officer	Cathy Rose
Information and Interpretation Officer	Claire Forrest
Strategic Access Officer	Annette Venters

Farming and Land Use Officer	Tracy Adams
Chalk Streams Officer	Allen Beechey
Office Manager	Roelie Reed
Administrative Assistant (until Sept 2006)	Helen Freed
Administrative Assistant (from Oct 2006)	Donna Hunter



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The National Association for AONBs
 Cymdeithas Genedlaethol AoHNE
 www.aonb.org.uk

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www.chilternsaonb.org

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Photos supplied by: © Chilterns Conservation Board and John Morris (Chiltern Woodlands Project)

- Cover photos -*
- i) Grand Union Canal near Tring*
 - ii) Children with Willow Hare*
 - iii) Bluebells in Cowleaze Wood*