Outstanding Chilterns
EXPLORE AND ENJOY IN 2016

Fun family days out
New walks and bike rides

GREAT COUNTRYSIDE SITES TO VISIT
DISCOVER TASTY LOCAL TREATS
FIGHT TO PROTECT THE CHILTERNs
The Old Thatched Inn
Gastro Pub
Main Street, Adstock, Buckinghamshire, MK18 2JN

We offer a unique blend of high quality dining, hosted in a relaxed and comfortable environment, serving locally sourced food.

Open seven days
Lunch from 12 noon - 2.30pm Dinner from 6pm - 9.30pm
Serving all day Sunday from 12 noon - 9pm

Telephone: 01296 712584
www.theoldthatchedinn.co.uk
Welcome to this new magazine published by the Chilterns Conservation Board, full of inspiring ideas and information on enjoying the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 2016.

From great walks and bike rides to fun family days out, good places to try tasty local food, wildlife conservation stories, quirky attractions to visit and plenty more you’ll find it all in here! Discover how to make the most of one of the UK’s finest areas of countryside and how you can get involved in caring for it.

www.chilternsaonb.org
The Chilterns AONB website has a wealth of information on the area, including hundreds of downloadable walks and cycling routes, an interactive map highlighting places to visit and places to eat, a local events listing and lots of information on the special features of the Chilterns.

Outstanding Chilterns is published annually by the Chilterns Conservation Board. Established in 2004, the Board is a public body with two key purposes:

• To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB
• To increase understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB

In fulfilling these the Board also seeks to foster social and economic well-being in local communities. It has 27 members drawn from across the Chilterns and a staff team of nine.

Chilterns Conservation Board
90 Station Road, Chinnor, Oxon OX39 4HA
Tel: 01844 355500
Email: office@chilternsaonb.org
www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation-board
(sign up here for the Board’s monthly e-newsletter)

@ChilternsAONB

Design: Amanda Carroll, www.studiobeam.co.uk
Photos: Chris Smith, John Morris, Allen Beechey, Paul Keene.
Main cover image: Walkers on Pitstone Hill
Advertising: Qwerty Advance Publications: Samantha@qwertyltd.com / 0118 930 2222

Walking and Cycling 4-5
A prescription from Dr Nature 6-7
Keeping it special 8
The water of life 9
Tasting the Chilterns 10-11
Map of the Chilterns AONB 12-13
The Chilterns needs you! 14-15
Housing pressures threaten Chilterns 16-17
Hellfire and heroes 18-19
Fizztastic family fun 21
Book review 22
Walking

New walks from Princes Risborough and Aldbury

Two new circular walking routes have been devised, using sections of the Ridgeway National Trail and the Chiltern Way. A 7 mile walk starts from the centre of Princes Risborough and goes up through beechwoods and nature reserves to a couple of stunning hilltop viewpoints. You get a fantastic sense of the history of the Chilterns as you tread the 5,000 year-old route of the Ridgeway, past the burial mounds of Bronze Age communities on top of Whiteleaf Hill, which is itself adorned with a chalk cross of mysterious origins. A 10 mile walk from picturesque Aldbury near Tring takes you along the hills to Ivinghoe Beacon, the dramatic northern end of the Ridgeway, before returning through the ancient woods of Ashridge.

Download the walk details and maps from www.chilternsaonb.org/ridgeway

Chiltern Heritage Trail is revived

The 16 year-old Chiltern Heritage Trail, originally created by Chiltern District Council to celebrate the millennium, has been given a new lease of life by the Chiltern Society. The 50 mile Trail passes through all 14 of the District’s parishes and includes many beautiful and historic parts of the Chilterns AONB. Society volunteers have been out checking the route, replacing lost or damaged signs and collating new information on all the points of interest along it.

A new guidebook is being published this summer which divides the Trail into eight sections of about 6 miles each on average – a good half day’s walk. They are: Chesham to Chenies; Chenies to Chalfont St Peter; Chalfont St Peter to Old Amersham; Old Amersham to Penn Street; Penn Street to Great Missenden; Great Missenden to Chartridge; Chartridge to Ashley Green; and Ashley Green to Chesham. Along the way you can visit some historic gems like John Milton’s cottage in Chalfont St Giles, the Tudor glory of Chenies Manor, an Iron Age hillyfort in Cholesbury and the Quaker village of Jordans. Most sections are accessible by public transport, and there are plenty of welcoming pubs en-route. The guidebook will be available to order from www.chilternsociety.org.uk.
Explore Tring on foot and bike

The bustling market town of Tring is full of history and a new app will take you on a guided tour of its streets to discover a Christopher Wren mansion, the old silk mill which employed hundreds of the town’s children and a park once occupied by kangaroos, amongst many things. There is audio commentary, lots of old and new photos and activities for children. The free Tring Heritage Trail app is available in the Apple and Android app stores. In it you’ll also find six walking and cycling trails which make the most of the glorious countryside surrounding Tring. Explore the watery wonders of the Grand Union Canal and Tring Reservoirs or head up into the miles of woodland and downland along the edge of the Chiltern Hills. A leaflet about the Trail can be picked up in the town’s museums and information centre.

Get a taste of the Cycleway

You’ve probably spotted the brown ‘Chilterns Cycleway’ road signs around the area but have you tried any of it out?

The Cycleway is now six years old and has become really popular, thanks to its route through some of the most scenic parts of the Chilterns. The 173 mile route is signposted along rural lanes and forms a big loop through the whole Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. If you’re looking for a day or half day’s ride there is a good number of circular rides using sections of the Cycleway – these are a great way to try it out without committing to the whole 173 miles! There are circular rides of different lengths from Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Wendover, West Wycombe, Henley-on-Thames and Wallingford. They all take you through lovely, tranquil countryside, pretty villages and past country pubs.

Interactive map of walks and bike rides

You are spoilt for choice when it comes to walking or cycling in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as there are hundreds of walking routes and bike rides to enjoy.

Just enter a postcode or place name into the interactive map on the Chilterns AONB website and select a nearby route – pick from long, medium or short walks, walks with no stiles, walks from railway stations, walks suitable for wheelchairs and buggies plus many cycling routes.

Download some directions and a map and off you go! Whether you fancy a gentle riverside stroll, blowing away the cobwebs on a scenic hilltop, striding across hill and vale or pedalling quiet lanes there will be something for you.

Get browsing at www.chilternsaonb.org/walks-rides

Interactive Map
A prescription from Dr Nature

Getting out and enjoying the Chilterns countryside could be seriously good for your health.

You know that feeling of peace and pleasure you get when you’re in a green, tranquil place? Well, it’s no coincidence that most of us feel better when we are out in the countryside, surrounded by vistas of farmland, woods, hills and valleys.

There is a lot of evidence now that being in a natural environment, especially if you’re doing something active like walking, is very good for your mental and physical well-being.

Studies have shown that being out and about in nature reduces stress and depression, lowers blood pressure, improves the immune system and reduces obesity. In fact, there are so many benefits that some GPs, instead of prescribing drugs for patients, are prescribing weekly walks in the countryside or participation in a local conservation work party.

If you are lucky enough to have a beautiful landscape on your doorstep, or regularly visit them, recent evidence reveals you may well enjoy better health simply because of the natural beauty around you. It demonstrated that scenic areas, with minimal man-made clutter like buildings and roads, are intrinsically better for people’s health than basic green spaces.

All this is great news for those of us that live in or near the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). With 324 square miles of nationally-protected countryside included in the AONB there is an abundance of places to walk or cycle, to enjoy a picnic or a great view, try something adventurous or chill out in a tranquil corner. The vast majority of this is free to do and will make us happier and healthier – what’s not to like!

Walking for all

The Chilterns countryside is criss-crossed by over 1200 miles of footpaths and bridleways – it’s one of the best areas in the UK for walking. Over 200 promoted walks make use of this fantastic network, including short, easy flat strolls, pub walks, full day hikes and routes suitable for buggies and mobility scooters. All have leaflets with maps and directions that you can download online or pick up in local information centres and libraries.

Pick one that appeals and away you go – see the link in the More Information section. If you’re a bit of a rusty walker why not join one of the short easy Health Walks in your area – your district or county council will have information.
Great countryside sites to visit

Here’s a selection of beautiful places to visit for free in the Chilterns:

**Sundon Hills Country Park** – near Harlington, Central Beds. Waymarked walks through woodland and grassland with stunning views and lots of flowers and butterflies in summer. Picnic area and car park.

**Ashridge Estate** – near Berkhamsted. A huge area of woodland, grassland and hills, owned by the National Trust, with lots of walking and cycling trails from the visitor centre, including ones suitable for buggies and mobility scooters. Parking, café and shop.

**Hodgemoor Woods** – near Chalfont St Giles. An ancient woodland full of wildlife, with footpaths for walkers and permissive trails for cyclists, managed by the Forestry Commission. Car park and picnic area.

**Brush Hill** – near Princes Risborough. A Local Nature Reserve with fabulous views over the Vale of Aylesbury, looked after by the Chiltern Society. There are wildlife walks around the site. Car park at the adjacent Whiteleaf Hill.

**Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve** – near Watlington, Oxon. You can listen to talking sculptures, marvel at the red kites overhead and enjoy wildlife in every season on the Reserve trails. Managed by Natural England, with parking and easy access routes.

**Hartslock Nature Reserve** – near Goring-on-Thames. A home for rare orchids with stunning views over the Thames Valley, owned by the Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust. You can reach Hartslock by strolling along the Thames Path National Trail from the centre of Goring.

Try something a little different...

Who said being active can’t be fun? If you fancy something different try out one of these:

- Test your agility and muscle power on the forest fitness trail at Wendover Woods
- Find your inner monkey as you swing between the trees on the Go Ape high wire courses in Wendover Woods and Black Park near Slough
- Fly a kite on the edge of the hills at Dunstable Downs and make it dance on the wind
- Hire a rowing boat on the Thames at Henley and admire the rolling Chiltern hills from the water
- Take an electric bike for a spin and tackle those hills with ease!

More information

Find full details, including locations and facilities, on all the countryside sites mentioned above at: [www.chilternsaonb.org/places-to-visit](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/places-to-visit).

To find out more about taking part in the fun activities above go to: [www.chilternsaonb.org/things-to-do](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/things-to-do).

Browse lots of walking and cycling routes at [www.chilternsaonb.org/walks-rides](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/walks-rides) and download route information. The free Handheld Tours walking app has a good range of Chilterns walks, with route map, directions and information for each one – find it in your Apple or Android app stores.
Sue Holden, Chief Officer of the Chilterns Conservation Board, explains what drives her to care for the Chilterns countryside.

When I moved to the Chilterns from Lincolnshire two years ago I was struck by just how green and tranquil this part of the world is. I particularly love the woods – it’s wonderful to go rambling for hours through the beechwoods and quiet valleys near my home in Chinnor. Many times I have stood still, listening, and realised that all I can hear is birdsong and the rustle of leaves in the wind. That is an incredibly special and increasingly rare experience in England, especially this close to London.

It’s clear to me that 51 years of being designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty have helped the Chilterns to remain remarkably unspoiled, given the pressures of a small crowded island. But what exactly does the term ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’, or AONB for short, mean? What does being an AONB actually mean for the Chilterns countryside?

In essence, having AONB status means that the Chilterns is recognised in law as one of the finest landscapes in the UK, on a par with National Parks and protected to the same degree. National planning policies state that major development is not acceptable in an AONB, except where it is clearly in the national interest. But any development should be small-scale, carefully sited and appropriately designed.

AONB status also means the Chilterns is part of the global family of protected landscapes, internationally-recognised for its distinctive character. The Chiltern Hills are important globally because chalk landscapes are extremely rare and therefore the unique habitats, flora and fauna linked to this geology are also very rare. Ancient woods and chalk streams are some of our most biodiverse habitats and yet are also amongst the most fragile and threatened. The landscape has given rise to a unique cultural heritage with centuries of small-scale, sustainable activity by people making a living from what the land has to offer, whether farming livestock, growing trees, making chairs, or producing bricks from local clay.

A well-managed natural environment underpins a healthy society and provides important services like clean air, clear water, fertile soil and pollinating insects. A beautiful landscape can refresh our souls, provide places for exercise and recreation and create opportunities for life-long learning and volunteering. And we need to ensure these benefits and opportunities are not lost, a challenge given climate change, tree diseases, damage from pest species and huge pressure for new houses and infrastructure.

Designation as an AONB recognises that the Chilterns countryside is a unique accumulation of geology, ecology, history, architecture, wildlife and community, creating a very distinctive place which enriches the whole country. I firmly believe, and I hope you do too, that it’s worth protecting the character of the Chilterns from the pressures on it and maintaining its place among the jewels of the British countryside. At the Chilterns Conservation Board our purpose is to conserve and enhance the AONB but to do that we need your help. We need people and partners with skills, expertise and funding to join us in caring for this incredible place. Please get in touch.
The water of life

The chalk rock of the Chiltern Hills gives rise to a wonderful natural treasure – sparkling clear streams flowing with water filtered through the chalky layers. Chalk rivers and streams are extremely rare on a global scale, and England has most of them. A healthy, fast-flowing stream is home to a great range of aquatic animals and plants and we’ve picked a selection to show here. The map in the centre pages shows the location of the Chilterns’ nine chalk streams.

Water voles are one of the UK’s most threatened mammals but are found on the Rivers Chess, Misbourne and Gade.

Yellow Flag irises grow along stream banks

Brown trout thrive on the abundant riverflies in a healthy chalk stream

To find out more about visiting the Chilterns’ chalk streams, and how the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project is working to conserve and enhance them, visit www.chilternsaonb.org/chalk-streams.

You can do your bit to look after them – use water carefully at home and there will be more left in the chalk aquifer for the streams.
Explore the distinctive character of the Chilterns via your tastebuds – there’s never been a better time to dive in to the mouth-watering range of food, wine and beer being produced by a burgeoning number of local producers in the AONB.

Juicy cherries in the orchards, peppery watercress fed by clear chalk streams, flour ground by wind and water-power... for centuries the landscapes of the Chilterns yielded produce to sustain the local population and the hungry folk of London. All this food-growing activity helped to shape the countryside we know today.

**Tasty experiences**

While supermarkets may now provide most of our staples, there is a surging interest in locally-produced food and drink and an ever-growing number of Chilterns’ enterprises and events offering tasty treats for our tables. This dynamic new food scene has created lots of fresh experiences for your taste buds, beyond the traditional cream tea or hearty pub lunch.

Take a tour of one of the six vineyards making the most of the chalky terroir of the Chilterns, or sup a pint at one of the 10 micro-breweries. You can try your hand at bread-making at 1,000-year old Redbournbury Watermill on the River Ver or have a day out at one of the many food-themed events cropping up across the area.

The huge public interest in high quality, distinctive local food and drink has been seized on by Chilterns-based entrepreneurs who are creating some exciting new experiences. Fancy a pedal though some beautiful scenery on an electric bike before stopping for a tasty lunch at a local deli? Or you can turn your hand to making some artisan chocolates under the experienced eye of a chocolatier. ‘Masterchef’ addicts will probably enjoy a cookery demonstration by a chef in one of the area’s top gastropubs. Discover more about these experiences and many others on the Food and Drink section of the VisitChilterns.co.uk website.

Summer provides a wonderful excuse to browse in one of the many delis or farm shops scattered across the Chilterns and buy the makings of a very tasty picnic. Find a tranquil spot, maybe with a great view, and enjoy eating this good local food while drinking in the landscape that produced it. Farmers’ markets are another excellent source of edible delights – most market towns have regular ones.
Outstanding Chilterns

INTERVIEW

Mary Tebje

Mary Tebje, a co-founder of the Chilterns Tourism Network, has visited many local food and drink destinations. We posed a tough question: can you pick out some of your favourites?

**PE Mead and Sons, Wilstone, near Tring**
I really enjoy browsing in this farm shop, a popular pitstop with walkers and cyclists, which is full of local food and drink including their own cold-pressed rapeseed oil, condiments and home-grown lamb.

**Chiltern Valley Winery and Brewery, near Henley**
This is a well-established vineyard producing some really tasty white, rose and sparkling wines and a range of real ales. You can make a full weekend of it here - they run a farmhouse B&B, very handy after a tour and tasting session! They are also opening a cookery school this year.

**Tring Brewery**
A great range of core and seasonal ales from this Hertfordshire brewery. They have made such a good connection with the landscape with many of their memorably named beers, inspired by their part of the Chilterns. A pint of Ridgeway anyone? They also run regular tours and events.

**Chilterns Charcuterie**
The most delicious cured meats from rare-breed animals raised in Buckinghamshire. They’ve only been going for a couple of years but are building a great reputation – their products are sold in local farm shops and farmers’ markets across the Chilterns.

**Crooked Billet pub, Stoke Row, near Henley**
I love their approach to good food – not only does the chef-proprietor raise some of the meat on his own small-holding but he encourages locals to swap their home-grown produce for lunch!

**Hazeldene Farm, Chesham**
Liz and Steve Bateman have been raising native rare breeds here for 10 years and sell the meat in their farm shop. They are passionate about high quality, high welfare meat and run lots of events on the farm at which you can meet the livestock and buy local food and crafts.

**Foodie days out**
New guides published on the Visit Chilterns website will help you plan the perfect day out: a scenic walk, a visit to a local producer and a great place for a meal.

Online guides have been produced for Tring and Berkhamsted, Wendover, Amersham, Marlow, Henley, West Wycombe and Radnage. Each one has information on attractions to visit in that area, local walks and bike rides, great food and drink products to sample and suggested pubs, cafes and restaurants serving good local food.

Download them for free at www.visitchilterns.co.uk/food-and-drink-destinations

**Events in 2016**

- **18-19 June**: Feast Festival Weekend at Waddesdon Manor
- **2-3 July**: Radnage Beer Festival, near High Wycombe
- **16 July**: Food and Drink Festival at Frithsden Vineyard near Berkhamsted
- **27-29 August**: Great Missenden Food Festival
- **24 Sept**: Thame Food Festival – the region’s biggest food festival
- **During September**: forage for mushrooms with an expert at Stonor Park near Henley
- **October**: Tring Apple Fayre

**Choose the Chilterns**

The Chilterns Tourism Network is a not-for-profit company representing over 220 local Chilterns tourism businesses who work together to promote the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as a desirable place to visit. It runs regular networking events and promotional campaigns. Membership of the CTN is free for qualifying tourism businesses.

To find out more and get involved contact: mary@visitchilterns.co.uk @VisitChilterns
The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Covering 324 square miles of rolling chalk hills and tranquil valleys, the Chilterns AONB stretches from the River Thames in south Oxfordshire through Buckinghamshire and Central Bedfordshire to Hitchin in Hertfordshire. This is an internationally-important landscape, protected to the same level as a National Park and recognised as one of the finest areas of countryside in the UK. The Chilterns is one of 34 AONBs in England, the nearest ones being the North Wessex Downs south of the River Thames and the Cotswolds.

The Chilterns AONB is a place to de-stress, exercise and feel the sense of well-being we all enjoy in natural surroundings. It’s a beautiful, incredibly-important gem that belongs to all of us so get out and enjoy it, and care for it!
If you can spare a bit of time to help care for the Chilterns you could get more than you bargained for in return.

Did you know the average British person spends over 11 hours a week on social media? If just two hours of that was spent helping out a good cause the difference that could be made to communities and the environment is immense. And the benefits don’t just flow one way – there’s a huge amount to be gained personally from volunteering, it can even help you live longer!

If you love the Chilterns countryside why not consider offering a little time to help look after it? There are loads of opportunities out there – what you do and how much time you give is entirely up to you. A great deal of the practical conservation work carried out on local wildlife sites relies heavily on volunteers so if you like being active in the great outdoors and making an immediate difference to somewhere special this could be for you.

There are many other options for helping out, like sharing your knowledge of local wildlife with the public at special events to monitoring proposed development in the Chilterns or helping out with admin for a conservation group. Whatever your interest there’s something for you.

You don’t need any specialist skills to do voluntary work and much of it is flexible enough to fit around all the other things you do.

Here’s what could be in it for you:

- Improved health and well-being
- A new group of friends
- Greater knowledge about the Chilterns, its wildlife and special features
- Satisfaction at making a difference to something you care about
Sally Blackman – caring for her local common

Sally Blackman has been helping to look after Booker Common near High Wycombe for 10 years and still gets a buzz from being involved in this green space outside her front door: “I wanted to improve where I live, for me and everyone else, get to know the Common better and make it more inviting for walkers, families and school children,” she says.

Sally is a member of the Booker Common and Woods Protection Society and takes part in regular tasks and events on the Common: “Typically when we have a work day we will start at 10 and finish at lunchtime or in the afternoon. The jobs are really variable – we might be clearing scrub, replacing benches, litter-picking or brushcutting to keep grass and weeds down. It’s very sociable, you get people from all backgrounds coming along and I’ve made some good friends through it. We stop for tea breaks and lunch and people take part in the task for as much time as they’ve got available.”

“I’ve really enjoyed learning about the wildlife and habitats on the Common and how to care for them. I feel like I’m involved in the Common’s future and am giving something back to my area. As a Society we think it’s very important to be open and welcoming to anyone wanting to join in so we communicate regularly about what we’re doing and organise a guided walk a couple of times a year to show people the latest conservation work.”

What can I do?

To help you explore what’s out there and find something that suits, the Chilterns Conservation Board has compiled an online Directory of Volunteering Opportunities in the Chilterns (browse it at www.chilternsaonb.org/volunteering). In it you’ll find a wide range of charities and local groups across the whole area and details of the activities they need help with.

Here are some examples:

Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust – many opportunities including practical work on reserves, helping with education work and welcoming the public at the College Lake Reserve Visitor Centre near Tring.

Chilterns Conservation Board – the public body for the AONB needs volunteers with expertise in planning, fundraising, public speaking and general office admin.

Chiltern Society – this large, volunteer-led charity has a huge number of roles across its many areas of interest which include footpath maintenance, practical conservation work, planning issues, heritage projects, cycling and walking.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre – help needed with wildlife surveys and office-based tasks such as data management.

Canal and River Trust – help needed with maintaining locks and the towpath along the Grand Union Canal.

Green Gyms – weekly conservation work parties at sites across south Oxfordshire.

Plus there are many small voluntary groups caring for a local green space like a wood or a common – there could well be one near you. You’ll find some listed in the Directory or contact your parish or town council to find out what’s going on in your patch.
Housing pressures threaten Chilterns

There is a very real danger that parts of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty could disappear under concrete and bricks over the next 20 years. The AONB is facing unprecedented pressure from the push to find new sites for housing developments.

Across the counties of the Chilterns local authorities have commissioned assessments of the need for new homes in their areas over the next two decades and these have produced some very high numbers (see below).

To put these numbers in context, 50,000 houses represents a city the size of Oxford. In trying to accommodate all these new homes local authorities are broadening their search for potential sites, and in some cases this means they are considering locations in the greenbelt and even in the Chilterns AONB. The Chilterns Conservation Board, which was established to conserve and enhance the AONB, is extremely concerned that this push to build could result in the permanent degradation of one of the country’s finest areas of countryside.

“The Chilterns AONB is a special place, nationally-protected for the beauty of its landscapes, and its character and habitats are very sensitive to change. Once gone they cannot be replaced,” says Lucy Murfett, Planning Officer at the Board.

National protection

The importance of protecting AONBs is enshrined in national planning policy which states that great weight should be given to conserving their landscapes and scenic beauty. It instructs decision makers that planning permission should be refused for major developments in AONBs except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the national interest. The policy leaves no doubt about the value of our best bits of countryside: ‘AONBs and National Parks have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty’. So if a development would be wrong for a National Park, it’s likely to be wrong here too.

Assessment of new homes needed

- **Central Bedfordshire & Luton**: 47,300 by 2031
- **Buckinghamshire**: 50,000 by 2033
- **Oxfordshire**: 100,000 by 2031
- **N. Herts & Stevenage**: 21,700 by 2031
- **S. W. Herts**: 72,400 by 2036

The Chilterns AONB is a special place, nationally-protected for the beauty of its landscapes, and its character and habitats are very sensitive to change.

Lucy Murfett, Board’s Planning Officer
The challenge

The pressures for development are huge, but must be balanced against the great benefits that an unspoiled, tranquil landscape rich with wildlife, history and culture brings to society. The Chilterns countryside represents a fantastic resource for people: a place to enjoy recreation, family time, exercise and peaceful relaxation. As the population grows, it’s ever more important that people have somewhere to escape to.

New development will happen, but the challenge is to ensure that it does not directly harm the Chilterns, or harm it indirectly. The impacts of housing growth come not just from development on AONB land but development around its edge as well:

- More traffic travelling through the AONB, affecting air quality and tranquillity
- A greater pressure on countryside sites and footpaths in the AONB
- Increased demand for domestic water supplies, much of which comes from the underground chalk aquifer which also supplies our globally-rare chalk streams.

The Conservation Board believes there is a place for small-scale, well-designed and well-sited housing development in the AONB, but no place for major development. It is working closely with all the planning authorities across the Chilterns to remind them of their legal duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act to protect the natural beauty of the area and the importance of safeguarding the environmental, social and economic benefits this lovely place provides for current and future generations.

What can you do?

It’s vital that everyone who cares for the Chilterns gets involved in the planning process and puts forward the case for protecting the AONB. If you have a local plan or a neighbourhood plan in development then make your views known about how it should be conserving and enhancing your bit of the Chilterns.

Do you have some knowledge of the planning system? Would you be interested in offering some time to assist the Conservation Board with planning issues in a voluntary capacity? Do get in touch via the contact details on page 3.
History has left its mark on the Chilterns in some intriguing and unexpected ways. Down the centuries the actions of an incredibly diverse set of people, from kindly princes to debauched aristocrats, grieving soldiers and rebellious worshippers have given us lots to explore and wonder at today. Read on!

A maharajah’s gift
In the 19th century a young man from Stoke Row in south Oxfordshire spent many years working in India near Benares (now Varanasi). Edward Reade got to know the local maharajah and described to him how people from his home village in the Chilterns suffered from a lack of water, and, just like the Indian villagers Edward was helping, had to walk miles every day to fetch it. The Maharajah of Benares was much struck by this tale of deprivation in Britain and paid for a well to be built in Stoke Row. In 1864 the 368 foot well, adorned with an elaborate domed canopy and topped by a gilded elephant, was opened and provided water to the community for over 70 years. A cherry orchard next to it provided an income for the well’s upkeep. You can still see the well and the orchard in Stoke Row.

Whipsnade’s leafy memorial
This natural green monument must be one of the country’s most poignant and unusual memorials to lost friends. Edmund Blyth survived World War 1 in the infantry but lost a number of close comrades. Some years later, keen to mark their short lives and sacrifice, he was inspired by a visit to the new Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool. As he drove home through autumn woods he conceived the idea of creating a cathedral made of trees. At a site next to Whipsnade village in Bedfordshire trees and shrubs were planted in the shape of a medieval cathedral. 80 years later the mature trees and grassy avenues form a tranquil, peaceful space. The Tree Cathedral is now owned by the National Trust and is free to visit all year round.

Hellfire under a hill
Heavy drinking, black magic, orgies … not a debauched party in a Hollywood star’s mansion but some of the rumoured antics that took place over 250 years ago under West Wycombe Hill near High Wycombe. Caves excavated out of the chalk were the meeting place of the Hellfire Club, a gathering of aristocrats and other well-to-do gentlemen headed by Sir Francis Dashwood, owner of West Wycombe Park and a man who liked to indulge his wild side. He balanced his underground excesses by re-building the church on top of the hill and adding a dramatic mausoleum next to it. The Hellfire Caves are a quirky attraction to visit these days, with half a mile of passages leading to a large banqueting hall and the ‘inner Temple’ at the end.

Discover lots more quirky Chilterns history and characters at www.chilternsaonb.org/people-and-history
A home for religious dissenters

It might seem unlikely but in the 17th century the Chilterns was a hotbed of religious dissention, a place where a number of groups who had broken away from the Church of England sought refuge. Among these were the early Quakers, some of whom lived and worshipped around the village of Jordans in south Buckinghamshire. In 1687 the King allowed non-conformist groups to worship lawfully and the Quakers of Jordans built a Meeting House which still stands today.

The most famous local Quaker is William Penn, who spent some time in America in the 1680s to avoid persecution, during which he established Pennsylvania and designed the new city of Philadelphia. The Meeting House in Jordans is open Tuesday – Sunday afternoons until the end of October. You can see the original 17th century Meeting Room inside it and outside the grave of William Penn and that of Thomas Ellwood, poet and early Quaker.
Go Ape! Tree Top Adventure

UNLEASH YOUR INNER APE

10% off per person*

at Wendover Woods nr. Aylesbury

Book at goape.co.uk
or call 0845 094 8742† quote CHWE5

*Offer valid until 30th November 2016, excludes Saturdays and Corporate Events. Discount code must be entered at time of booking. Only valid at Wendover Woods.
†Calls cost 7p per minute plus your phone company’s access charge. Participation and supervision ratios apply - please see our website.
Celebrating Roald Dahl’s centenary

2016 marks the centenary of the birth of the famous author Roald Dahl, and there is plenty going on to celebrate it. Dahl lived in the heart of the Chilterns in Great Missenden for 30 years and the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre in the village is running events all year. There’s lots planned for the summer in particular, tying in with the release of the big-screen adaption of *The BFG*, like BFG-themed craft activities, storytelling sessions and clue trails. You can also follow self-guided trails around the village and local countryside to spot features that pop up in Dahl’s stories. Find all the details at www.roalddahl.com/museum

For more Dahl-themed fun visit the Roald Dahl Children’s Gallery in the Bucks County Museum in Aylesbury where kids can dive into Fantastic Mr Fox’s tunnel and visit the Twits’ upside-down room. www.buckscountymuseum.org/roalddahl

Great days out

Travel back in time to meet highwaymen, medieval knights, vicious Vikings and many more characters at the Chiltern Open Air Museum’s living history events. The Museum, near Chalfont St Giles, also has a working farm, a playground and acres of space for running around. Join the National Trust rangers at Dunstable Downs for fun family walks with lots of playtime along the way – there are guided walks throughout the year. Beale Park next to the Thames at Pangbourne has loads to keep the kids entertained from meeting meerkats and lemurs to riding the miniature railway.

Cycling and woodland adventures

For easy family cycling try the Phoenix Trail near Princes Risborough which is traffic-free, level and runs for five miles through tranquil countryside. The Ebury Way between Rickmansworth and Watford is another traffic-free route, perfect for safe cycling, passing lakes and meadows and crossing the Grand Union Canal. In the lovely green expanse of Nettlebed Common near Henley there’s lots of fun to be had on the swings, see-saws and logs of the Woodland Play Trail. You can take the young ones on a twiggy adventure on the Stick Man Trail at Wendover Woods – pick up an activity pack from the Café in the Woods containing lots of fun things to do on the way round. And look out for the giant Gruffalo while you’re there!

Activity sessions

Several visitor attractions in the Chilterns run regular nature-themed activity sessions for children, including the Natural History Museum in Tring, the River and Rowing Museum in Henley and College Lake Nature Reserve near Tring. Some are free and for most you will need to book in advance.

More information

Find links to all the places mentioned above at www.chilternsaonb.org/things-to-do

Looking for inspiration on how to keep the children entertained at weekends and in the holidays? We’re here to help – below are plenty of ideas on fun ways to get them out in the fresh air, burning off energy, enjoying nature and being active!
Year in the life of a wood

Richard Fortey is best known as a distinguished palaeontologist, author and TV presenter who has worked with David Attenborough and presented programmes on BBC4 about ancient life, evolution on islands and other topics. He is also a keen naturalist and a few years ago took the opportunity to buy a few acres of ancient woodland near his home in Henley-on-Thames. His detailed observations of the changing wildlife through the seasons, along with the joys and pitfalls of being a woodland owner, are contained in a book published in May entitled *The Wood for the Trees – the long view of nature from a small wood.*

Richard Fortey’s wood is part of Lambridge Wood between Henley and Nettlebed, a classic Chilterns beech and bluebell wood which lies on a section of the prehistoric earthwork Grim’s Ditch. His account of the natural life of the wood month-by-month paints a vivid picture of one of the best-known and loved natural features of the Chilterns. His huge academic knowledge shines through too – how many people could look at a pebble and accurately surmise that it was brought to the Chilterns by an ancient, long-disappeared river flowing from the Midlands?

The Chilterns Conservation Board is hoping to arrange a talk by Richard Fortey on his wood later this year – if you would like to be kept informed of the details please email cforrest@chilternsaonb.org.

I was overwhelmed by a feeling of entering a realm of eternal nature.

Richard Fortey
Suppliers of rustic lap panels, closeboarded panels, palisade panels, trellis panels and rose arches, hazel or willow hurdles, railway sleepers and garden furniture and decking, sheds made to measure, log stores, bin stores or any outside storage.

We have Bark, Mulch and Play Bark All types of fencing and wire and much more...
Reigniting a Lost Art

The vast majority of bricks manufactured today are fired using gas, oil or coal. However before 1800 wood was the main kiln fuel. A beautiful and unique side effect of wood burning are the natural glazes that form on the bricks during firing. For ultra authentic matching of brickwork on older buildings wood fired bricks are often the best choice.

All of our wood fired bricks are hand made and are dried and fired using wood sourced locally. This means that our bricks are not only beautiful to look at, but the complete absence of fossil fuels in their production ensures they are close to being carbon neutral.

THE BRICKWORKS, BELLINGDON, CHESHAM
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HP5 2UR
TEL: 01494 758212

WWW.HGMATTHEWS.COM
INFO@HGMATTHEWS.COM

Handmade
Woodfired