A landscape of remarkable beauty
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A landscape of remarkable beauty
I am fortunate that England’s Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are part of my Ministerial responsibilities. Whether it be rolling hills, sweeping coastline or a tranquil village, spending time in an AONB can stir the heart and lift the spirit.

This is a pivotal moment for all AONBs. The Government has set its ambition in the 25 Year Environment Plan which states clearly the importance of natural beauty as part of our green future, while AONBs retain the highest status of protection for landscape through national planning policy. Leaving the EU brings with it an opportunity to develop a better system for supporting our farmers and land managers, who play such a vital role as stewards of the landscape. And the Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty led by Julian Glover – the first of its kind for generations – will make recommendations to make sure our designated landscapes can flourish in the years ahead.

In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people – farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff – for the beautiful places they live and work. In this spirit I am delighted to welcome publication of this Statutory Management Plan for The Chilterns AONB. It is significant that this plan will be delivered in partnership by those who value The Chilterns AONB. I would like to thank all those involved in preparation of this document and wish you the best of success in bringing it to fruition.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is nationally protected as one of the finest landscapes in the UK and is a truly ‘living landscape’. Its unique offering of ancient woodland, chalk streams, farmland, chalk downland and cultural heritage is shaped not just by natural processes but also generations of human activity.

All organisations responsible for AONBs are required to create a Management Plan every five years, and this Plan for 2019–2024 provides a vision and policies to help guide the work of those who care for this special place. We have worked closely with partners and the public in developing this Plan, and we hope a renewed partnership approach will ensure that everyone who can play a role in caring for the Chilterns will be able to contribute to achieving its aspirations.

The Chilterns Conservation Board has achieved a great deal in the last five years, from advising on local plans and planning matters to developing multi-year, strategic projects that have attracted millions of pounds in funding and benefit landscape restoration, nature conservation and communities in our area. We continue to work with key partners to create programmes that promote the widespread benefits the Chilterns offers, including health and wellbeing opportunities for the millions of people who live nearby.

However, despite this good news, pressures and threats remain. Our natural resources are under unprecedented pressure from development, infrastructure, pests, diseases and climate change. As I write this Foreword, the impacts of Brexit, the Glover Review and local authority restructuring are not yet known. The work we collectively undertake to care for our AONB must continue despite this uncertainty.

Our country needs green spaces and the powerful benefits of nature now, more than ever. I commend this ambitious Plan to all those who will help care for the Chilterns AONB in the future.

Ian Reay, Chairman, Chilterns Conservation Board

Chairman’s Foreword
Conserve & enhance the natural beauty of the area
About the Chilterns

The Chilterns is a landscape of remarkable beauty and distinctive character with a unique interaction of geological, ecological and cultural heritage features. Designation of the Chilterns as an AONB was in 1965, with an extension in 1990. It now extends over 833km² of mainly privately-owned land. The Chilterns is a home and a workplace for over 80,000 people and some 1.6 million people live within 8km of the AONB.

In particular the Chilterns was designated to protect its special qualities which include the steep chalk escarpment with flower-rich downland, woodlands, commons, tranquil valleys, ancient routes, villages with brick and flint houses, chalk streams and a rich historic environment of hillforts and chalk figures.

What is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’ is a designation for an area of land that is of national importance for its natural beauty. The origins of AONBs are in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. In June 2000, the government confirmed that AONBs have the same level of landscape quality and share the same level of protection as National Parks.

The single purpose of AONB designation is ‘to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area’. All public bodies have a legal duty to ‘have regard’ to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of an AONB.

What is natural beauty?

The term ‘natural beauty’ is enshrined in the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. Legislation has made it clear that natural beauty is not just the look of the landscape since, but includes the landform and geology, the plants and animals, the landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries. In 2006 legislation clarified that land is not prevented from being treated as of natural beauty by the fact that it is used for agriculture, woodlands or as a park; or because its physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape.
What is the Chilterns AONB Management Plan?

The Chilterns AONB Management Plan sets out the vision, policies and actions for the management of the Chilterns AONB for the period 2019–2024, and describes how best to conserve, enhance and enjoy the Chilterns. Its creation is led by the Chilterns Conservation Board and it is the only plan which guides the management of the AONB as a whole. It will influence key policies, plans and processes affecting the area, including development plans, neighbourhood development plans, transport plans and green infrastructure strategies.

This Management Plan is a legal requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 20005.

Who is responsible for preparing the Chilterns AONB Management Plan?

The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) is responsible for preparing and publishing the AONB Management Plan for the AONB6. Following consultation with local communities, public bodies, partners and agencies with an interest in the area, the Management Plan is adopted by the CCB. The Board promotes its implementation by a wide range of organisations, including local authorities, community groups and land managers.

Who is the Chilterns AONB Management Plan for?

This Management Plan helps all those with a responsibility for the AONB care for it, for current and future generations. The plan provides guidance and policies for everyone with an interest in, or responsibility for, the AONB. That includes all those organisations and individuals who manage or have an influence over land in the area, as well as those who live, work and enjoy leisure time there.

Global and National Context of the Chilterns AONB

AONBs are part of the global network of protected landscapes. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources has six management categories covering all types of protected areas. Our AONBs and National Parks fall into Category V – landscapes managed mainly for conservation and recreation.

- The Chilterns AONB is one of 46 AONBs covering just under one fifth of the UK
- AONBs are living, working landscapes that contribute more than £16bn every year to the national economy
- Over two thirds of England’s population live within half an hour’s drive of an AONB
- Approximately 150 million people visit the English AONBs every year, spending in excess of £2bn7

The CCB is an active member of the National Association for AONBs and through this works with other AONBs across the country8.

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5 Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
6 What Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty can offer the LEPs, National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 2017
7 For more information: Web: www.landscapesforlife.org.uk Twitter: @naaonb @AONBFamily
INTRODUCTION

The Chilterns Conservation Board

The CCB was established by Parliamentary Order in 2004. It is one of only two conservation boards (the other is for the Cotswolds) set up so far under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 20009. The CCB is an independent statutory body and has two statutory purposes10:

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

In fulfilling these purposes, the CCB has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities. Where there is a conflict between conserving the special qualities of the Chilterns and its use or enjoyment, we must give greater weight to its conservation and enhancement.

About the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB)

There are 27 Board Members; one from each of the 13 local authorities in the AONB, eight appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and six elected by parish and town councils in the AONB. The local authorities who created the CCB are Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, Wycombe District Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council, Chiltern District Council, Three Rivers District Council, Luton Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Dacorum Borough Council and North Herts District Council.

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9 Section 86 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
10 Section 87 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended by the NERC Act 2006
2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHILTERNS

Special Qualities

The Chilterns’ special qualities are considered so important, nationally and internationally, they require protection.

PANORAMIC VIEWS from and across the escarpment interwoven with intimate dipslope valleys and rolling fields.

Nationally important concentrations of CHALK GRASSLAND, extremely DIVERSE IN FLORA AND FAUNA, and home to some SCARCE AND THREATENED SPECIES. Once extensive, the chalk grassland now only covers 1% of the AONB mostly in small fragments. Species for which the AONB is particularly important include Chiltern gentian, wild candytuft, pasque flower, silver-spotted skipper and glow-worm.

SIGNIFICANT ANCESTRAL WOODED LANDSCAPES, including the Chilterns Beech Wood Special Area of Conservation; significant box, juniper and beech yew woods; many veteran trees and relict wood pasture.

Significant ancient hedgerows, hedgerow and field trees, orchards and parkland weaving across FARMLAND THAT COVERS approximately 60% OF THE CHILTERNS.

Relative TRANQUILLITY and peace on the doorstep of TEN MILLION PEOPLE, one of the most accessible protected landscapes in Europe;

relatively dark skies, of great value to human and wildlife health; unspoilt countryside, secret corners and a surprising sense of remoteness.

One of the most WOODED LANDSCAPES IN ENGLAND, with 23% WOODLAND COVER concentrated in the central and southern areas; 56% OF THE WOODLAND is Ancient, a particularly rich, distinctive and prominent feature, including the Chilterns Beech Wood Special Area of Conservation; significant box, juniper and beech yew woods; many veteran trees and relict wood pasture.
A DRAMATIC CHALK ESCARPMENT, a globally rare landscape type which gives rise to rare ecology and distinctive cultural heritage.

NINE PRECIOUS CHALK STREAMS, a globally scarce habitat and home to some of the UK’s most endangered species; associated UK BAP priority species include otter, water vole, reed bunting and brown trout; numerous chalk springs occur along the base of the escarpment.

OVER 2000ha OF COMMON LAND, heaths and greens, RICH IN WILDLIFE and cultural heritage; 3700ha OF OPEN ACCESS LAND.

DISTINCTIVE BUILDINGS made from local brick, flint and clay tiles; many ATTRACTIVE VILLAGES, popular places to live in and visit; many notable individual buildings and follies including STATELY HOMES, MONUMENTS and MAUSOLEUMS; a wealth of MEDIEVAL CHURCHES, many built from flint.

An INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE around wood-working, furniture making, chalk quarrying, brick making, and food production with windmills and watercress beds.

An extensive and diverse ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE, including ancient parish boundaries, medieval field patterns and IRON AGE HILLFORTS; extensive remnants of woodland heritage including sawpits, charcoal hearths and wood banks.

A dense network of 2000km of rights of way; two NATIONAL TRAILS, the Ridgeway and Thames Path; notable regional routes such as the CHILTERN WAY and the CHILTERN CYCLEWAY.

Numerous ANCIENT ROUTEWAYS and SUNKEN LANES including the Icknield Way, considered by many to be the oldest road in Britain.
Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a tool to help understand what the landscape is like today, how it has come to be like that and how it may change in the future. LCA documents identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas.

There is no single LCA for the Chilterns AONB. A number of county and district-based LCAs cover the whole of the AONB. These have been undertaken using similar (but not identical) specifications.

These give us the following four broad types of landscape in the Chilterns:

**Scarp Foothills and Vale Fringes**
Gently undulating chalk slopes with chalk springs between the base of the scarp and the clay vale to the west. Mainly managed within intensive agriculture with large fields and relatively few hedgerows, this landscape forms a narrow band only a few fields wide, towards the north of the AONB, but widens as it approaches the Thames in the south.

**Chalk Scarp**
The ‘spine’ of the Chilterns is the chalk scarp that runs roughly north-east to south-west along the western side of the AONB. A spectacular ridge rises high above the vale to the west and dominates views over a wide area.

Combes and prominent hills, often locations for chalk figures, monuments, burial mounds or hillforts, form a deeply convoluted steep scarp edge which supports a mosaic of chalk grassland, woodland and scrub.

**River Valleys**
The Chilterns contains a series of larger river valleys that cut through the scarp and dipslope. Arterial valleys run north west to south east and, create dramatic ‘wind gaps’ where they cut through the scarp, as at Tring and Wendover.

Often asymmetrical in shape these valleys contain the internationally rare, aquifer-fed chalk streams. As natural corridors through the Chiltern Hills, there is a long history of travel from ancient drovers routes, turnpikes and canals to modern day road and rail links. A number of large historic houses presiding over estates and parkland, are scattered throughout the valleys while settlements have grown up associated with the water supply, woodland industry, farming trade and transport links to London.
Plateau and Dipslope

A large proportion of the AONB is covered by plateau and dipslope as the land gradually falls away to the east and Greater London. Though less visible and striking than the scarp, this landscape forms a key part of the classic Chilterns landscape.

The topography is complex, with areas of plateau dissected by long, narrow, often dry valleys. Extensive woodlands and arable fields interspersed with commons, villages, scattered farmsteads (often dating from medieval times) and designed parklands characterise the plateau. Commons, heaths and greens would once have been far more extensive. Many Chilterns commons are wooded or former wood pasture, with areas of heathland, acid grassland, ponds and other open habitats. Grazed fields can still be found on the steeper valley sides and valley bottoms where settlements often formed around water sources or stretched out along the valley roads.

There is a more detailed description in two separate documents Landscape Character and Chronology available on the AONB website: www.chilternsaonb.org/landscape-character-and-chronology-of-the-chilterns
Timeline of the Chilterns

125,000 BC Paleolithic
Nationally notable finds of flint tools – evidence of Neanderthal hunter-gatherers in the Chilterns.

10,000 BC Mesolithic
Permanent occupation began after the last ice age, when vegetation returned as the ice sheets shrank.

4000 BC Neolithic
Woodland clearance for arable farming and keeping of domestic animals began. The burial mound, Whiteleaf long barrow, dates from this time.

2500 BC Bronze Age
Semi-nomadic farming gave way to permanent settlements. Increased use of metal tools and weapons.

800 BC Iron Age
Hillforts and linear earthworks date from around this time, including Grim’s Ditch whose function remains an unanswered puzzle.

AD 43 Roman
Roman occupation evident in remains of villas, iron works and pottery kilns.

Geology of the Chilterns Countryside

- Clay-with-flints
- Seaford (Upper) Chalk
- Nodular (Middle) Chalk
- Marly (Lower) Chalk
- Gault Clay & Greensand
AD 410 Late Antiquity & Saxon
Settlements extended up the scarp to become strip parishes, each having a share of lowland arable, upland pasture and hilltop woodland.

AD 1066 Medieval period
The hilly landscape led to a patchwork of small fields and woodlands separated by hedges and earth banks. Wood became valuable as a fuel for brick and tile making.

AD 1485 Tudors to Elizabethans
Political stability enabled farming to prosper; food and fuel supplied to growing London. Piecemeal enclosure saw open fields gradually disappear, leading to the intimate landscape character.

AD 1603 Stuarts to Victorians
Arable farming dominated as metropolitan demand increased. Early maps show the extent of woodland, considered ‘ancient’ if it is pre-1600, with bluebells often a good indicator.

AD 1837 Victorian
Turnpike roads, canals and railways brought population growth and new access to markets.

AD 1870 Late Victorian
Mills for flour, cloth and paper multiplied on the rivers. Chair making marked the start of the furniture industry of High Wycombe.

AD 1900 Twentieth Century
Chalk pits, such as at Chinnor, quarried for cement, lime and mortar, which were transported on their own railway. Charles Rothschild identified wildlife sites needing preservation – the forerunner of the Wildlife Trust.

AD 1949 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
Legal protection was given for the best wildlife and geological sites in England.

AD 1950-60 Post-war agricultural intensification
Some landscape features lost, including hedgerows and habitats; decline of land-based employment, skills and crafts followed.

AD 1965 Designation of the Chilterns AONB
Recognition of the importance of landscape and wildlife resulted in the creation of the Chilterns AONB.

AD 1967 M40
The new M40 cut through the Central Chilterns and led to a rapid increase in housing, transport and noise.


AD 2011 to present
Rapid growth increasing pressure on the protected landscape, along with new environmental awareness, new technology, and new people keen to explore, learn and protect the countryside.
Almost 60% of the woodland in the Chilterns is ancient, dating back 400 years.
3. THE STATE OF THE CHILTERNs

The Chilterns AONB faces unprecedented pressure. From housing and transport infrastructure to climate change, there are many impacts on the natural beauty and special qualities of the Chilterns.

This section provides a snapshot of the state of the Chilterns and summarises key issues affecting the AONB. Tackling these issues requires action at many levels, from local to national and international. This Management Plan outlines what is needed and creates an agenda for action.

Headline Indicators

1. Environmental Land Management (scheme coverage and take up)

35% (17,956 ha) of the farmland of the AONB is in Environmental Stewardship (ES). This puts the Chilterns in the bottom 10% of all AONBs in England for ES take up. ES provides funding to farmers and other land managers to deliver environmental management on their land. Take up has fallen from a high of over 30,000ha in 2014. The figures do not yet include take up of the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme that began in 2016.

2. Woodland Management

64% of the woodland in the AONB is in active management. This puts the Chilterns in the top 40% of all AONBs in England for woodland management. Woodland management is important to create the conditions in which wildlife can thrive.

3. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

There are 64 SSSIs in the AONB, totalling 3,213ha. Of this, 98.8% is assessed as in favourable or ‘unfavourable recovering’ condition. Of the 997ha in unfavourable recovering condition, over 70% is calcareous or neutral grassland.

Ash dieback is likely to have a devastating effect on the landscape; squirrels, deer and Glis glis (edible dormouse) ensure very few young trees survive and the chalk aquifer, which we use for drinking water, is at an all-time low.
4. Priority Habitat Extent and Condition

Natural England mapping shows 15,927ha of priority habitat in the Chilterns AONB (see table and map below). These figures do not include linear priority habitats such as the rivers, hedgerows and arable field margins. Many of the priority habitats in the Chilterns, as elsewhere, are likely to be under recorded due to the small and scattered nature of the parcels. Datasets on condition are currently only available for priority habitat within SSSIs and/or Higher-Level Stewardship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority habitat</th>
<th>Area (hectares)</th>
<th>% of priority habitat in the Chilterns AONB</th>
<th>% of priority habitat across all AONBs in England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deciduous woodland</td>
<td>14,046</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowland calcareous grassland</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowland heathland</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional orchard</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowland meadows</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floodplain grazing marsh</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowland dry acid grassland</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowland fen</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple moor grass and rush pastures</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15,927</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other includes:
- Good quality semi-improved grassland
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland meadows
- Floodplain grazing marsh

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**Habitats of principal importance under section 41 of the Natural Resources and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) are referred to as Priority Habitats. © Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2017**
5. Chalk Streams
There are nine chalk streams in the AONB. None are currently assessed as achieving good ecological status or potential\(^\text{18}\). Of the nine, two are assessed as in bad condition, four in poor condition and five in moderate condition. This indicates a decline since the 2009 assessment, in line with the national trend. The issues behind the poor and declining state of these rivers are numerous and complex and include impacts of pollution, development, channel modification, invasive species, abstraction, droughts and climate change.

6. Historic Environment
The condition of most designated heritage assets in the Chilterns has remained largely stable over the past decade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage Asset type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Number at risk(^\text{19})</th>
<th>% at risk</th>
<th>Average % at risk across AONBs in England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listed building (Grade I)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed building (Grade II*)</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed building (Grade II)</td>
<td>2026</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Monument</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Parks and Garden</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the vast majority of known archaeological sites are neither scheduled nor protected and there are significant gaps in our knowledge, particularly in the wooded areas of the Chilterns.

7. Health Walks
The Chilterns has some of the most popular health walks programmes of any protected landscape in the country. There has been a 45% increase in health walk footfall in the last five years, with 64,000 health walk attendances in 2016–2017 across the AONB.

8. Visits to Countryside Sites
Visitor numbers to formal countryside attractions have increased over recent years, in some cases substantially. For example, Wendover Woods saw a 13% increase in visitors (2013–2017) and College Lake saw a 16% increase (2013–2016).

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\(^{18}\)www.environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/
\(^{19}\)At risk figures Oct 2016 data Historic England
Forces for Change

The following is a summary of the main forces for change relevant to the Chilterns landscape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Key Issues</th>
<th>Predicted Trends and Impacts without Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Biodiversity**                           | ♦ Decline in traditional land management (e.g. mixed farming, crop rotation, grazing, woodland management, orchards, watercress beds and exercise of common rights)  
♦ Change of land use including increase in area of land used primarily for recreation (e.g. golf, liveries, and new businesses such as paintballing)  
♦ Impacts of housing and infrastructure development  
♦ Declines in diversity within habitats  
♦ Nutrition  
♦ Impacts of systemic pesticides  
♦ Impacts of non-native invasive pests and diseases  
♦ Climate change, increasing climatic variation  
♦ Visitor impacts on sensitive sites and habitats, especially along the escarpment  
♦ Unprotected sites  
♦ Habitat fragmentation | ♦ Declines in abundance and range of flora and fora  
♦ Reductions in habitat connectivity and resilience  
♦ Increasing impacts of pests and diseases  
♦ Loss of species diversity within semi-natural habitats, including ancient woodlands and chalk grassland  
♦ Loss of hedgerow trees particularly ash  
♦ Scrubbing up of grassland sites  
♦ Declines in characteristic species and habitats |
| **Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage** | ♦ Development pressures  
♦ Changes in land management  
♦ Unprotected sites and landscapes; site specific focus of designation  
♦ Heritage of the Chilterns less recognised and understood than other protected landscapes  
♦ Limited resources | ♦ Loss of historic landscape character  
♦ Decline in condition of wider setting of monuments  
♦ Condition of designated assets largely stable but a few at risk  
♦ Increased archaeological understanding through housing and infrastructure development  
♦ Initiatives developed in isolation |
| **Land**                                   | ♦ Changes in land management practices  
♦ Global markets contributing to demise of local industry, for example furniture making  
♦ Growing markets in wood fuel and local products  
♦ Low take up and reduced resourcing of environmental schemes (e.g. Countryside Stewardship)  
♦ Brexit – opportunities for influence and change alongside uncertainty for land managers and farmers  
♦ Impact on rural workers of high cost of housing  
♦ Fewer people employed in land management  
♦ Subdivision of woodlands into small plots | ♦ Less commercial need to manage landscape features, such as hedgerows and trees; loss of historic field patterns  
♦ Declines in soil health  
♦ Sheep grazing of chalk grassland is currently uneconomic leading to declining biodiversity  
♦ Under managed woodlands  
♦ Decreasing number of holdings, increase in larger holding, more contractors, land sold off for amenity, changes in area of land farmed  
♦ Farm diversification resulting from growth in marketing of local products and tourism |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Key Issues</th>
<th>Predicted Trends and Impacts without Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Water                         | ● Environmentally unsustainable levels of abstraction from chalk aquifer leading to chronic low flows and shortening of river habitats  
                               ● Abstraction for River Thames at level of no more capacity  
                               ● High levels of water usage  
                               ● Modifications to water courses  
                               ● Poor ecological condition of chalk streams  
                               ● Pollution, diffuse and non-diffuse  
                               ● Non-native invasive pests and diseases  
                               ● Impact of climate change   | ↓ Water quality decline  
                               ↓ Further degradation of chalk streams, streams and rivers running dry  
                               ↓ Failure to reach required Water Framework Directive status  
                               ↓ Loss of key landscape features  
                               ↓ Impact on ecology and loss of associated wildlife |
| Settlement and Development    | ● Highly desirable area, commutable to London  
                               ● Unprecedented housing and infrastructure growth within and in setting of the AONB  
                               ● Construction of HS2  
                               ● Airport expansion and increased over-flying  
                               ● Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor  
                               ● Creeping suburbanisation and gentrification  
                               ● Lack of affordable housing | ↓ Erosion of character  
                               ↓ Increased noise, air/light pollution  
                               ↓ Habitat severance, degradation/loss  
                               ↓ Less enjoyable to visit  
                               ↓ New building designs not locally distinctive  
                               ↓ Housing even less affordable for local community |
| Social                        | ● Population in and around the Chilterns is increasing rapidly  
                               ● Some large urban populations on the edge of the Chilterns with relatively high incidence of health issues compared to the AONB; this provides major opportunities for enhancing health and wellbeing through outdoor activity  
                               ● Public understanding of the benefits provided by the Chilterns is low  
                               ● Low levels of engagement with some audiences (e.g. urban young people, Black and ethnic minority communities)  
                               ● Declining public sector funding | ↑ Gradually increasing profile for the area and the opportunities it presents to increase health and wellbeing  
                               ↑ Increased number of visitors  
                               ↑ Risk of negative impacts of additional visitors to sensitive habitats and sites  
                               ↑ Risk of anti-social behaviour (e.g. fly tipping, vandalism, wildlife crime)  
                               ↓ Continued lack of engagement with under-represented audiences  
                               ↓ Gradual decline in maintenance of rights of way and countryside access infrastructure unless public funding is maintained or new funding secured |
Caring for the Chilterns forever & for everyone
To achieve this vision, the CCB advocates that:

1. All special qualities and natural resources of the Chilterns will be protected forever for everyone, current and future generations.

2. The wildlife and natural beauty of the Chilterns have an intrinsic value that will be preserved and restored.

3. The landscape is designated for the nation and will be protected by the nation.

4. To ensure its future care, more people need to understand the value of the Chilterns as a unique and special landscape, of national and international significance.

5. The Chilterns provides a valuable resource for the enjoyment, health and wellbeing of a significant proportion of the country’s population.

6. The landscape is a place where many people live and work, where community facilities must be retained to foster sustainable, vibrant communities.

7. Viable, sustainable and diverse farming, forestry and rural economy sectors are essential to conserve and enhance the wildlife and natural beauty of the Chilterns, and public benefits of land management are supported by public funding.

8. As one of the most accessible protected landscapes in Europe, more people should use the Chilterns for quiet recreation, especially the 1.6 million people who live within 8km of the boundary and the adjacent urban populations, with carefully managed access to ensure the special qualities are protected.

9. Those who live in or near, make a living from, visit and love the Chilterns are encouraged to help care for it.

10. Given the Chilterns is already more developed than most protected landscapes and given the potential benefit of the landscape to millions, there should be no major development in the AONB; only the most essential development should take place and where it takes place, there should be no adverse impact on landscape, special qualities or access, and it should deliver an environmental net gain.
Securing the Chilterns for Future Generations

The government aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first.\textsuperscript{20}

In particular, this Management Plan contributes to what the Environment Plan describes as a "once-in-a lifetime chance to reform our agriculture and fisheries management, how we restore nature, and how we care for our land, our rivers and our seas." It also contributes to the achievement of the aim to "set gold standards in protecting and growing natural capital". And it endorses the overarching principle described by the Secretary of State that "Respecting nature’s intrinsic value, and the value of all life, is critical to our mission."

General Policies

To achieve the above, we have set out four general policies across three key areas, to help conserve and enhance the Chilterns.

**National Park Status and Boundary Review**

National Parks are extensive tracts of country designated because of their natural beauty and the opportunities they afford for open-air recreation.\textsuperscript{21} The Chilterns meets both criteria.

National Park status could help raise the Chilterns’ profile as a landscape of national (even international) significance, which the CCB is unable to do alone.

**General Policy 1**

Explore the case for and against the Chilterns having enhanced status or being designated a National Park.

An application was made in 2013 to Natural England to consider adding areas of the chalk landscape that were missed from the Chilterns AONB designation. This application is still pending.

**General Policy 2**

Review the boundary of the protected area to cover the wider area of the Chilterns landscape that merits it.

**A Renewed Approach to Partnership Working**

There are a significant number of organisations that are dedicated to caring for the Chilterns and in their feedback on the Plan, key partners and stakeholders stated that there is a need for a strong strategic partnership across the Chilterns. Collaborative working with local organisations, local authorities, charities and government agencies on delivery of the Management Plan will ensure more is achieved and there is a consistent approach to the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns. Cross-cutting subjects, such as health and wellbeing initiatives, have been identified as a top priority.

**General Policy 3**

Establish a strong partnership to deliver the Chilterns AONB Management Plan working together in the best interests of the area, its environment, communities, economy and visitors.
The Chiltern Society

The Chiltern Society is the largest charity operating across all the Chilterns. It has 7000 members and over 500 volunteers working on 20 conservation sites, rights of ways maintenance, planning campaigning, chalk stream monitoring, and heritage sites. Pictured here are volunteers maintaining Whiteleaf Cross, a significant heritage site near Princes Risborough.

“The suite of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty designated since the 1949 Act has been among the outstanding environmental achievements of the past 100 years.”

Defra 25 Year Environment Plan
Benefitting People and Nature – an Ecosystems Approach

A healthy natural environment underpins the health and wellbeing of society and the economy. The natural resources – or ‘Natural Capital’ – of the Chilterns includes its trees and woodland, chalk streams, aquifer and other water bodies, farmland and grassland, soils, landscape and cultural assets. The benefits or services that we get from these natural resources are known as Ecosystems Services. Ecosystems Services can be broken down into four types:

**PROVISIONING SERVICES**
The products obtained from nature

- Biomass energy
- Food provision
- Genetic diversity
- Fibre provision
- Water availability

**REGULATING SERVICES**
The benefits obtained from the regulation of natural processes

- Pollination & regulating air quality
- Regulating climate & carbon storage
- Regulating soil erosion & quality
- Regulating water flow, flooding & water quality
- Regulating disease & pests

**CULTURAL SERVICES**
The non-material benefits people obtain from nature

- Health & wellbeing
- Recreation & tourism
- Sense of history & cultural heritage
- Sense of place & inspiration
- Tranquillity
- Scientific & education values

**SUPPORTING SERVICES**
The services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services

- Biodiversity & geodiversity
- Nutrient cycling
- Primary production such as photosynthesis
- Soil formation
- Water cycling


The AONB can support the wider ecological network of surrounding areas so that they can all become more resilient. Examples of Ecosystem Services provided by the Chilterns include:

- Flint and timber for construction
- Wood for fuel
- Natural flood defences from woodland and grassland
- Pollination by insects
- Carbon storage by woodland and soil
- Chalk aquifer for water supply
- Cultural benefits from a health and recreational perspective
- Locally distinctive food like cheese and beer

The Management Plan aims to use this natural capital provided by the Chilterns more sustainably, to enhance the AONB and contribute to the delivery of the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan.

Climate change is expected to have a major but unpredictable influence on the natural beauty and natural capital of the Chilterns. It is likely that the long-term changes will alter the species composition of woodlands and the type of crops grown by farmers leading to alteration to the landscape.

The Chilterns can make a significant contribution to helping mitigate climate change in ways that are compatible with conserving and enhancing its natural beauty. These include: carbon capture and storage in Chilterns woodlands and soils, storage and provision of water from the chalk aquifer, resilient ecological networks to allow species movement in response to climate change, local food and wood products, and the Chilterns as ‘staycation’ destination. As the climate changes and people try to reduce their carbon footprint, more people may decide to holiday in the UK rather than to go abroad, making the Chilterns even more valuable in a national context as sustainable alternative for short and long visits, an outstanding landscape accessible by public transport and on the doorstep of millions in the south east.

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General Policy 4

Support projects and proposals that have a positive impact on the ability of the Chilterns to contribute sustainable Ecosystem Services by:

- Sustainably managing land and water environments
- Protecting and providing more, better and joined up natural habitats across the AONB and with adjacent areas, enhancing networks through the landscape
- Protecting and conserving water resources and improving water quality
- Improving the Chilterns’ resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change
- Increasing the ability to store carbon through new tree planting, wetland restoration or other means
- Conserving and improving soil structure and quality
- Reducing litter and environmental pollution, especially air pollution
- Managing and mitigating the risk of flooding
- Supporting the sustainable production and local use of food, forestry and raw materials
- Improving opportunities for peoples’ health and wellbeing, including provision of high-quality green infrastructure close to where people live
- Stimulating sustainable tourism and economic activity
- Delivering high-quality sustainable design that protects the local distinctiveness of the Chilterns
- Managing or controlling non-native invasive species

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22The Government, A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, HMSO, 2018