

Section 6

Implementation and monitoring



*Harvest near West Wycombe
(Bryan Edgley)*

Implementation

1. This plan sets out an ambitious vision for the Chilterns which could be realised by the application of the policies proposed by the Chilterns Conservation Board and many others, especially those able to manage and influence land use change and development. Many actions are proposed and they too will require the direction of resources from many organisations, businesses and individuals as they are beyond the direct resources available to the Conservation Board.
2. The Board will contribute by directing its own resources including Board members, staff, expertise and funds. It will provide leadership in its role as a champion for the AONB. There are many others with skills and resources and the Board will endeavour to co-ordinate their activity and encourage collaboration.
3. The owners and managers of land and the communities of the Chilterns are the most important players in conserving and enhancing natural beauty. There is a long history of local people caring for the Chilterns who volunteer in large numbers often with organisations such as the Chiltern Society, the National Trust, local authorities and wildlife trusts. The Conservation Board is also fortunate to be able to call on many skilled and enthusiastic volunteers to help with its work and, in particular, to work with the public.

4. There are many other public bodies which aim to care for the environment, several of which have considerable resources and legal powers. The Board aims to work with them all and to seek their support for the aims of this Plan for the Chilterns. Many of these bodies are subject to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Section 4 which states:

General duty of public bodies etc:

85. -

(1) In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.

(2) The following are relevant authorities for the purpose of this section-

- (a) any Minister of the Crown,
- (b) any public body,
- (c) any statutory undertaker,
- (d) any person holding public office.

(3) In subsection (2)-

“public body” includes -

- (a) a county council, county borough council, district council, parish council or community council;
- (b) a joint planning board within the meaning of section 2 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990;
- (c) a joint committee appointed under section 102(1)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972;

“public office” means -

- (a) an office under Her Majesty;
- (b) an office created or continued in existence by a public general Act; or
- (c) an office the remuneration in respect of which is paid out of money provided by Parliament.

5. Grant schemes including Environment Stewardship managed by Natural England, the England Woodland Grant Scheme offered by the Forestry Commission and the LEADER programme for the Chilterns have in previous years provided considerable incentives for environmentally sensitive management. With these schemes under review as part of Common Agricultural Policy reform it is unclear exactly what form successor schemes will take, however the availability or otherwise of such grants is likely to have an important influence on future land management decisions. All three funds are supported by the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) which is provided with funding by the EU and UK government.

6. This Plan is specific to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is a requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 that it is produced and published by the Conservation Board. There are many other plans which are a statutory responsibility on a wide range of organisations. It is important that they are consistent insofar as they also support the aims of this Plan. Such plans include Local Development Frameworks and Local Plans produced by local planning authorities, Local Transport Plans produced by highway authorities, Neighbourhood Development Plans produced by local communities and Sustainable Community Strategies produced by Local Strategic Partnerships.

Business Plan

7. The Conservation Board publishes an annual business plan with budget and work programme. All its activities are directed to delivering the aims of this Plan and to encouraging others to do so. The Board’s operating costs are largely met from grant aid provided by Defra and the local authorities in which the AONB lies. The Board aims to attract additional funding for special projects,

many of which are outlined in this Plan as actions. There is considerable competition for funds from, for example, sponsors, the Lottery and the EU, and it is difficult to predict from one year to the next how successful those bids will be.

8. The Conservation Board realises fully the value of skilled and hard working volunteers and will be helping to develop the volunteering resource in the Chilterns. The value of this support is hard to estimate and often does not appear in financial statements but it is worth tens, even hundreds, of thousands of pounds every year.

Monitoring

9. The overriding aim of this plan and the Conservation Board is to conserve, and where possible enhance, the natural beauty of the Chilterns. It also aims to enhance the levels of understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. Monitoring the effectiveness of the plan with its aims, policies and actions requires a baseline on the condition of the Chilterns against which progress can be monitored.
10. In the 2008 – 2013 Management Plan a commitment was made to develop a baseline on the condition of the Chilterns against which progress could be monitored. In 2009 the first State of the Chilterns Environment Report was published, providing baseline reporting across 20 condition monitoring indicators. Annual updates have been published ever since.
11. Ideally for each key attribute of the Chilterns an indicator would be identified and information gathered on a regular basis to enable its condition to be assessed. The reality is that some characteristics and features change in time and indicators should be reviewed to reflect this.
12. The State of the Chilterns Environment Report is produced using best available

data – in some cases drawing on national data sets such as agri-environment scheme data, in other cases based on local survey. That such a baseline has been produced is thanks to the co-operation and assistance of many organisations and individuals who have provided data and helped to interpret it. Inevitably the quality and quantity of data is variable, and financial constraints are having an impact with less funding available for monitoring in recent years.

13. Nonetheless, the State of the Environment reporting has produced a useful baseline which will prove increasingly meaningful as trends emerge.

Headline condition indicators for 2014-2019

The majority have been carried over from the previous plan; others are new because of changes in available data. Indicators used will be reviewed on an annual basis and will continue to be refined and adapted as appropriate.

Landscape and Biodiversity

1. Environmental Land Management Schemes – take up and coverage of current and future agri-environment and woodland grant scheme options
2. a) Sites of Special Scientific Interest – area in favourable condition
b) Priority habitat – extent, area in favourable condition and area of habitat creation / restoration
3. Local sites – percentage in positive conservation management
4. Commons – percentage in positive conservation management
5. Livestock numbers and numbers of conservation grazing herds/ flocks
6. Species – population trends for key species

7. Chalk streams –
 - a) Water Framework Directive status
 - b) River Fly monitoring trend data as an indicator of chalk stream quality.
8. Hedges – length in good condition using DEFRA condition criteria
9. Equestrian land use – area of land managed for equestrian purposes

Historic Environment

10. Listed buildings (Grade 1 /11*) – total number/ number at risk
11. Registered Historic Parks and Gardens – total number/ number at risk
12. Scheduled Monuments – total number/ number at risk
13. Conservation Areas – total number/ number at risk

Social and Economic

14. Community facilities:
 - a) Loss of recognised community facilities e.g. pubs
 - b) Number of farm shops and farmers' markets
15. Number of members of Chilterns Tourism Network

Understanding and Enjoyment

16. Participation in health walks
17. Area of open access land
18. Visitor satisfaction on rights of way and use of the countryside

Development

19. Number of appropriately designed and sustainably constructed affordable rural needs houses provided
20. Length of overhead power lines put underground

Cricket at Greys Green near Henley (Clive Ormonde)

