



Keeping the Chilterns Special

An introduction to the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019



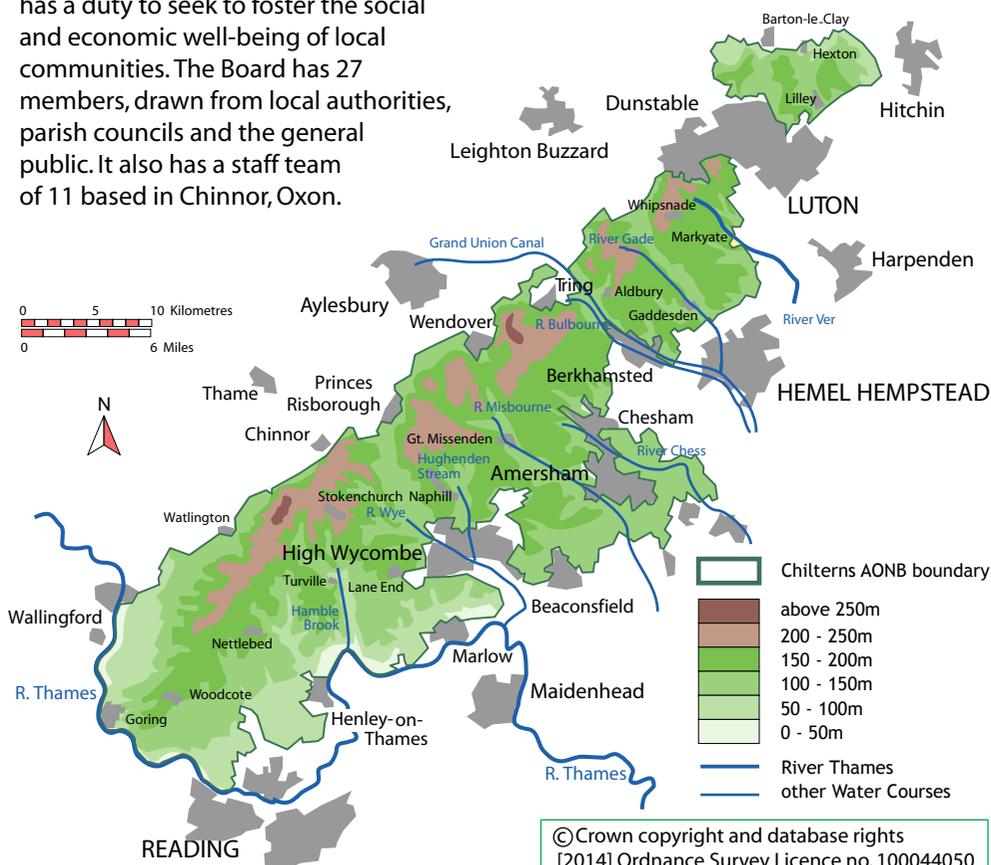
An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1965 and covers 833 square kilometres. It is one of 46 AONBs in the UK which, together with National Parks, are nationally-protected as the finest landscapes in the country.

The Chilterns Conservation Board was established by Parliamentary Order in 2004. It has two statutory purposes:

- ▶ To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns; and
- ▶ To increase the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.

In fulfilling these purposes, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities. The Board has 27 members, drawn from local authorities, parish councils and the general public. It also has a staff team of 11 based in Chinnor, Oxon.



Introduction to the Management Plan

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) places a duty on all local authorities which include an AONB, and Conservation Boards, where they exist, to produce a plan for the management of the AONB. These plans must be reviewed every five years. The Chilterns AONB Management Plan was reviewed in 2013 and the new Plan runs from 2014 – 2019.

The Chilterns Conservation Board has produced the new Plan in consultation with a wide range of local authorities, organisations, communities and individuals. The broad aims, policies and actions in the Plan are therefore a collective expression of the wishes and interests of many people and bodies with an interest in the future of the Chilterns.

The main part of the Plan is divided into a number of sections which reflect the statutory purposes of the Board:

- 1.** Conserving and enhancing natural beauty, further divided into:
 - Landscape
 - Farming, forestry and other land management
 - Biodiversity
 - Water environment
 - Historic environment
 - Development
- 2.** Understanding and enjoyment
- 3.** Social and economic well-being

Who is the Plan for?

All those bodies which have a statutory 'duty of regard' for the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns AONB must reflect the aims and policies of the Management Plan in their own functions and operations. These include local authorities, government agencies, other public bodies and utility companies.

As importantly, this is a plan for everyone who cares for and manages the Chilterns AONB and for those who live, work or play in it. We are all stewards of this beautiful countryside and must play our part in keeping it special.

Ivinghoe Beacon



The Management Plan is based on a vision for the Chilterns AONB in which:

Its special and unique character is conserved, cared for and cherished for future generations to enjoy.

The importance of taking a landscape-wide approach to its management is accepted, which combines an understanding of its natural, historical, cultural, social and economic characteristics.

The setting of the Chilterns is valued and protected by ensuring development adjacent to the AONB also respects its national importance.

The historic and cultural environment of the Chilterns is conserved and appreciated widely.

Opportunities to expand, enhance and enjoy natural beauty are created and taken.

Local people and visitors can easily appreciate and enjoy its special qualities.



Aston Rowant Nature Reserve

Those who live, work, visit and enjoy the area also want to be its custodians and stewards.

The knowledge, skills and resources needed to manage the AONB as a nationally important landscape are readily available.

The potentially adverse impacts of pests, diseases and climate change are avoided or minimised.

The health and well-being of local people and visitors is enhanced by their enjoyment of the area.

The potential of a high quality natural environment to provide a high quality living environment for local communities and businesses is realised.

There is a thriving market for environmentally-sustainable local produce which contributes to the viability of land management and enterprises.



Ashridge near Berkhamsted



The special qualities of the Chilterns AONB

These are some of the special features that the Management Plan aims to conserve and enhance:

The Chilterns AONB was designated for the natural beauty of its landscape. In this sense, the term 'natural beauty' refers not only to the scenic beauty of its countryside but to the other elements which together create the special character of the Chilterns, including its wildlife, history and cultural heritage.

The AONB contains a rich mosaic of chalk escarpment, woodlands, commons, tranquil valleys, ancient routes, chalk streams, attractive villages, flower-rich downland, fine houses and prehistoric features.

63 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, three National Nature Reserves and three European-designated Special Areas of Conservation demonstrate the area's importance for wildlife.

Nearly 22% of the AONB is covered in woodland and it also has a nationally-important concentration of chalk grassland.

With over 55 million leisure visits a year the Chilterns is one of the most popular landscapes in the UK.

The area is rich in history with 113 Scheduled Monuments and 19 registered parks and gardens.

Pressures on the Chilterns

Some of the current issues the Management Plan considers include:



Fingest Valley

Development:

- ▶ National policies to promote growth and development could lead to urbanisation, loss of tranquillity and natural beauty in the AONB if planning authorities are not vigilant.
- ▶ Current proposals for the High Speed 2 rail line will have a severe impact on the Misbourne Valley if it goes ahead.

▶ **Visitor pressure:** Growing populations in nearby towns could lead to pressures on the AONB that need to be managed.

▶ **Use of water:** Greater development near the AONB could lead to more abstraction of groundwater for domestic use which would affect streams and rivers.

▶ **Changes in farming:** Reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and more frequent extremes of weather such as drought and flooding are affecting farming.

▶ **Changes in forestry:** Declining prices for UK timber has caused some woods to suffer from lack of management but the growing demand for wood fuel has reversed this in places.

▶ **Pests and diseases:** Threats to trees and woods are growing with more diseases arriving and greater numbers of damaging pests such as grey squirrels.



Cholesbury Camp near Wendover



Cross-cutting themes of the Management Plan

A number of important themes, which will have a significant influence on the management of the AONB, cut across all the chapters of the Plan. They are:

Climate change: a changing global climate will affect the Chilterns in the coming decades. We could see changes in woodland tree species and the range of crops grown by farmers and more erratic flows in rivers and streams.

Social inclusion: reaching out to as wide an audience as possible to help them enjoy and care for the Chilterns AONB is essential for its future.

Health and well-being: the value of protected countryside in providing space for exercise and relaxation is increasingly seen in economic and social terms as well as environmental.

Lifelong learning: the natural and cultural features of the Chilterns offer many opportunities for learning at all stages of life.

Ecosystem services: there is a greater emphasis at national level on valuing the services provided by the natural environment such as flood protection, biodiversity, water resources, public health and more.

Environmental sustainability: there is increasing priority on shifting from non-renewable to renewable resources, especially in the field of energy. The AONB can contribute to this, particularly in the production of wood fuel.

How will the Plan be delivered and monitored?

The implementation of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan will require the efforts and resources of many organisations, businesses and individuals as well as those of the Conservation Board. A set of actions that will help deliver the Plan during 2014-2019 are laid out in the Engagement Plan in Section 5 of the Management Plan.

The effectiveness of the Plan will be monitored using a set of headline condition indicators developed for each section. The majority have been carried over from the previous plan and include indicators such as length of hedgerow in good condition and number of Scheduled Monuments at risk. The results of this monitoring are published by the Board in an annual State of the Chilterns Environment report.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

In compliance with EU regulations a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the impacts of the Plan upon the Chilterns AONB was carried out and an Environmental Report was published. A screening report on the impact of the Plan upon the Special Areas of Conservation within the AONB was also prepared. Both of these documents, plus a non-technical summary of the Environmental Report, can be downloaded at: www.chilternsaonb.org/management-plan

Availability of the Plan

The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019, and its supporting documents, can be downloaded as pdf files at www.chilternsaonb.org/management-plan. The Plan is available as a whole or by individual chapters.

There are very limited numbers of printed copies of the Plan. Reference copies are available in the main libraries in the Chilterns area.



Get in touch

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