

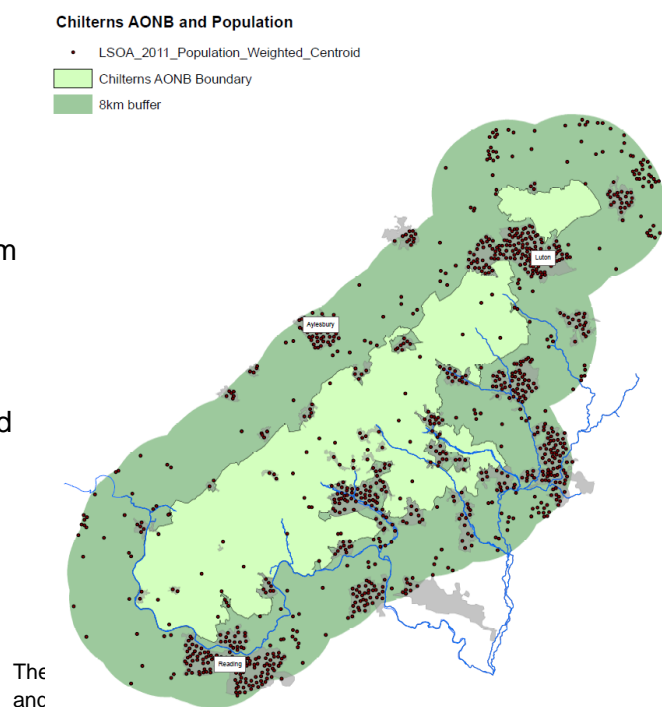
1. The Future of the Chilterns

Vision

Our vision is that the Chilterns will be cared for, forever and for everyone. A place where people can enjoy and be inspired by its distinctive natural beauty, space and tranquillity, we will celebrate and enhance its character and history. There will be more space for nature to flourish; abundant wildlife and a healthy environment will provide us with the ingredients for healthy living. A place where communities can breathe; a haven for nature and recreation.

To achieve this vision, the Chiltern Conservation Board believes we should all recognise:

1. That all the special qualities, and the natural resources, of the Chilterns should be protected forever for everyone.
2. That the wildlife and natural beauty of the Chilterns have an intrinsic value which must be preserved and restored.
3. That the AONB is designated for the nation and must be protected by the nation.
4. That to ensure its future care, more people need to understand the value of the Chilterns as a unique and special place, of national and international significance.
5. That the Chilterns provides a valuable resource for the enjoyment, health and wellbeing of a significant proportion of the country's population.¹
6. That more people should be using the Chilterns for recreation, with the important caveat that access must be managed carefully to ensure the special qualities are protected. The AONB is probably the most accessible protected landscape in Europe, a significant reason for enhanced recognition and conservation.
7. That we should engage the population within and around the Chilterns, especially the 1.6 million people who live within 8km of the boundary and the adjacent urban populations; that those who live in or near, make a living from visit and love the Chilterns are encouraged to help care for it.
8. That, given the Chilterns is already more developed than most protected landscapes, and given the potential benefit of the landscape to millions, that there should be no major development in the AONB. Only the most essential development should take place within the AONB and where it takes place, there should be no adverse impact on landscape,



special qualities or access, and an environmental net gain delivered.

Securing the Chilterns for Future Generations

The Management Plan supports the Government’s wish, expressed in its 25 Year Environment Plan¹⁴, to help the natural world regain and retain good health. 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 first¹.

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.”

To achieve the above, there is a need to pursue four critical ambitions to secure the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns. These are set out below as four General Policies and the Conservation Board is seeking views on them through consultation on the Management Plan.

1. National Park Status and Boundary Review

There are calls for the Chilterns to be a National Park. National parks are extensive tracts of country designated because of their natural beauty and the opportunities they afford for open-air recreation, having regard both to their character and to their position in relation to centres of population².

Before considering an area as a National Park, there are two tests. The Chilterns already meets the natural beauty test. The second test is the main reason for seeking National Park status – the area is close to very large population centres and the nearby population will grow significantly in the coming decades. There is great need to raise the profile of the Chilterns as a landscape of national, even international, significance. Though the Conservation Board gives a voice to the Chilterns, it does not have the authority and resources it needs to deliver the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Chilterns and promote public enjoyment.

GP1	We will fully explore the case for and against the Chilterns becoming a National Park to provide a single strategic authority, with higher profile and greater powers, to ensure the delivery of this Management Plan’s ambitions.
------------	---

In 2013 we submitted an application to Natural England for a review of the boundary of the Chilterns AONB to consider adding areas of the chalk landscape that were missed from the

¹ The Government, A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, HMSO, 2018

² National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949, Section 5(2)

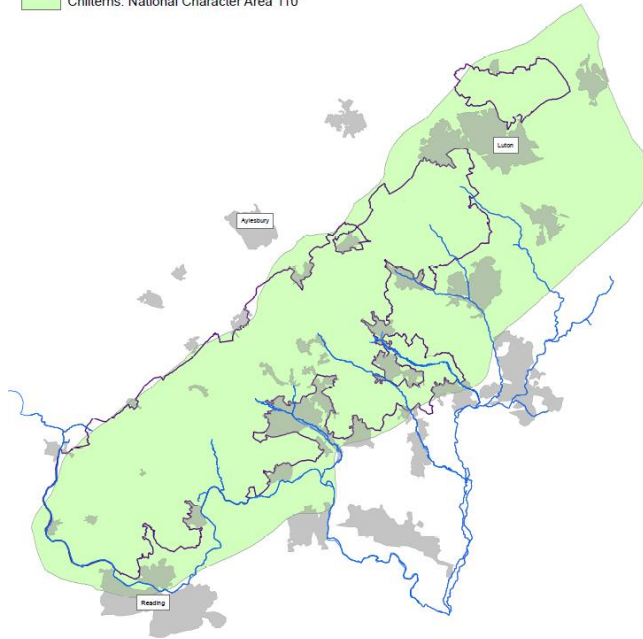
designation. Natural England has limited resources for boundary reviews, so our application is still pending.

GP2 We will work with Natural England to review the boundary of the protected area to cover the wider area of the Chilterns landscape that merits it.

Chilterns AONB and National Character Area

Chilterns AONB Boundary
Chilterns: National Character Area 110

The map identifies the proposed Boundary expansion to the AONB to include areas of missed chalk landscape.



2. A renewed approach to partnership working

There are a significant number of organisations, and individuals within them, who are dedicated to caring for the Chilterns.



Case Study: the Chiltern Society, the largest charity operating across all the Chilterns. It has 7000 members and over 500 volunteers work 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

Whilst preparing for the review of the AONB Management Plan, key partners and stakeholders stated that there is a need for a strong strategic partnership across the Chilterns. This is because collaborative working will ensure more is achieved and that stakeholders will take a consistent approach to the planning, conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns.

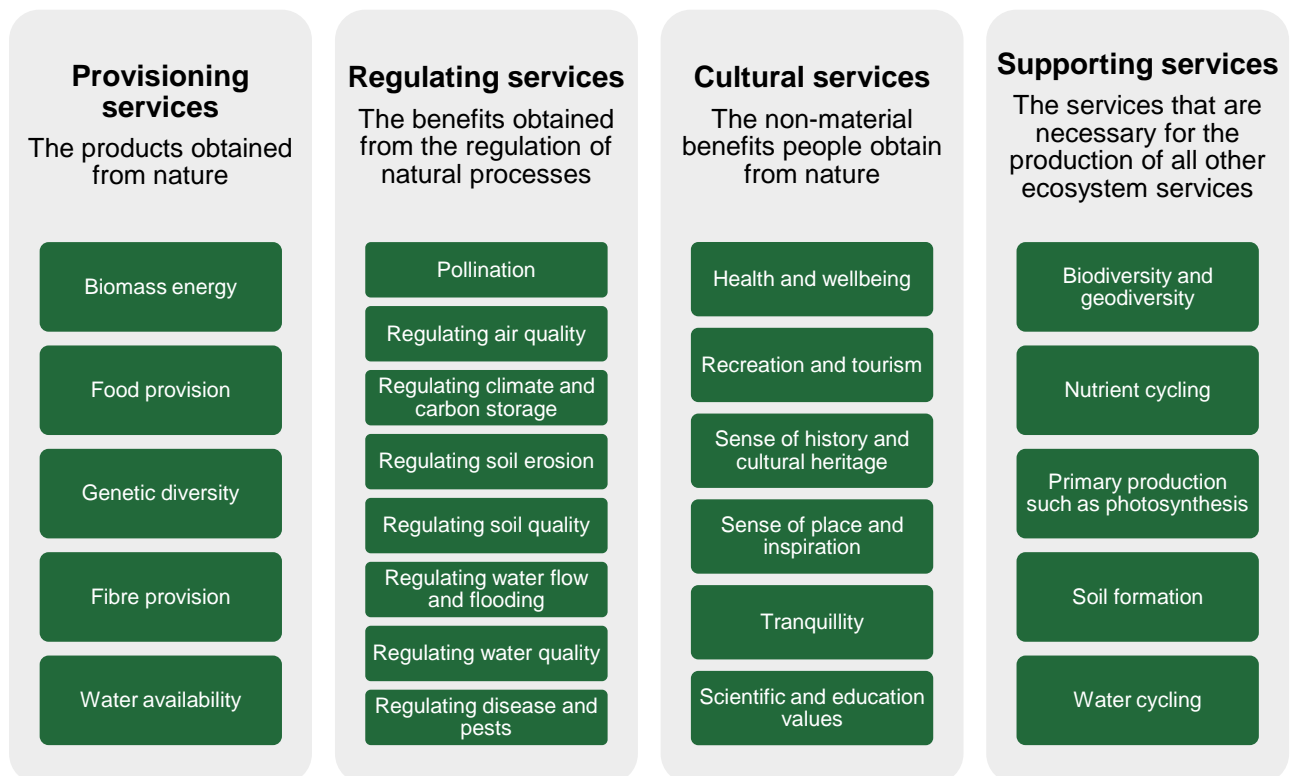
Feedback from partners, especially local authorities, is that partnership working on cross-cutting subjects such as health and wellbeing initiatives should be a top priority. There needs to be more partnership working with local organisations, local authorities, NGOs and technical staff from government agencies on shared work and delivery of the management plan.

GP3 We will establish a strong partnership to deliver the Vision for the Chilterns through a collective commitment to work together in the best interests of the area, its environment, communities, economy and visitors.

Benefitting people and nature – an ecosystems approach

A healthy natural environment underpins the health and wellbeing of our society and our 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 4 types:

Ecosystem Services



Obvious benefits or services provided by nature in the Chilterns include the food we eat, the water we drink and the plant materials we use. We get flint and timber for construction, wood for fuel and locally distinctive foods like cheese and beer. There are also many less visible benefits, such as the climate regulation and natural flood defences provided by woodlands and grasslands, the billions of tonnes of carbon stored by woodlands and soils, or the pollination of crops by insects. Millions of people depend upon the chalk aquifer of Chilterns for water supply. Even less visible are cultural benefits such as the inspiration we take from wildlife and the natural environment.

The policies and objectives for the management of the Chilterns must conserve and enhance our natural capital and the benefits which society receives from this natural capital. In doing so, they will also contribute to delivering the aims of the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan³. This plan calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first. One of its key goals is to use resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently.

GP4	<p>We will support projects and proposals that have a positive impact on the ability of the Chilterns to contribute sustainable ecosystem services by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) sustainably managing land and water environments b) protecting and providing more, better and joined up natural habitats c) conserving water resources and improving water quality d) improving the Chilterns’ resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change e) increasing the ability to store carbon through new planting or other means f) conserving and improving soils g) reducing litter and environmental pollution, especially air pollution h) managing and mitigating the risk of flooding i) supporting the sustainable production and local use of food, forestry and raw materials j) improving opportunities for peoples’ health and wellbeing k) stimulating sustainable tourism and economic activity l) delivering high-quality sustainable design that protects the local distinctiveness of the Chilterns
------------	--

³ The Government, A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, HMSO, 2018