Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Draft Management Plan
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1. Introduction

The Chilterns – a very special place

The Chilterns is a landscape of remarkable beauty and distinctive character with a unique interaction of geological, ecological and cultural heritage features. Together, these create a place of natural beauty. The Chilterns is special because of the steep chalk escarpment with areas of flower rich downland, chalk streams, extensive tracts of ancient woodlands, historic commons, tranquil valleys, a network of ancient routes, villages with their brick and flint houses, a rich history of settlement and archaeology. The significant qualities are summarised later in this document. Together, they are what make the Chilterns an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

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.

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, as is the National Park designation. 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 primary 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. Over the years qualification and amendment to the legislation has made it clear that natural is not just the look of the landscape, 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, the government 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.

Global, national and regional context of the Chilterns AONB

The Chilterns AONB is one of 46 AONBs in the UK, covering over 12.5% of the land surface. The distinctive character and natural beauty of AONBs make them some of the most special and cherished places in England. AONBs are living, working landscapes that contribute some £16bn every year to the national economy. Over two thirds of England’s population live within half an

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1. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 82
2. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 85
4. Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006: Section 99
hour’s drive of an AONB; and around 150 million people visit the English AONBs every year, spending in excess of £2bn.5

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.

European, national and local policies and plans already provide a considerable level of protection for the natural and scenic beauty of the AONB. In addition, the strategies and plans prepared by a wide range of partner organisations deal with many other issues that affect the area. These include the management of transport, tourism, recreation, geodiversity and biodiversity. The AONB Management Plan will influence key policies, plans and processes affecting the area. This would cover, for example, Development Plans, Neighbourhood Development Plans, Transport Plans and Green Infrastructure Strategies.

The Conservation Board is an active member of the National Association for AONBs and through this works with other AONBs across the country6.

The Chilterns Conservation Board

The Chilterns Conservation Board 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 20007.

The Conservation Board an independent statutory body and has two statutory purposes8:

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

In fulfilling these purposes, the Conservation Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities. In practice, 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.

Who is the Chilterns Conservation Board?

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, South Bucks District Council, Three Rivers District Council, Luton Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire District Council, Hertfordshire District Council, Dacorum District Council and North Herts District Council.

The Conservation Board has a small staff team based in Chinnor in Oxfordshire. Volunteers, who lead guided walks, give talks, help at events and carry out project work, support the staff.

5 NAAONB, What Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty can offer the LEPs. Fairford, Glos: National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 2017
6 For more information: Web: www.landscapesforlife.org.uk Twitter: @naaonb @AONBFamily
7 Section 86 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
8 Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended by the NERC Act 2006
Chilterns AONB Management Plan

This Management Plan is a statutory document under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000\(^9\). The Chilterns Conservation Board is responsible for preparing the AONB Management Plan for the AONB\(^{10}\), setting out the policies for the management of the Chilterns. We adopt the AONB Management Plan and promote its implementation by a wide range of organisations, including local authorities, government agencies, community groups and land managers.

This Management Plan helps all those with a responsibility for the AONB to improve it for current and future generations. The plan provides guidance and policies for everyone with an interest in, or responsibility for, an 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 relax there.

Following consultation with local communities, public bodies, partners and agencies with an interest in the area, the Management Plan is adopted by the Chilterns Conservation Board.

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The structure of the Management Plan

Section 1: Introduction, context

Section 2: What is the significance of the Chilterns AONB

- Special Qualities
- Benefits from nature
- Landscape Character

Section 3: What is the condition of the Chilterns AONB

- State of the Chilterns - headline issues and environmental pressures

Section 4: What is the future vision of the Chilterns AONB

- Vision for the Chilterns
- General Policies

Sections 5-10: What are the objectives and policies that will conserve and enhance the Chilterns AONB

- Nature
- Historic Environment
- Land, Woodland & Water
- Enjoyment & Understanding
- Well-being
- Planning

For each of these themes, the plan covers the

- ** ISSUES ** impacting on the theme
- ** STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES ** to fulfil the purposes of the AONB
- ** POLICIES ** required to ensure that the purposes are achieved
- ** KEY ACTIONS ** which would ensure progress over the next 5 yrs

Section 11: How does the plan get delivered and how do we know if we’ve been successful

- Implementation & Monitoring

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\(^9\) Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

\(^{10}\) Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
2. The Significance of the Chilterns

Special Qualities

The Chilterns is significant, nationally and internationally, because of its Special Qualities that are rare and considered so important they require protection. In summary, these special qualities are:

❖ A dramatic chalk escarpment, a globally scarce geological landscape which gives rise to rare ecology and distinctive cultural heritage

❖ Panoramic views from and across the escarpment interwoven with intimate dip slope valleys and rolling fields

❖ Nationally important concentrations of chalk downland, extremely diverse in flora and fauna and home to some scarce and threatened species. Once extensive, the downland now only covers 1% of the AONB mostly in small fragments. Many specialist plants and animals are associated with chalk grassland. Species for which the AONB is particularly important include Chiltern Gentian, wild candytuft, pasque flower, silver-spotted skipper and glow-worm

❖ 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; a significant assemblage of box, juniper and beech yew woods; together with many veteran trees and relict areas of wood pasture

❖ 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

❖ Significant ancient hedgerows, hedgerow and field trees, orchards and parkland weaving across farmland that covers approximately 60% of the Chilterns

❖ 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 Chilterns Cycleway

❖ Over 2000 ha of common land, heaths and greens, rich in wildlife and cultural heritage; almost 3000ha of open access land

❖ An impressive quality and quantity of ancient routeways and sunken lanes including the Icknield Way, part of the Ridgeway National Trail, considered the oldest road in Britain

❖ 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, mausoleums and windmills; a wealth of medieval churches, many built from flint

❖ An industrial heritage around wood-working, furniture and production of building materials

❖ A vast archaeology including ancient parish boundaries, medieval field patterns and iron-age hillforts; significant remnants of woodland heritage are extensive including sawpits, charcoal hearths and wood banks

❖ Relative tranquillity and peace on the doorstep of ten million people, probably the most accessible protected landscape in Europe; relatively dark skies, of huge value to human and wildlife health; unspoilt countryside, secret corners and a surprising sense of remoteness
**The landscape character**

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. It is the process of identifying and describing variation in character of the landscape. 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 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the Chilterns AONB\(^1\). A number of county and district-based LCAs cover the whole of the AONB. These have been undertaken using similar (but not identical) specifications.

A summary of these assessments gives us four broad types of landscape:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scarp Foothills and Vale Fringes</th>
<th>Chalk Scarp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gently undulating chalk slopes between the base of the scarp and the clay vale to the west.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plateau and Dip-slope</th>
<th>River Valleys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A large proportion of the AONB is covered by plateau and dip-slope 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.</td>
<td>The Chilterns contains a series of larger river valleys that cut through the scarp and dip-slope. Arterial valleys run north-west to south-east and, in places, create dramatic ‘wind gaps’ where they cut through the scarp, as at Tring and Wendover</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) 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. It is the process of identifying and describing variation in character of the landscape.
The topography is complex, with areas of plateau dissected by long, narrow valleys (often dry). Extensive woodlands and arable fields interspersed with commons, villages and scattered farmsteads often dating from medieval times, characterise the plateau. 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.

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.

There is a more detailed description in two separate documents – Landscape Character and Chronology, available on the AONB website.
3. The State of the Chilterns

The Chilterns AONB faces unprecedented pressure. From housing and infrastructure to increasing traffic, there are impacts on the natural beauty and special qualities of the Chilterns. Ash dieback will 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. This section provides a series of headlines to create 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) of the farmland\(^{12}\) in the AONB is in Environmental Stewardship (ES). This puts the Chilterns in the bottom 10% of all AONBs in England for ES take up.\(^{13}\)

   ES is an agri-environment scheme that 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Trend - Declining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. **Woodland management**

64% of the woodland in the AONB is in active management\(^{14}\). 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Trend - Stable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**

There are 64 SSSIs in the AONB, totalling 3213 ha. Of this, 98.8% is assessed as in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. Of the 997 ha in unfavourable recovering condition, over 70% is calcareous or neutral grassland.\(^{15}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Trend - Stable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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\(^{12}\) ‘Farmland’ refers to Utilisable Agricultural Area (UAA)

\(^{13}\) © Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2017.

\(^{14}\) © Forestry Commission copyright [2017]; © Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2017

\(^{15}\) © Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2017.
4. **Priority Habitat extent and condition**

Natural England mapping shows 15,927 ha of priority habitat in the Chilterns AONB\(^{16}\).

Data 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 total priority in the Chilterns AONB</th>
<th>% of total 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>

| CURRENT STATUS (EXTENT) | n/a          | TREND - UNKNOWN | ? |
| CURRENT STATUS (CONDITION) | UNKNOWN    | TREND - UNKNOWN | ? |

5. Chalk Streams

There are 9 chalk streams in the Chilterns AONB. None is currently assessed as achieving good ecological status or potential\(^\text{17}\).

\(^{17}\) [http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/](http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/)
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(^{18})</th>
<th>% at risk</th>
<th>Average % at risk across AONBs in England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listed building (Grade 1)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed building (Grade 11*)</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.6%</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, ('undesignated heritage assets); furthermore, 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 5 years, with 64,000 health walk attendances in 2016 – 2017 across the AONB.

8. Visits to countryside sites

Visitor numbers to formal countryside attractions are have increased over recent years, in some cases substantially.

For example: Wendover Woods - 13% increase in visitors (2013 – 2017); and College Lake 16% increase (2013 – 2016).

\(^{18}\) At risk figures Oct 2016 data Historic England
The following is a summary of the main forces for change relevant to the Chilterns landscape and this Management Plan.

**Forces for Change**

<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, 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,  
● Nutrification,  
● 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 chalk 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 | ↓ Less business need to manage landscape features such as hedgerows and trees; loss of historic field patterns,  
↓ Sheep grazing of chalk grassland is currently uneconomic leading to declining biodiversity,  
↓ Under managed woodlands |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brex - opportunities for influence and change alongside uncertainty for land managers and farmers</td>
<td>Decreasing number of holdings, increase in larger holding, more contractors, land sold off for amenity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on rural workers of high cost of living and housing</td>
<td>Farm diversification resulting from growth in marketing of local products and tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer people directly involved in land management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subdivision of woodlands into small plots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Over abstraction of aquifer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High levels of water usage</td>
<td>Water quality decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifications to water courses</td>
<td>Further degradation of chalk streams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor ecological condition of chalk streams</td>
<td>Failure to reach required Water Framework Directive status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution including diffuse and non-diffuse pollution</td>
<td>Loss of key landscape features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native invasive pests and diseases</td>
<td>Loss of associated wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of climate change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement and development</td>
<td>Erosion of character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly desirable area, commutable to London</td>
<td>Increased noise, air and light pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprecedented housing and infrastructure growth within and in the setting of the AONB</td>
<td>Habitat severance, degradation and loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of HS2 through the Chilterns at its widest point</td>
<td>Less enjoyable to visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport expansion and increased over-flying</td>
<td>New building designs not locally distinctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor</td>
<td>Housing even less affordable for local community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creeping suburbanisation and gentrification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of affordable housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Gradually increasing profile for the area and the opportunities it presents to increase health and wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population in and around the Chilterns is increasing rapidly</td>
<td>Increased number of visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Risk of increased negative impacts of additional visitors to sensitive habitats and sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public understanding of the benefits provided by the Chilterns is low</td>
<td>Continued lack of engagement with under-represented audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low levels of engagement with some audiences e.g. urban young people, Black and ethnic minority communities.</td>
<td>Gradual decline in maintenance of rights of way and countryside access infrastructure unless public funding is maintained, or new funding secured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps in provision of countryside access infrastructure in some areas (eg. car parking, access links)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declining public sector funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. 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.

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 Plan\(^{14}\), 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 first\(^{19}\).

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 population\(^{20}\).

   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 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.

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\(^{19}\) The Government, *A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment*, HMSO, 2018

\(^{20}\) *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act*, 1949, Section 5(2)
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 Ecosystem Services. Ecosystem Services can be broken down into 4 types:

**Ecosystem Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Provisioning services</strong></th>
<th><strong>Regulating services</strong></th>
<th><strong>Cultural services</strong></th>
<th><strong>Supporting services</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The products obtained from nature</td>
<td>The benefits obtained from the regulation of natural processes</td>
<td>The non-material benefits people obtain from nature</td>
<td>The services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biomass energy</td>
<td>Pollination</td>
<td>Health and wellbeing</td>
<td>Biodiversity and geodiversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food provision</td>
<td>Regulating air quality</td>
<td>Recreation and tourism</td>
<td>Nutrient cycling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genetic diversity</td>
<td>Regulating climate and carbon storage</td>
<td>Sense of history and cultural heritage</td>
<td>Primary production such as photosynthesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibre provision</td>
<td>Regulating soil erosion</td>
<td>Sense of place and inspiration</td>
<td>Soil formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water availability</td>
<td>Regulating soil quality</td>
<td>Tranquillity</td>
<td>Water cycling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regulating water flow and flooding</td>
<td>Scientific and education values</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regulating water quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regulating disease and pests</td>
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</table>

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 Plan\textsuperscript{21}. 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GP4</th>
<th>We will support projects and proposals that have a positive impact on the ability of the Chilterns to contribute sustainable ecosystem services by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) sustainably managing land and water environments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) protecting and providing more, better and joined up natural habitats</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) conserving water resources and improving water quality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d) improving the Chilterns’ resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) increasing the ability to store carbon through new planting or other means</td>
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<td></td>
<td>f) conserving and improving soils</td>
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<td></td>
<td>g) reducing litter and environmental pollution, especially air pollution</td>
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<td></td>
<td>h) managing and mitigating the risk of flooding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i) supporting the sustainable production and local use of food, forestry and raw materials</td>
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<td></td>
<td>j) improving opportunities for peoples’ health and wellbeing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>k) stimulating sustainable tourism and economic activity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>l) delivering high-quality sustainable design that protects the local distinctiveness of the Chilterns</td>
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</table>

\textsuperscript{21} The Government, A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, HMSO, 2018
5. Nature

Context

The Chilterns is home to a wonderful variety of wildlife, including many protected and notable species. The AONB is particularly important for its chalk grassland, chalk streams, ancient woodlands (especially beech) and arable habitats. Fine-grained variations in soils, topography and past management have given rise over millennia to rich habitat mosaics. These include box woodland and juniper scrub, scarp slope and dip-slope chalk streams, wayside verges and disused quarries. Wood pasture, heathland and acid grassland (habitats often associated with common land) add to the mix.

The characteristic habitats we associate with the Chilterns are often a by-product of traditional management – grazing, woodland management, quarrying, farrowing and so on – over many millennia. Farmers, woodland owners, and other land managers have played a crucial part over the centuries in shaping habitats for wildlife.

The chalk escarpment is a crucial stepping-stone for species moving between the southern central chalk landscapes and suitable habitats further northeast. Such movement is in response to climate change and other pressures.

KEY FACTS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grassland and bare ground</th>
<th>Trees and woodland</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The Chilterns has nationally important concentrations of chalk grassland (c1,300 ha) found mainly along the steep scarp and dry valley slopes</td>
<td>• The Chilterns is one of the most heavily wooded areas in England, famous for its extensive beech woods and ancient woodland</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Heathland (289 ha), lowland meadow (51 ha), lowland dry acid grassland (ha), lowland fen (18 ha) habitats are also found here, and together with areas of bare ground including within quarry and former quarry sites</td>
<td>• Ancient woodlands are home to many rare and threatened species but today cover only around 2% of England. In the Chilterns, this figure is 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Chalk grassland is an internationally rare, fragile and wildlife-rich habitat that has declined significantly over the past 100 years</td>
<td>• Priority habitats found in the Chilterns include lowland beech and yew, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, wood-pasture and parkland</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Many species found in chalk grassland, for example Chiltern Gentian, do not live in other habitats</td>
<td>• The Chilterns has a rich heritage of parkland, wood pasture and common land often with high concentrations of veteran trees and associated deadwood invertebrates and fungi</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The Chilterns has important populations of many chalk species e.g. wild candytuft, pasque flower, silver-spotted skipper and glow-worm</td>
<td>• Box woodland is also a feature with the largest native Box woodland in the UK found near Great Kimble in Buckinghamshire</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Around 56% of the chalk grassland in the Chilterns is in a Site of Special Scientific Interest</td>
<td>• Active management of woodlands across the Chilterns is needed to let in light and create habitat mosaics including younger trees</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Chalk grassland has developed over many hundreds – or even thousands of years of</td>
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Livestock grazing, usually by sheep, on vegetation growing on nutrient poor chalky soils

- Grazing remains the best way to manage this habitat and land owners should be supported and strongly encouraged to graze chalk grassland sites
- Left unmanaged species-rich grassland will quickly scrub up and eventually return to scrub and woodland
- Chalk scrub is often of high wildlife value – the best management creates habitat mosaics, including small areas of scrub and longer grassland as well as short turf
- Juniper and Box scrub habitats are of particular interest in the Chilterns
- Many of our grassland and heathland sites are popular with visitors. Without appropriate management high visitor pressure causes significant problems on some sites. Uncontrolled dogs cause problems around grazing livestock and can jeopardise long term site management

Water bodies and wetlands

- Rivers and wetlands are scarce but precious habitats in the Chilterns
- Chalk streams are a globally scarce habitat – nine of the c300 chalk streams in the world are found here
- They are home to some of the UK’s most endangered species including water vole, otter and brown trout
- Chalk streams are groundwater-fed, shallow, fast flowing watercourses with a gravel bed and low banks. Flows depend on groundwater levels in the underlying chalk aquifer
- Winterbournes – the upper reaches of streams that are dry in the summer months are an important component of chalk streams habitat, supporting unique assemblages of plants and animals
- As well as supporting our chalk streams, the chalk aquifer underlying the Chilterns supplies water to millions of people in the south east of England

Farmland habitats

- Plantations on ancient woodland sites need to be restored through a mix of natural regeneration and appropriate planting
- Invasive non-native pests and diseases as well as increasing deer numbers are a serious and growing concern for our woodlands. Their impacts on woodland ecology and landscape connectivity need to be managed
- Improved management of woodlands is needed in the Chilterns to increase diversity in terms of species mix and age if our woodlands are to be resilient to climate change, and tree pests and diseases
- Traditional orchards, particularly cherry orchards, were once important in the Chilterns and the mix of old fruit trees and grassland can be valuable for wildlife.
- Farmland is the main land use in the Chilterns, covering over 60% of the AONB; it provides a wide range of habitats for wildlife and maintains the character
- Farming has created a mosaic of arable and grassland habitats, stitched together by hedgerows and interspersed with woodland, commons and downland.
- Species rich and ancient hedgerows provide important wildlife habitat and corridors; and characteristic features in some parts of the Chilterns landscape
- Hedgerows need the right management to sustain their value for wildlife. Farmers and other land managers play an important role planting and restoring hedgerows; with the declines in livestock farming, the function of many hedges as barriers to movement of stock has gone
- Over the post war period, introduction of modern farming techniques and changes in holding size and field size – for example removal of hedgerows to create large fields
- Besides the main chalk streams, which flow in valleys cutting through the Chilterns, there are numerous chalk springs located at the foot of the scarp.
- Low flows are the key issue affecting the area's chalk streams.
- Pollution is also a significant concern, especially from urban and sewage effluent. Pollution becomes more concentrated at times of low flow.
- All our chalk streams have been heavily modified for example due to milling, agriculture and urban development. These activities have fragmented habitats, degraded natural river channels and interrupted natural processes.
- The spread of non-native invasive species such as Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and North American mink have had an impact on the ecology of Chilterns chalk streams.
- The major river of the Chilterns is the River Thames, which forms the boundary between the North Wessex Downs and the Chilterns.
- Other wetland habitats include lakes, gravel and mineral extraction pits, reservoirs, canals and ponds. The small number of lakes and reservoirs of the Chilterns provide important wildlife habitat although all are man-made.
- There are many ponds, especially on farmland and common land, created to water livestock or from small scale mineral extraction. They provide habitat for a variety of specialist wildlife e.g. great crested newt and starfruit. The number and ecological condition of ponds in the Chilterns has significantly declined over many years.

In England, many of our rarest and most threatened species are listed under Section 41 (S41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 as being of principal importance for conservation. In his landmark report 'Making Space for Nature' in 2010 Professor Lawton concluded that 'There is compelling evidence that England’s collection of wildlife sites are generally too small and too isolated, leading to declines in many of England’s characteristic species.  

recommendations for 'more, bigger, better, more joined up spaces for wildlife' underlined the need for conservation action at a landscape scale.

The Government’s Biodiversity 2020 strategy contained an ambition to ensure that ‘By 2020, we will see an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and will have prevented further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species.’ So far, not enough has been done to achieve this, either locally in the Chilterns or nationally. The Government’s 25 Year Plan raises the ambition for nature, aiming to become the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

There is an urgent need do more to translate these ambitions into reality both at a local and a national level. This Management Plan sets out a framework for joint action to progress these ambitions in the Chilterns.

[INSERT Lawton diagram]

Long term trends

The Chilterns saw major losses in area of characteristic habitats and landscape features over the course of the 20th century including23:

| Chalk grassland 54% lost | Commons, greens and heaths 43% lost | Ancient woodland 9% lost |

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23 The Changing Landscape of the Chilterns, Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation Project  Bucks County Council/ Chilterns Conservation Board 2009
More recent trends

Much of the best wildlife habitat that survives in the Chilterns lies within designated sites and nature reserves. Many wildlife species continue to decline in both abundance and range.

Species with specialist habitat requirements have been hardest hit; however, as elsewhere in the country, many formerly abundant species of the wider countryside have also declined over recent decades.

For example, looking at woodland and farmland birds, over the past 10 years Corn Bunting, Nightingale and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker have all but disappeared from the Chilterns. Many others, such as Lapwing, Yellowhammer, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Spotted Flycatcher are declining. Whilst some generalist woodland species remain relatively stable, the overall trends for farmland and specialist woodland birds continue downwards. This reflects a long-term reduction in woodland management as a whole across the Chilterns.

Plant species – particularly specialist chalk loving plants – are also under pressure. The flora in the Chilterns, particularly the northern Chilterns, is regarded as being one of the top three richest and most important chalk floras in the UK. However, of the 60+ rarer species within the area, 10 are now thought to be extinct as naturally occurring species. Many others are now restricted to a single site.

As a final example, looking at our 9 chalk streams, not one is currently assessed as being in good ecological condition according to the latest Environment Agency assessment. With only 300 chalk rivers in the world we have a particular responsibility for these precious water bodies.

These examples underline the need for a more concerted wildlife conservation effort in the Chilterns.

Despite the dedication and hard work of many people and organisations over many years – not least farmers and land managers, volunteers and community groups, NGOs and statutory agencies – we are still losing wildlife from the Chilterns. These declines are due to a range of factors, including those listed below. It is clear that action that is more effective is needed – for example, landscape scale conservation initiatives that go beyond existing wildlife sites – if we are to halt and reverse these declines.

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24 TVERC Bird Indices in the Chilterns report 2017 (BTO data)
Key Issues

Habitat degradation takes many forms including direct loss of habitat, decline in habitat quality, fragmentation and increased isolation of habitat, increased leisure and recreational use. In many cases, the hardest hit species / species groups are those requiring habitat mosaics rather than single habitats.

Changes in land management practices

Traditional land management practices (such as sheep grazing of chalk downland, small scale chalk quarrying, and hedge laying) created conditions that supported a more varied and dynamic mosaic of habitats than those produced by many modern farming and forestry practices – which in turn are driven by national and global markets. 26

Extensive grazing was traditionally used across many wetlands, commons and wood pasture/parkland as well as grassland habitats. The decline in traditional grazing is a key driver for the decline of species and habitats.

Management of wildlife habitat

There is a need for better management of many existing wildlife sites, and areas of semi-natural habitat. Local Sites, in particular, together with roadside verges are a crucial component of ecological networks in the Chilterns. However, management support, resources and advice are often lacking.

Environmental and ecological change including climate change, loss of pollinators and impacts of pests, diseases and invasive non-native species (INNS)

Long-standing ecological impacts caused by grey squirrels, deer, Glis glis (edible dormouse), American mink, Phytophthora, Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed continue to be a significant concern, along with new threats including Chalara dieback of Ash, Acute Oak Decline, Oak Processionary Moth.

Increased climatic variation is already affecting important habitats, for example beech woodlands and chalk streams. Severe droughts and excessive water abstraction reduce the functioning length of chalk streams. This severely degrades their ecology.

80% of British wild plants and 90% of the world’s crops are dependent upon insect pollination, and over 250 UK pollinators are in danger of extinction. Insect populations are impacted by a range of factors including habitat fragmentation, loss of flower rich grassland, increased use of machinery and increased use of pesticides.

Habitat fragmentation

Housing and transport infrastructure and changes in land use continue to leave a legacy of habitat fragmentation. Examples include:

- severed hedgerows;
- culverted chalk streams;
- small, isolated islands of chalk grassland; and
- ancient woodland or traditional orchard habitat isolated within intensively managed arable land.

The 25 year Environment Plan contains ambitious proposals for net environmental gain in relation to impacts of development, and the need to minimise impact of development on and provide net gains for biodiversity is enshrined in government policy (National Planning Policy Framework).

Yet there is no proven delivery mechanism to secure net gain at the point where development impacts on the AONB or its setting.

Wildlife habitats need to be big enough and sufficiently well connected for wildlife to thrive and species need corridors to move through the landscape in response to a changing environment.

Impacts of people and dogs

Whilst we want to encourage many more people to visit and enjoy the Chilterns, their actions can damage many of the area’s semi-natural habitats. This needs careful management. There are direct impacts, for example impacts of dogs including disturbance to ground nesting birds, impacts on livestock, effects of flea treatment unintentionally washed off pets on pollinators and aquatic species. In addition, there are indirect impacts, for example, when high visitor numbers in some key honey-pot sites make it harder to carry out appropriate management.

Strategic Objectives

Diverse communities of wildlife species survive in small pockets and islands. The wider countryside is not as wildlife rich as it was 50 or even 20 years ago. We can change this by prioritising and investing in the natural environment as never before – and in the people and organisations that care for it – to deliver ‘more, bigger, better, more joined up spaces for nature’.

- **NO1** Ensure that spaces for wildlife are well connected, well managed and diverse.
- **NO2** Increase the range and abundance of populations of key wildlife species.
- **NO3** Minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity in the AONB and its setting.

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28 Including species characteristic of the Chilterns, species for which the Chilterns is important, and rare or notable species found in the Chilterns
NO4 Ensure that chalk habitat management in the Chilterns is widely considered an exemplar of best practice.

NO5 Enable people to understand and be inspired by the natural environment of the Chilterns; ensuring that policies and decisions in the Chilterns recognise its value to society, and for its own sake.

NO6 Secure protected status for Chalk Streams as a globally rare habitat.

NO7 Encourage people from different organisations, communities and backgrounds, to work together to ‘make space for nature’ in the Chilterns.

Policies

To achieve these objectives we must work together to:

**O1 Bigger, better connected and protected spaces for wildlife**

**NP1** Create bigger, more joined up habitat networks, reconnect surviving pockets of habitat, and develop landscape-scale conservation initiatives.

We know that to achieve real change we need to be ambitious, collaborative and focused on reversing declines in wildlife at a landscape or catchment scale. The rationale – as set out in the Lawton Report – is well understood. We now need strong collaboration, leadership and resources to make it happen. Funding needs to be targeted firstly at supporting management of good quality existing habitat and secondly at re-creation of habitat in target areas e.g. Biodiversity Opportunity Areas to support the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network.

**NP2** Promote and support landowner and farmer-led initiatives that prioritise nature and deliver wildlife conservation and enhancement at a landscape/catchment scale.

Farmers and other land managers are key to sustaining landscape-scale conservation initiatives over the long term.

**NP3** Look for and promote opportunities for restoring natural processes where appropriate.

To help nature recover, we need to help natural processes re-establish themselves. This could for example include restoration of natural chalk stream flows or introduction of extensive grazing across different habitats. It could also include exploring options for reintroduction of key species, such as pine marten, to the Chilterns to achieve better ecological balance.

**NP4** End environmentally unsustainable abstraction from Chilterns chalk streams to restore their ecology and improve their resilience to climate change.

Low water flows are the key issue affecting the area’s chalk streams. Too much water has been abstracted from the Chilterns over recent decades. This together with severe
<table>
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<tr>
<td>droughts has reduced the functioning length of chalk streams and severely degraded their ecology.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NP5</strong> Protect important, under-represented habitats and natural features through new designations and sensitive management.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We need to protect important habitats through nature conservation designations, including Local Sites as well as SSSIs. Local sites are an important component of our ecological networks. The identification / designation and monitoring of these sites is a priority. At the same time, there is a strong case for more key Chilterns sites – for example Chilterns chalk streams – to be included in the national suite of SSSIs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NP6</strong> Halt and then reverse declines in rare, protected and characteristic wildlife species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This needs to be based on solid scientific evidence and understanding of species population ecology. Effective monitoring and record keeping are crucial. Record centres need to be properly valued and supported to achieve this. We should focus on species at the edge of their range, and develop initiatives to encourage expansion and favourable management of the habitat required by these species.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NP7</strong> Control and, where possible, eradicate invasive non-native pests and diseases in the Chilterns, and develop strategies to reduce their impact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damaging impacts of deer, grey squirrel, <em>Glis glis</em> (edible dormouse) and mink need to be addressed, alongside a concerted effort to manage impacts of, amongst others, Chalara dieback of Ash, Acute Oak Decline, Oak Processionary Moth, Phytophthora, Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed. Collaborative action to reduce grey squirrel damage is identified as a particular priority. We need to play our part in preventing the further spread and introduction of INNS including through supporting schemes to promote good bio-security.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NP8</strong> Ensure delivery mechanisms are in place to secure net gains for biodiversity in the AONB and its setting,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning policies and decision must contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment including through minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. The 25 year Environment Plan takes this further setting out ambitions for net environmental gains. To secure these objectives for the Chilterns effective mechanisms need to be developed and implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NP9</strong> Ensure no loss of existing semi-natural habitat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our key wildlife habitats are the core of our ecological networks. They include species rich grassland and disturbed/bare ground, ancient woodland, chalk streams, beech woodland, arable field margins, hedgerows, wayside verges, traditional orchards, veteran</td>
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and notable trees, and habitats associated with common land. The conservation of existing semi-natural habitat and ancient woodland is a high priority.

**NP10 Improve ecological condition, resilience and diversity of semi-natural wildlife habitats**

We need best practice in management of all semi-natural wildlife habitats. This means, for example, grazing of all chalk grassland or woodland management to enhance species and structural diversity.

In the past traditional management would have inadvertently helped to create the conditions in which nature could thrive. For example, small scale extraction of brick clay created dips and hollows that today are ponds. We now need to test and develop new ways of sustaining the diversity within our habitats that is so characteristic of the Chilterns. For example, we need glades in woodland, bare chalk in chalk grassland and flourishing ground flora at the base of our hedgerows.

Our woods and trees are an amazing resource for people, wildlife and landscape – but they face many threats. There are difficult choices ahead about management for long term resilience and we need to work together to develop a clear strategy. We need regeneration, restoration and active management of our woodland and trees to preserve the wooded landscape, for which the AONB is renowned.

There are also places where we need less active management – for example we need to leave dead wood in our woodlands to provide homes for beetles or fungi, or in some cases less to mow road side verges less frequently to allow wild flowers to bloom.

We need to learn from our history of land management whilst developing new and contemporary ways of allowing nature to flourish.

**NP11 Engage many more, and a greater variety of local groups, communities and volunteers and young people in activity to support wildlife, farming and land management and the local environment.**

There are many diverse communities within and close to the Chilterns but the demographic profile of those who get involved in wildlife conservation is relatively narrow.

We need everyone to feel they have stake in the natural environment. People need inspiration to play their part if we are to make the progress we seek. Communities can get involved in many different ways including buying local food and products, as well as wildlife monitoring and practical conservation activity.

We should support and promote citizen science initiatives as a means to broaden engagement, recruit volunteers and support environmental recording. At the same time, we need to support and sustain the interest of local amateur naturalists who make a huge contribution to our knowledge of the local area.

We need to engage younger generations through schools and outdoor activity programmes to encourage them to develop a long-term interest and involvement.
Help visitors to discover and enjoy wildlife in the Chilterns sensitively while not harming or disturbing it.

There are many wonderful wildlife spectacles and fascinating species to be found in the Chilterns. Part of our mission is to inspire many more people with a sense of wonder in the natural world and the confidence to venture out into the countryside to enjoy the health benefits of green and beautiful, wildlife rich spaces.

At the same time, some of our most precious habitats are particularly sensitive to impacts of visitors and their pets (including cats and dogs). There needs to be a carefully planned and strategic approach to managing visitors, targeting areas with the capacity and infrastructure to accommodate additional use in order to protect the more sensitive sites from damage. This means better mapping of habitat sensitivity and current hotspots to support development of a strategy. Where there is a conflict between access and nature conservation, legislation requires that the natural environment be given priority.

Create opportunities for farmers and other land managers, research institutes and nature conservationists to share learning on best practice wildlife conservation relevant to the Chilterns.

Opportunities for networking and learning are important in themselves and they help to develop wider thinking and a landscape scale approach.

Create partnerships within and across sectors to drive forward better networking, decision making and action for wildlife.

Significant change will only come through far more joined up working both within the nature conservation sector and, importantly, across sectors.

Maximise ‘win-win’ opportunities where restoration or expansion of wildlife habitats can at the same time provide benefits to society and respect or strengthen landscape character.

To do this we need a good understanding of the key components of the ‘natural capital’ of the area. This includes understanding the benefits that flow from good land management—for example, in terms of management of flood risk and provision of clean water and ways to enhance those benefits. This understanding needs to inform decisions about investment in the natural environment. We also need a good understanding of landscape character and how past management has shaped the landscape we see today.

Manage land to enhance the resilience of key habitats and species to the impacts of climate change.

Climatic variation and extreme weather events are already affecting our wildlife communities. We need to monitor and understand likely changes and their impacts on...
key species and habitats. This will help farmers and other land managers to make good decisions regarding future management. Well-connected habitat networks are crucial to allow species movement through the landscape in response to a changing climate.

**NP17**

Ensure that all those who make decisions that impact on Chilterns wildlife are doing so, and are able to do so, on the basis of robust, up-to-date and readily available ecological information.

This underlines the importance of support for local record centres but also other sources of information such as remote sensing data.

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**Key actions**

1. Develop and secure support for a Chilterns biodiversity strategy with ambitious 5 year and 25 year targets. Work will include:
   a. identification of critical areas for investment
   b. baseline connectivity mapping
   c. strategic assessment of resources – especially volunteers – to inform a more coordinated approach

   Key components will include landscape scale conservation, and support for farmer-led initiatives, and clear strategies for Chilterns trees and woods, species rich grassland; chalk streams and wetlands; and farmland habitats.

2. Create an ‘agenda for Chilterns wildlife’ and secure wide support for this agenda across sectors including health, education, research and economic development.

3. Create a series of flagship initiatives for Chilterns wildlife as proposals for investment from developer contributions and other sources.

4. Create a visitor management initiative to include assessment of which areas are potentially robust to recreational pressure and which are likely to be vulnerable.

5. Secure commitment to ending abstraction from Chilterns chalk streams.
6. Historic Environment

Context

Everything you see in the Chilterns AONB has been influenced by thousands of years of human activity. Traces of each successive generation are left as a legacy; written on the landscape as archaeological sites, monuments, buildings, route ways, and patterns of land use. These tell rich stories of cultural heritage and history.

Parish and private records, folk memory, and artefacts attest to the relatively recent lives and work, culture and customs, beliefs and politics of locals. These range from the Bodgers with their workshops, lathes, and saw pits hidden in the Chilterns beech woods, to the country houses of notable figures of British history, whose designed gardens and estates have become nationally important sites.

Some 45% of the Chilterns landscape has preserved its character from before the beginning of the 18th century, and as such can rightfully be regarded as precious, fragile, “ancient countryside,” with high potential for yielding evidence of the medieval period and earlier. Prominent throughout the Chilterns are the historic towns and villages with their buildings and churches in characteristic vernacular styles, and the immediately recognisable materials of flint, brick, and timber. Across the AONB, over 2000 buildings, dating from the 12th to the 20th centuries, have been judged worthy of protection through being listed.

The ancient woodlands (making up 13% of the AONB), commons, and downland that surround these settlements and characterise the Chilterns landscape are all considered to have high historic value and are dense with archaeological and historic sites. The AONB as a whole contains over 100 Scheduled Monuments, and many more sites which are undesignated (recorded in local Historic Environment Records), or that are yet to be found. The earliest settlers in the region left their mark through field systems, surviving from the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and early medieval periods. These are joined by displays of their wealth and power, and their ritual and funerary practices, through monuments such as the 20 known hillforts, the kilometres of linear...
earthworks known as Grim’s Ditch, and hundreds of burial barrows. In summary, the historic environment underpins the essential nature of the Chilterns.

Key Issues

The Chilterns AONB faces significant threats to its historic environment in the next five years. Archaeology is a finite asset, and many sites in the Chilterns are highly sensitive, surviving only as subtle earthworks or fragile deposits of finds. The region faces unprecedented demands for development, both for housing and for infrastructure. Changes in land management patterns are subjecting our “ancient countryside” to dramatic change that it has not felt for more than 300 years, putting at risk a fragile historic landscape. Whilst Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings are protected to some degree, we may lose the valuable context within which they were constructed. Numerous undesignated or unknown sites are at even greater risk, lacking statutory protections.

Development Pressures

The Chilterns faces ever-increasing pressure from development projects both to archaeology, to its landscape, and to its character. These developments will enable increased understanding of the Chilterns Historic Environment, through the archaeological assessment and mitigation required through the planning process. However, there are also dangers, from the destruction of sites of national importance, to the alteration of the character, cultural heritage and spirit of places. The construction of HS2 will erase a section of Grim’s Ditch, a Scheduled Monument. Unsympathetic design choices, inappropriate locations for development, unsuitable materials, and lack of knowledge and time in the planning process are all risks to the historic environment of the Chilterns.

Changes in Land Management

The decline of traditional agriculture and industry has led to changes in land management and woodland management. The future of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which often provides funding to farmers for protecting heritage asset, is uncertain.

Access to sites can be a challenge for protecting heritage. Site owners need to balance the many benefits of the public being able to visit such places against potential damage such as site erosion caused by high footfall, vandalism, fly-tipping, or illegal metal detecting.

[INSERT: Ivinghoe Beacon hillfort, Bucks., showing chalk scarring]

Sites and Landscapes Unprotected

The condition of the Chilterns’ designated assets, that is the Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, and Scheduled Monuments, has remained largely stable in the recent past. This is due to statutory protections and proactive management from land owners. Only two Listed Buildings are designated ‘At Risk’ by Historic England, along with eight Scheduled Monuments. However, the approach to designation takes a site specific, rather than landscape scale approach to protection. This means the wider setting of monuments, often integral to their character, and perhaps beyond the bounds of the AONB, is not protected.

Furthermore, the vast majority of known archaeological sites are not ‘Scheduled’; they are “undesignated heritage assets”. They lack statutory protection and are therefore at increased risk. Indeed, there are significant gaps in our knowledge, particularly in the woodland areas of the Chilterns. It is striking that the Chilterns has relatively few Scheduled Monuments (113), compared for instance to the North Wessex Downs AONB (478) or to the Cotswolds AONB (442).

Lack of Understanding and Engagement
The heritage of the Chilterns as a single area is less well recognised and understood than is the case for other protected landscapes, making protection and presentation of sites and heritage more difficult. Limited resources are also a problem for many agencies involved in tourism and heritage promotion. Many bodies are involved in heritage in the Chilterns, so improved communication and coordination of their activities is vital.

Historic assets are an irreplaceable resource. They deliver wide social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits. Change is inevitable and so in the face of mounting threats, careful management is needed. Through holistic, landscape scale approaches to planning, land use, and development, and through collaboration and coordination between partners, we can preserve the rich legacy of the past for the benefit of future generations.

Strategic Objectives

The main objectives of the Chilterns Conservation Board with regard to the Historic Environment are:

| HO1 | Better protect the Chilterns historic environment, both formally designated and unprotected heritage assets. |
| HO2 | Seek new discoveries of unknown heritage assets and improve understanding of those already identified. To reveal, in greater detail, the significance of the historic environment and cultural heritage of the Chilterns. |
| HO3 | Increase the knowledge and enjoyment of Chilterns heritage and culture by local residents, visitors and the wider public; and bring a love of heritage to wider parts of society. |

Policies

To achieve these objectives we must work together to:

| HP1 | Encourage owners of designated heritage assets to create conservation Management Plans and manage or restore assets appropriately through consultation between land owners, Conservation Officers, and following guidance from Historic England. |
| HP2 | Encourage and facilitate work to improve the condition of assets in order to remove them from At Risk status, and explore the designation of new assets through work with local Historic Environment Records and Historic England. |
| HP3 | Encourage the use of the Chilterns Building Design Guide and the Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation Project by developers and planners. |
| HP4 | Encourage sensitive restoration prioritising local and in-character materials. |
HP5 | Work towards the coordination of groups with an interest or responsibility for the historic environment of the Chilterns.

HP6 | Help communities to create of robust Neighbourhood Plans which take heritage assets into account.

HP7 | Improve knowledge of heritage assets through facilitating research and investigation.

HP8 | Identify and record the cultural history of Chilterns inhabitants and settlements to preserve memory for future generations.

HP9 | Improve the sharing of heritage information of the Chilterns, signposting individuals to appropriate sources such as local Historic Environment Records and History Centres.

HP10 | Encourage initiatives to highlight the importance of the Chilterns to political history (Disraeli to William Penn), artistic history and literary history (John Milton to Roald Dahl), as well as the industrial history of the area.

HP11 | Improve public understanding of the historic environment of the Chilterns, through projects, events, information, and campaigns.

HP12 | Create e-learning resources concerning history and archaeology for primary and secondary school curricula.

Key Actions

1. Implement the ‘Beacons of the Past’ Project, working closely with other bodies to learn more about Chilterns archaeology, increase data sharing, communicate the narrative of Chilterns prehistory to the public, develop heritage walks, work to remove Scheduled sites from the At Risk register, and empower local groups to conduct further research and more effectively protect heritage assets.

2. Implement the ‘Chalk Cherries and Chairs’ Landscape Partnership Scheme, engaging the public in cultural heritage projects (e.g. Woodlanders, Cherry Orchards, Routes to the Past, Grim’s Ditch) and traditional skills training; providing resources for the creation of Neighbourhood Plans and supporting landowners managing heritage assets.

3. Make the Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation project data accessible online for communities, local history societies, schools and decision makers.

4. Offer new history and cultural trails at Walking Festivals and integrate information on public transport links with heritage routes. Make the Building Design Guide available to Parish Councils.
7. Land, Woodland and Water

Context

Through the centuries, human influence has shaped the Chiltern’s landscape. Stock and arable farming, firewood and timber production have created the mosaic of fields and woodlands, interlinked with hedgerows dotted with hedgerow trees. Even the courses of many of the area’s characteristic chalk streams have been modified by engineering. Such changes were for a variety of purposes, such as milling, agriculture, urban development and landscaping. Overlaying all this is a network of ancient rights of way. These may have originated as paths for farm workers or extraction tracks for timber. Some developed as paths for drovers or trade routes for commodities on their way to London. Often, years of use have left incised tracks and sunken lanes cutting across the chalk escarpment and winding down the steep valley sides.

In the 21st century, modern technology and world markets affect every part of our lives. Stock farming (sheep, beef, dairy) declines while the current economics of arable farming leads to fewer people farming larger areas. It is uneconomic to graze chalk grassland yet without grazing; our species rich chalk grassland is lost to scrub. There is now no need for hedgerows to keep stock in as farmers rely on fencing. An annual flail keeps surviving hedges in check but each year their quality deteriorates. In the past, many commons would have been grazed and wooded areas managed through the exercise of common rights. Most of these rights are no longer exercised though over half of the wooded areas have Management Plans.

More intensive stock management, sometimes associated with equine, alpaca and deer enterprises, can lead to the introduction of numerous paddocks and other infrastructure that degrades traditional field patterns.

The demise of the Chilterns furniture industry led to a reduction in the harvesting of timber. However, the recent trend for wood burning stoves and wood-fuel heating systems has recharged the management of small woodlands. At the same time, very few quality timber trees reach maturity. This is due to both the rapid increases in deer and grey squirrel numbers, and the constant spread of new diseases. Further, there is a trend to split some large estate woodlands into small wood lots and sell them. The result is inconsistent management, and pressure for fencing, accesses and buildings. This means that the control of pests and diseases becomes even more difficult.

The porous chalk rock of the Chilterns Hills forms part of the most significant aquifer in the south east of England. Water levels within the aquifer supplying the internationally important Chiltern chalk streams, normally fluctuates with the changing seasons. Ground water recharge occurs with the steady seepage of rainwater through farm and woodlands in the winter months. However, utility companies extract drinking water for millions of people – residents of the Chilterns and far beyond. The Chilterns has one of the highest levels of water use per head of population in the UK. In addition, the chalk streams are particularly vulnerable to impacts of new development. Not only do flows suffer, when abstraction is increased to supply the increased demand for drinking water, but also there is an increased flood risk. Rain water runs off quickly from paved surfaces, collects pollutants from the drainage system and, with increasing numbers of extreme weather events, can lead to flash flooding and poor water quality. Extreme weather events also reduce the effectiveness of groundwater recharge from farm and woodland. Heavy rain fall runs quickly off valley sides and can carry silt from arable fields into the chalk streams if field margins or other measures aren’t present to arrest the flow.
Currently, all nine chalk streams that flow through the AONB are failing to attain the Water Framework Directive (WFD) objective of Good Ecological Status (GES) or Potential (GES/P), primarily due to low flows.

At the same time as the global influences set out above push towards irrevocable change to the Chilterns we love, many farmers and woodland owners do protect the land they work on and look after the wildlife it supports. Utility companies use natural resources and they are now coming to understand how complex and delicately balanced our natural systems are. Many organisations and an increasing army of members of the public, volunteer to protect reserves, habitats and the countryside they enjoy.

Farming, forestry, utility companies abstracting our drinking water all depend on the natural capital resources provided by the Chilterns. We all have a duty to protect and, where degraded, improve these resources – our soils (sometimes prone to erosion on steep valley sides), our chalk aquifer (vulnerable to over abstraction and diffuse pollution of nutrients, pesticides and silt) and the diverse range of plant and animal life these resources support.

The UK will have formally left the European Union and, therefore, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in March 2019, by the time this Management Plan is published. Post CAP, the UK Government is committed to guaranteeing the same level of total funding until 2022. An 'agricultural transition' period in England will help farmers prepare for new trading relationships and a new environmental land management system. This Management Plan will influence government thinking and allocation of funds that will assist land managers and foresters protect and enhance the Chilterns landscape.

### Strategic Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LO1</th>
<th>Protect and, where degraded, improve the Chiltern’s natural capital resources – soils, water, clean air.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LO2</td>
<td>Ensure that the Chilterns remain a functional, working landscape with viable, sustainable and diverse farming, forestry and rural economy sectors.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The map above highlights Woodland cover across the AONB.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LO3</th>
<th>Safeguard the Chilterns landscape by maintaining and enhancing all landscape features (such as hedges and trees), important wildlife habitats and cultural heritage at all times.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LO4</td>
<td>Increase resilience to pests, diseases, non-native invasive species and climate change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LO5</td>
<td>End environmentally unsustainable abstraction from chalk stream catchments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LO8</td>
<td>Ensure that those who work in the landscape, local and national policy makers, and the public, understand the link between environmentally sustainable farming, forestry, rural economy sectors and a healthy Chilterns AONB.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policies

To achieve these objectives we must work together to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LP1</th>
<th>Make agreed best practice advice (farming, forestry and other land management) accessible to all.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best practice will ensure healthy soils, clean water and unpolluted air – vital for farming, forestry, wildlife, local communities and visitors. Best practice advice can also help existing landowners and new entrants to the farming and forestry sectors appreciate how they can look after the landscape features under their control including hedgerows, hedgerow and in-field trees, pollard willows alongside chalk streams.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LP2</td>
<td>Publicise and promote appropriate land-based skill training and advances in new technology across the AONB.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both traditional rural skills and modern technology have their place in securing a healthy Chilterns landscape – from hedge laying to GPS guided farming operations which avoid compaction, damage to soils and over use of fertilizers and pesticides.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LP3</td>
<td>Promote the production and processing of local produce, including venison and wood-fuel.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Local produce can reinforce a sense of place for visitors and residents alike. However, successful marketing can also benefit the environment. For example, venison sales can help support deer management, wood-fuel marketing finances on-going woodland management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| LP4 | Ensure landowners and land managers continue or re-introduce favourable grazing management on all areas of Chilterns chalk grassland |
We need grazing animals to look after our grasslands but, for many farmers, this is currently uneconomic.

[Case study, grazing at Blows Down]

**LP5**  
**Ensure that more landowners sensitively manage more hedgerows.**

We have over 4,000 km of hedgerow in the Chilterns. Between 2006 and 2008, 330 hedges were surveyed and only 38% where in good condition. Consequently, 62% (approximately 2,500km or just over 1,500 miles) of our Chilterns hedgerows need attention. We could reduce nutrient enrichment, buffer them from cultivation and allow hedges to become wider and taller. Further, an average Chilterns hedge may need laying or coppicing every 40 years. This means that across the Chilterns, we need to rejuvenate at least 100km (62 miles) of hedge every year.

Maintaining our hedge network will protect vital connections for wildlife (wildlife corridors), protect the linking fabric of our countryside and, particularly when rejuvenating old hedgerows, will preserve ancient field patterns that are still discernible today.

[insert Photo – hedge laying course]

**LP6**  
**Encourage landowners and local communities to plant 500 new standard trees in our hedgerows across the Chilterns per year.**

Some 44,000 standard trees grow in Chilterns hedges but most of these are over mature. Many will succumb to old age or diseases, such as Ash Dieback or Sudden Oak Decline, in the coming years. Even without the rapid spread of pests and diseases, based on an average mature age of 100 years (looking at a range of trees from the relatively short-lived cherry to longer lived oak), we will need to plant 440 new trees per year to maintain hedgerow tree numbers. Replanting 500 hedgerow trees a year is a minimum; to keep up with disease pressure, we should be aiming for nearer 1,000!

[insert Photo – hedgerow trees]

Detailed proposals will need to be developed by those living and working within the AONB.

**LP7**  
**Link and buffer valued habitats – including grasslands, woodlands, streams – by a network of field margins (both grass and annually cultivated unsown arable margins as appropriate), new woodland and low intensity grassland areas.**

Farmland, woodland, orchards, commons, streams, golf courses, public open space, even road verges can all provide important links to connect wildlife habitats.

**LP8**  
**Ensure there is no loss of woodland within the AONB**

The Chilterns is renowned for its woodland, which covers 23.74% of the AONB. Much of this contains important wildlife and archaeology. 56% is classed as ancient woodland. This has been in constant woodland management for over 400 years (medieval times).

It is important that no woodland is lost to building works or infrastructure. Indeed, we should seek opportunities to increase the woodland area. This is in line with government policy. However, government resources will be needed if the total area of woodland is to increase.
| LP9 | Manage woodlands to achieve a greater diversity of tree species and varied age structure to ensure economic sustainability, enhance biodiversity and make them more resilient to disease and climate change. It is important that statutory agencies and advisers work together with woodland owners and managers. They can provide advice, training and support identifying the most appropriate tree species and on-going woodland management to achieve this policy. Species selection tools, such as Forest Research’s Ecological Site Classification, can help plan site appropriate planting. |
| LP10 | Restore Planted Ancient Woodlands (PAWS) returning them to predominantly broadleaf species and implement sensitive long-term management. On-going support and advice needs to be maintained. |
| LP11 | Manage glades, other open areas and woodland edges to provide a varied habitat for woodland birds, butterflies and plants. Partnerships between woodland owners, statutory agencies, local wildlife and volunteer groups will help achieve this policy. |
| LP12 | Protect and sensitively manage historic and cultural features. These features include ancient parish boundary hedges and field patterns, medieval Strip Lynchets, woodland boundary banks and saw pits. |
| LP13 | Restore chalk stream flows through reduction of abstraction to environmentally sustainable levels. Adopting the Environment Agency’s ‘Restoring Sustainable Abstraction’ programme together with an abstraction licencing scheme that provides adequate protection of the water environment, is essential for the long-term health of the area’s chalk streams. |
| LP14 | Support a catchment based approach to the enhancement and sustainable management of the Chilterns water environment. This will include Natural flood management through farming and woodland management practises and help reconnect rivers with their flood plains. |
| LP15 | Enhance and restore the natural form and function of chalk streams and enhance chalk stream habitat connectivity. |
| LP16 | Encourage management that acknowledges the characteristic river valley landscape  
Smaller and irregular field patterns and pollard willows often characterise river valleys within the AONB. |

**O3 Resilience**

| LP17 | Raise awareness of pest, diseases and non-native invasive species along with the need for improved biosecurity. |
| LP18 | Control and manage deer numbers, grey squirrel, *Glis glis* and mink, coordinated at a landscape scale  
Statutory agencies will need to support landowner collaboration and partnership groups (similar to the ‘Farmer Cluster’ model) if this policy is to succeed. |
| LP19 | Develop firewood harvesting as a tool to restructure ash woodland suffering from ash die back (taking care to retain resistant trees). |

**O4 Understanding the links**

| LP20 | Make relevant, informative and interesting information about farming, forestry and the rural economy readily available to all residents and visitors to the AONB.  
The Chilterns is a working environment. It is important for visitors and residents to understand the processes that shape the environment they enjoy and the wider environmental benefits that are provided. This includes carbon capture and flood water management benefits provided by both grassland and woods.  
It is also important for the farming and forestry sectors to appreciate both the challenges and opportunities provided by working within a much loved and visited nationally protected landscape. |
| LP21 | Promote public awareness and understanding of the link between water demand, abstraction and chalk stream flows together with measures to reduce demand and increase water use efficiency. |
Key Actions

1) Increase collaborative projects, such as farm and woodland clusters, deer control partnerships, landscape scale projects and coordinate management advice (including Chiltern Woodlands Project, Chiltns Chalk Streams Projects, government agencies).

2) Seek existing and new funding to support landscape and ecological management, rural businesses (including agricultural and forestry) and rural communities – both from government agencies, local government and from other sources such as HLF and charitable trusts.

3) Promote a greater uptake of existing agri-environment schemes.
4) Work with government and local stakeholders to design post-Brexit environmental land management measures (covering both agriculture and forestry) that offer pragmatic solutions to protect and enhance the natural capital, landscape and wildlife of the Chilterns, provide good value for the tax payer and realistic recompense to help sustainable farming and forestry sectors. Environmental land management measures should, for example enable grazing of chalk grassland and address other issues mentioned above.

5) Develop and deliver schemes that achieve WFD objectives for the water environment.

6) Work collaboratively with local advisers, land agencies, representative organisations to encourage landowner, farmer and forester uptake of future environmental land management measures.

7) Increase volunteer activity – including parish hedgerows, commons, ‘looker’ network for grazing partnerships, rights of way, wildlife and landscape surveying and audits (Chiltern Society, Chiltern Rangers, National Trust, Wildlife Trusts, river groups, Chilterns Commons).

8) Extend protection of fragile habitats by expanding local designation and improved national legislation. These habitats include the specie rich chalk grassland, ancient woodland and chalk streams.

9) Establish a freely accessible website (E-hub) to promote good practice (including, for example, biosecurity measures), publicise training and technical innovation to local businesses; provide information to the public and promote the Chilterns AONB offer.

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34 GB Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=55
Check Clean Dry campaign http://www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry/
Forestry Commissions ‘Keep It Clean’ campaign https://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/beeh-a6tek3
8. Enjoyment and Understanding

Context

The Chilterns has long been a place for leisure and recreation. Since the time of ‘Metroland’, good public transport allows Londoners to take the train straight out of the city and into the countryside. And very many people do just that. This ease of access and the wide range of opportunities on offer make the Chilterns particularly valuable as both a local and a regional recreational resource. It is a place for physical activity and an escape from busy and pressured lives. It is a landscape ideal for walking, cycling and a vast array of outdoor activities. There is an extensive rights of way network, two National Trails and dozens of promoted routes. The Chilterns provides an accessible natural health service, with health walks and green gym activities on offer. Organised events and endurance challenges have become increasingly popular over the last few years and new initiatives have developed such as Park Runs.

Today, people are working longer hours, spending less time outdoors and leading lives that are more sedentary. This is taking its toll on their health and happiness. The need for a beautiful and tranquil environment to recharge the batteries is greater than ever. The Chilterns already attracts a large numbers of local leisure users, and this is increasing with new housing growth. However visitor numbers are unevenly spread, with visitor pressure concentrated on some of the most sensitive chalk downland sites. Overall, the Chilterns has the capacity to accommodate greater use. It can benefit a much greater proportion of the 1.6 million people who live within 8km of the Chilterns, in particular the least active.

The challenge is to manage visits and countryside services well, to ensure the protection of the most popular and vulnerable countryside sites and habitats. This will require more investment in countryside provision and public engagement to attract more volunteers and stewards to help care for the AONB in the future.

Strategic Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EO1</th>
<th>Secure national recognition for the wealth of accessible recreational opportunities the Chilterns countryside offers to residents and visitors.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EO2</td>
<td>Ensure more high-quality opportunities for outdoor recreation, life-long learning and volunteering for all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO3</td>
<td>Ensure more people are able to enjoy healthier and happier lives through enjoying the Chilterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO4</td>
<td>Make more people aware of what makes the Chilterns special; inspire them to help care for it and contribute to its protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO5</td>
<td>Encourage much greater use of the Chilterns countryside by people from the towns/urban communities surrounding the Chilterns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policies

To achieve these objectives we must work together to:

### O1 National recognition

| EP1 | Increase support and funding for a well-maintained, high quality and better connected rights of way network for walking, cycling and riding. |
|     | The recreational opportunities in the Chilterns rely on a high quality rights of way network; it is one of the main ways for users to explore the AONB. Local Authorities have faced severe funding and staff cuts over the last few years, making it much more challenging to maintain standards and develop new opportunities. |

### O2 High quality recreation opportunities

| EP2 | Encourage greater use of the National Trails and regional promoted routes and maximise their contribution to the local economy. |
|     | The Chilterns has some iconic long-distance promoted routes. This includes two National Trails (the Ridgeway and the Thames Path) and regional routes such as the Chiltern Way and Chilterns Cycleway. |

| EP3 | Support initiatives to improve accessibility to the countryside, making it – and promoting it – as the most accessible landscape in the country. |
|     | Access to the countryside should be further improved to provide more and better opportunities for everyone to enjoy the countryside. This includes providing physical access, waymarking, information and facilities on appropriate sites where these are lacking (e.g. car parking, Forest Schools sites). |

| EP4 | Expand opportunities for volunteering and lifelong learning and ensure it is better coordinated across the Chilterns. |
|     | Volunteers are more important than ever to countryside organisations. They provide the resource to help care for the Chilterns. Volunteering can bring multiple health benefits; it can increase people’s skills and confidence; and it can decrease health inequalities and isolation. |

[Insert: Volunteering case study]

| EP5 | Ensure all young people in the Chilterns and surrounding towns have opportunities to experience and learn about the Chilterns informally and through formal education. |
|     | Many young people from urban areas have never experienced the Chilterns countryside, even though it is on their doorstep. Young people are a priority audience. There is potential to nurture greater exploration and understanding at an early stage which will build a lasting interest. This can be done through events at countryside sites, Forest Schools, outreach to schools, getting young people involved in conservation projects or outdoor activities. |
### EP6 Greater engagement

**Broader public engagement activity to attract new audiences and increase understanding and enjoyment of the AONB, in particular targeting urban communities and young people.**

Many residents from towns adjoining the Chilterns do not visit and enjoy the special landscape they have on their doorstep. Awareness of the AONB as a protected landscape is low, especially outside the AONB. Events can attract new and diverse audiences and stimulate an interest in the Chilterns. However, current activities on offer tend to attract a narrow demographic.

### EP7 Better provision and take-up of car-free visitor experiences in the Chilterns

**Encourage better provision and take-up of car-free visitor experiences in the Chilterns.**

Opportunities should be sought to reduce car use by countryside users by offering good alternatives and promoting their use. This should include:

- Safe, attractive and accessible infrastructure for walking and cycling in and around the Chilterns
- Promoting integrated public transport and Active Travel Plans to and across the Chilterns
- Lobbying for more and safer cycling routes
- Encouraging additional bike hire

### EP8 Inspired to care

**Promote greater understanding of the Chilterns landscape and respect for other users, through communication and education.**

People need to be aware of the potential effects their activities can have on both sensitive habitats and on other recreational users. Although some anti-social behaviour will always occur, education can go a long way to minimising the problems. It can also stimulate an interest in the landscape around them.

### EP9 Sustainable use

**Raise the profile and visibility of the Chilterns through high quality gateway signage, information and interpretation.**

Awareness of the Chilterns as a protected landscape is low, even within the AONB. There is no unified brand or sense of place. Raising the profile of the Chilterns is crucial to attracting support for the area and ensuring its future. There are many ways this can be achieved, for example through information boards, interpretation, signage, leaflets and digital communications.

### EP10 Increase the sustainable use of the Chilterns for recreation and physical activity.

**Increase the sustainable use of the Chilterns for recreation and physical activity.**

The number of people living in or close to the Chilterns is increasing. However, there are still large numbers of people who do not make use of the Chilterns countryside, often they are not aware of the opportunities on their doorstep or how to access them. There is potential for many more people to enjoy and benefit from countryside recreation within the
AONB. However there needs to be a Chilterns-wide visitor management initiative to ensure visitor use is sustainable.

**EP11 Secure commitment from partners to gather and commission data and research that will contribute to the development of a Visitor Management Strategy for the Chilterns.**

**EP12 Ensure the Chilterns benefits from new and improved access and green space provision linked to new built development.**

There are a lot of major new housing and infrastructure developments in the Chilterns that will affect countryside access and the rights of way network. It is essential to maintain and enhance the connectivity and character of the rights of way network.

**Key Actions**

1) Seek funding to develop and deliver a new large-scale Chilterns public engagement programme, with a particular focus on urban audiences.

2) Develop a visitor management initiative to provide new and improved access whilst protecting the most vulnerable sites. To include:
   - An assessment of carrying capacity, identifying which areas are potentially robust to recreational pressure and which are likely to be vulnerable
   - Identify priority sites for new greenspace and new access links, to create recreational space close to where people live
   - Enhanced walking and cycling routes from town centres to the countryside to encourage more non-car based visiting to the Chilterns

3) Expand and develop the Chilterns Walking Festival and make it sustainable once Leader funding has stopped (October 2019).

4) Coordinate a review and analysis of existing data relating to leisure use of the Chilterns, with a view to commissioning (and getting funded) a new Chilterns Leisure Visitor Survey. This will include a survey of non-users, especially those from the urban areas surrounding the Chilterns.
9. Social and economic wellbeing

Context

The Chilterns has a fantastic array of natural and social assets, which makes it such an attractive place to live, work and visit. Communities and businesses from both within and beyond the AONB enjoy many benefits from the landscape. This includes tangible benefits from its natural resources such as clean water, fresh air and wood for fuel, which is covered in chapter 2. But it provides wider benefits too. It is a place for relaxation, exploration and inspiration, offering a rich cultural heritage, contact with nature, a sense of place and numerous opportunities for leisure, recreation and learning. However, there is low awareness of the Chilterns and the benefits it provides to society and as a visitor destination. Its value is not fully realised, in particular its contribution to peoples’ health and wellbeing. In addition, communities and businesses do not always recognise and value the importance of their role as custodians of this heritage.

But we can change this by measuring and demonstrating the value of the Chilterns, building the brand and profile of the area, and securing support and investment for the AONB. By doing this, we can bring even greater benefits to the communities and businesses in and around the Chilterns, and more resources to help protect the Chilterns for the future.

Supporting Communities of the Chilterns

The Chilterns is a living and working landscape, shaped, worked and enjoyed by people living in and around the AONB; 80,000 people live within the AONB and a further 1.6 million live within 8km. There are specific issues affecting communities of the Chilterns that this Management Plan seeks to influence:

- The economy of the Chilterns is doing well and is above the national average. However, forestry and farming activities such as planting and managing woodlands to produce timber and grazing livestock on the hills are in decline. Policies to ensure that the Chilterns remain a functional, working landscape with a viable rural economy sectors are set out in chapter 6

- The management of the landscape needs a range of skills that are in short supply, for example foresters and flint workers. Policies to encourage land-based skills training are included in chapter 6

- House prices in the Chilterns are well above the national average. Policies to support housing for local people are included in chapter 9

- More people than ever are experiencing social isolation and mental health issues. Contributory factors include the closure of village shops, pubs and community facilities, more people commuting outside the area and major new developments. There are many ways to address this, including promoting opportunities for volunteering, organising Festivals and community events, and encouraging activity through health walks and other programmes. Policies are included below and in chapter 7

- Better access links between rural and urban areas are needed and improved public and community transport options. Policies are included below and in chapter 7
Strategic Objectives

| SO1 | Increase the economic and social wellbeing of local communities and businesses within the AONB by supporting the development of the visitor economy and improving community facilities. |
| SO2 | Ensure that the AONB is recognised and valued by residents, visitors and the health sector for the contribution it makes to peoples' physical and mental health and wellbeing, offering connection with nature and a wide variety of recreational opportunities. |
| SO3 | Ensure that the natural capital of the Chilterns and its contribution to society is understood and valued by all decision makers and used to lever in funding. |
| SO4 | Ensure that businesses and communities in and around the AONB value its specialness, support Chilterns initiatives and help raise the profile of the area. |

Policies

To achieve these objectives we must work together to:

<p>| SP1 | Develop the visitor economy and increase its economic impact. |
|     | The Chilterns is a popular destination for local leisure but awareness of the Chilterns outside the local area is low. There is huge potential to attract more visitors, expand the short break market and raise the profile of the Chilterns. The Chilterns has some incredible tourism assets. More could be done to connect them, celebrate them and position them at the heart of the visitor offer. |
| SP2 | Seek the coordination of visitor development and promotion across the Chilterns, including securing funding for a dedicated resource. |
|     | Tourism promotion is largely based on local authority boundaries. Consequently, there is very limited Chilterns-wide tourism promotion other than by the Chilterns Conservation Board and Chilterns Tourism Network. This is done with very limited resources. |
| SP3 | Promote historic market towns as gateways to the countryside. |
|     | Many of our market towns are appealing visitor destinations. In addition, they have a special role as gateways to the Chilterns. They are easy to get to by public transport and provide visitor facilities such as car parking, pubs, shops, cafes. Market towns provide easy access to the Chilterns countryside, with lots of walks and rides on offer. |
| SP4 | Support rural diversification that adds value to the local economy |
|     | Only through diversification can many small to medium size farms in the Chilterns remain viable. It can provide important visitor facilities, such as farm accommodation. This is in short supply in the Chilterns. What is approved needs to be sympathetic to its setting and the wider landscape. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SP5</strong></th>
<th>Retain and promote community facilities, including shops, pubs, public and community transport, and encourage them where there are gaps in provision.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many villages in the Chilterns have lost their shop or pub over the years or seen a decline in community facilities and services. Others are under threat. These amenities are often the life-blood of the community and affect both local people and visitors. We must support and promote community facilities to help them survive. Some villages have been able to step in and buy the pub/shop threatened with closure and run it as a community business.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>SP6</strong></th>
<th>Promote local food, drink and craft products</th>
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<tr>
<td>The last few years have seen many new, high quality, artisan food and drink producers starting up. These range from Chilterns beer and wine to cheese and charcuterie producers. People are increasingly interested in knowing where their food comes from but awareness of Chilterns produce is low. There is huge potential in promoting the Chilterns’ rich diversity of food, drink and craft products. This can be through festivals and events, promotional activity and business engagement. By promoting the Chilterns food, drink and crafts heritage, it is also a way of keeping cultural traditional alive, for example the Chilterns Apple Days or cherry pie festivals.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>SP7</strong></th>
<th>Encourage greater use of the AONB landscape to improve levels of physical and mental health and wellbeing.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The continued decline in physical activity is a key factor in the deepening health crisis. Yet there is recognition of the significant benefits to physical and mental wellbeing of spending time in a natural environment and taking exercise. There has been a growth in health and wellbeing programmes based on outdoor activity such as Health Walks and Green Gyms.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>SP8</strong></th>
<th>Expand opportunities for volunteering and lifelong learning and ensure it is better coordinated across the Chilterns.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers are more important than ever to countryside organisations. They provide the resource to help care for the Chilterns. Volunteering can bring multiple health benefits; it can increase people’s skills and confidence; and it can decrease health inequalities and isolation.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>SP9</strong></th>
<th>Ensure that the value of the natural capital assets of the AONB is better understood and promoted; that it is used to underpin investment and growth strategies; and to secure net gain for the Chilterns.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Chilterns provides multiple benefits to people in addition to the productive capacity of the land. It can support biodiversity, lock up carbon, help ensure clean supplies of water as well as providing places for leisure, recreation, health and wellbeing. There is a poor appreciation of the benefits people derive from the AONB. In particular, the benefit for populations living outside the AONB enjoy is often over-looked. As more land is built on, the need to understand, value and promote the benefits becomes more important.</td>
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</table>
**SP10** Ensure businesses both in and around the AONB, recognise the value of being located in the Chilterns and endorse the Chilterns brand.

A Chilterns location can benefit businesses. This is especially so for those with a connection to the visitor economy. However, the Chilterns does not have a strong brand. There is nothing for businesses to build upon. There is low awareness of the AONB and its value as a protected landscape.

**SP11** Investigate income generation opportunities including visitor-giving schemes.

Visitor Giving is a way of offering visitors the opportunity to give a little something back to looking after the places they love. It is a way of providing a mechanism for collecting those small contributions that can add up to a significant amount.

**SP12** Promote the Chilterns at key visitor entry points

There are some major national and international visitor-gateways in or near the Chilterns. These include railway stations, Luton airport, Beaconsfield Service Station. There are many smaller gateways too where information, facilities and signage would help people access and enjoy the Chilterns.

**Key Actions**

1) Develop a partnership approach to access health and activity funds.

2) Explore and access alternative sources of funding to deliver more outdoor activity programmes and benefit more people (including personal health budgets, social or green prescribing and spending commitments by Sport England to encourage physical activity).

3) Seek funding for a range of Chilterns visitor projects based on the priority themes of Food & Drink, Arts & Culture, History & Heritage.

4) Support and promote a rolling programme of Chilterns Festivals throughout the year, including the Walking Festival, Food & Drink Festival, Heritage Festival.

5) Work with the business sector to encourage greater investment and support for Chilterns initiatives.
10. Development

Context

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are outstanding landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so precious that it is in the nation’s interest to safeguard them. Special planning controls apply in the AONB. The planning system protects AONBs in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Part of looking after the Chilterns for current and future generations involves limiting development and making sure that anything that is built genuinely enhances the AONB. This is very difficult to do. In this chapter, we set out our policies to achieve it.

Whilst nationally there is a need for development, there is also a need to protect the most special places, the finest and most beautiful parts of the countryside. They must be kept special. This is particularly true for the Chilterns, an irreplaceable green lung for London and its commuter belt. The AONB is not a suitable location for general housing and economic development that does not need to be in the nationally protected landscape. In the AONB, different priorities apply: conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty, and the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage. Planning policies and decisions for our area should encourage the Chilterns’ role as a haven for wildlife, a place to experience history and enjoy the outdoors.

The Chilterns is a highly desirable area in which to live. It is commutable to London and closely surrounded by large settlements, many of which are planned to expand. For example, Aylesbury has been designated a Garden Town and will grow by at least 16,000 extra homes. Local authorities face pressures when preparing their Local Plans for settlements to expand into the AONB and its setting, for example at Luton, Princes Risborough, High Wycombe, Hemel Hempstead and Marlow, to name but a few. The vast scale of the Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor will change the strategic geography of the region forever, while making it ever more important that the Chilterns is protected to play its role in the health and wellbeing of that future population.

Pressures for development have increased significantly since the last AONB Management Plan was prepared. Recently, there has been a four-fold increase in the number of new homes granted planning permission each year in the Chilterns AONB. On top of windfall development on sites not anticipated in advance, Councils are themselves proposing significant housing allocations in the AONB in draft local plans and neighbourhood plans. There could be over 500 new homes built a year in the Chilterns AONB post 2020. This could result in the construction of 7,500 new homes in the nationally protected landscape of the Chilterns AONB by the mid-2030s. This will have serious impacts on its beauty, character, ecology and tranquillity. We also have HS2 being built through the Chilterns AONB and airport expansion proposed at Heathrow and Luton, which threaten more over-flying of the AONB.

Even small scale, cumulative changes to land and buildings can materially harm the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB. Creeping suburbanisation is already diminishing the quality of the landscape, for instance when householders or businesses build unsympathetic extensions or install inappropriate fencing, gates, external lighting and domestic paraphernalia. If habitats continue to

35 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 55) - “development,” means the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land.

36 Independent Review of Housing in England’s AONBs (2017) shows number of homes permitted in the Chilterns AONB rose from an average of 82 per year before 2012, to over 386 per year during 2015-17 (the 386 figure is an under-count because the 2015-17 figures exclude smaller sites of less than 10 units).
become smaller with their links severed by our transport corridors, noise barriers and security fencing, the AONB will be poorer. More overflying aircraft, roads used as rat-runs and light pollution at night will spoil the beauty and tranquillity of our area. The Chilterns will become less enjoyable to visit and less special.

[insert Photo & caption: Enjoying the Ridgeway National Trail. In parts of the Chilterns, there are stretches where you don’t see a building for miles, this rare experience in the busy south-east is something to treasure and safeguard]

The Chilterns is becoming increasingly exclusive as a place to live. Research by Savills using Land Registry data show that house prices in the Chilterns AONB attract a premium of 75% above the average house price for the counties, and 162% higher house price than the UK average:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Distinction</th>
<th>Average Second Hand Sale Price, 12 months to April 2018</th>
<th>5 Year Growth</th>
<th>Premium above County(s) average</th>
<th>Premium above UK average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chilterns AONB</td>
<td>£718,629</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>162%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Savills Research using Land Registry

Although many homes have been permitted in the AONB in recent years, very little of it has been affordable housing. Regrettably, there have been no Rural Exceptions Schemes37 in the Chilterns for several years. The stock of affordable homes has dwindled through the Right to Buy, and in some areas, by taking away restrictive covenants designed to prevent former council housing being re-sold later as holiday homes or second homes. Rural pubs, village shops and barns are being lost to residential conversion, while smaller homes and bungalows seem attractive propositions for redevelopment into luxury large replacement dwellings. Part of the cultural heritage of the Chilterns is lost when families with long local connections move away. Outdoor work in farming, forestry, conservation land management and tourism is typically low paid, making it hard to keep people with the skills the AONB needs. Too often agricultural occupancy conditions have been removed with ease, reducing the stock of tied accommodation that goes with a job. We need new approaches to make sure the right kind of housing is being built. It must be available and affordable for local people. Sensitively-designed conversions, infill, rural exceptions sites and community-led housing schemes in the villages of the AONB can benefit the AONB. They are best when of a small-scale and meet local needs.

We need stronger mechanisms to protect rural pubs, village shops, public transport and community buildings for communities and visitors.

37 Rural Exceptions Schemes are small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be allowed for housing. They seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection.
Cumulative impacts

It is important to assess the cumulative impact of development on the character of the AONB. A single planning proposal may affect only a small area of the AONB. However, a number of similar developments in the area, or continuous incremental changes over time, or a series of new developments in sequential views along an important trail, can have a significant impact. The combined effects of a set of developments can have a cumulative detrimental effect. The character of the AONB, its wildlife and people’s enjoyment could slowly diminish over time. We have further advice in a Position Statement on the Cumulative Impacts of Development on the Chilterns AONB.

[Photo & caption: Keep dark skies and stars bright: light pollution from inappropriate large glazed building design [or search on-line]

Photo caption: Classic Chilterns vernacular architecture at Turville: small-scale cottages of local brick and flint with clay tile roofs

Photo & caption: Award winning new Chilterns building at the Winery at Hundred Hills Vineyard, South Oxfordshire

Photo & caption: Poor ‘anywhere’ designs fail to keep the Chilterns special and distinctive (Chinnor).

Photo & caption: Grand new build projects can also be insensitive to the AONB. Stark, white, huge and angular this replacement dwelling, here viewed from the Chilterns cycleway, dominates the landscape in its siting and design.]

A summary of planning arrangements in the AONB

Planning authorities have a legal duty to have regard to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB38. They also have the permissive power to take all such action they need to in order to accomplish this39. However, the national conversation about planning tends to put meeting housing numbers first. Sometimes the responsibility and power local authorities have towards the AONB is forgotten or sidelined. This results in approval of housing schemes within the AONB that do not align with the vision for the AONB, or government policy for the AONB, or demonstrate that the statutory duty towards the AONB has been met.

The Chilterns Conservation Board has no planning powers and does not make decisions on planning applications. The Conservation Board has an advisory role. We comment on emerging plans and major planning applications and we prepare guidance. The AONB is split across thirteen local authorities40, each with planning responsibilities. The Conservation Board brings together all those who make plans and determine planning

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38 The duty is set out the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 section 85. The duty of regard towards conserving and enhancing the AONB applies to local planning authorities, parish councils, infrastructure providers, government bodies and others.

39 and the permissive power in section 84

40 3 counties, 2 unitaries, 7 districts and 1 borough council. To find your local planning authority click here
applications in the Chilterns (see map below). We encourage cross-boundary thinking and co-operation. We would like a single consistent set of planning policies adopted across the AONB to ensure all planning decisions reflect its special qualities. This helps ensure that policies and decisions conserve and enhance the Chilterns for current and future generations.

When the CRoW Act 2000 Section 85 duty towards the AONB applies in planning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In plan-making – for example when</th>
<th>In the development management process – for example when</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting vision, aims and objectives</td>
<td>Having pre-application discussions with applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing development management policies (not just those related to protected landscapes or the countryside)</td>
<td>Validating planning applications (is there the right information from the applicant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating options for development</td>
<td>Scoping what supporting information is relevant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing reasonable alternatives</td>
<td>Deciding whether a development is major development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing site allocations</td>
<td>Deciding whether a development is EIA development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparing site specific policies</td>
<td>Deciding whether full or outline permission is appropriate and whether or not to reserve matters such as landscaping, appearance, scale and layout</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deciding whether to consult Natural England and the Chilterns Conservation Board and when taking their views into account</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing a case officer’s report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making a decision, by the Planning Committee or delegated, and when recording that decision</td>
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• Deciding whether or not to prepare or adopt Supplementary Planning Documents
• When undertaking Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)\footnote{Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process required by law of assessing the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment}
• When engaging in Duty to Co-operate discussions with other authorities

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|   | Deciding on conditions and obligations
|   | Deciding whether or not to grant prior approval for some Permitted Development (PD) rights\footnote{For see GPDO as amended}
|   | Deciding whether to remove PD rights
|   | Deciding whether or not to issue a lawful development certificate
|   | Deciding whether or not to use planning enforcement functions, including to address authorised development and to secure delivery of conditions and obligations if they are not being adequately implemented.

### Scale of development

The purpose of designating an area of countryside as AONB is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. An AONB must be treated differently from the wider countryside; it has the highest status of protection for its landscape and scenic beauty, equal to National Parks. Government policy is that great weight\footnote{National Planning Policy Framework para 1172} should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important in AONBs. This requirement applies to all sizes of planning proposal, large and small.

The National Planning Policy Framework confirms that the presence of AONBs can restrict development in order to help achieve sustainable development\footnote{National Planning Policy Framework para 172 and footnote 6 make it clear that the requirement for local plans to meet objectively assessed needs does not apply in AONBs (for plan-making provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other development unless ‘the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area’ with footnote 6 identifying AONBs as one such restriction.} and explains that the scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited\footnote{National Planning Policy Framework para 172}. To this end, the Chilterns AONB should not be required to accommodate general housing and other development needs that arise from outside of the AONB.

### Major development

Government policy requires that planning applications for major developments in AONBs should be refused “other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest”\footnote{National Planning Policy Framework para 172. Deciding whether a proposal is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.}.

In determining what constitutes major development in the AONB, we recommend that decision makers consider whether the proposal, by reason of its nature, scale and setting, has the potential to have a significant adverse impact on the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.
The potential for adverse impact will include the consideration of both the impact of cumulative development and the individual characteristics of each proposal and its context.

If a proposal is major, the decision maker will need to assess against the considerations in the NPPF para 172: “a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy; b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated”. Major housing schemes are unlikely to be acceptable because the need could be met outside the Chilterns AONB, elsewhere in the housing market area. Similarly, for large economic development, energy and other major proposals. If it is considered that exceptional circumstances exist and development would be in the public interest, all opportunities to conserve and enhance the special qualities should be sought, by following policies GP1, and DP1 to DP15.

**Permitted development rights**

Many permitted development rights do not apply in AONBs. For example, the following need planning permission: larger homes extensions, exterior cladding or pebble-dashing a home, loft conversions involving additions to roofs, larger outbuildings, swimming pools, barn conversions to dwellings. This enables local planning authorities to manage the impacts of development on key elements of landscape character; and manage the details involved in minor developments, conversions and changes of use. This helps ensure the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB.

**The setting of the AONB**

A development outside the AONB boundary can cause harm to the AONB, even if it is some distance away. The local authority's legal duty towards the AONB applies when a proposal affects land in the AONB, regardless of where that effect originates (inside or outside the AONB). We have produced special advice in a **Position Statement on Development Affecting the Setting of the Chilterns AONB**. The setting of the AONB is not a geographic zone that can be mapped, nor does it cover a set distance from the AONB boundary. Large proposals even far away can have an impact on the AONB, and so fall within the setting. We consider that the setting of the Chilterns AONB is the area within which development and land management proposals (by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design) may have an impact, either positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the area.

[Photo & caption: A View to a Hill. This greenfield land at Alscot outside the AONB is in the setting of the AONB, because there is a clear view to the AONB at Whiteleaf Cross, and panoramic views back from the public viewpoint on the top of Whiteleaf Hill. This field, and the view, will be lost to development under plans for a 2,500 home urban extension of Princes Risborough.]

This “after” example from Chinnor (Former Garden Centre Site) shows how development can harm the view to the AONB. The edge of Chinnor is now very visible from the Thame Road, Emmington Road and the public footpaths in between. The density and the alignment with the houses tightly

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47 These allow some types of development within certain thresholds without requiring planning permission, see GPDO as amended
48 in **Section 85 of the CRoW Act**
packed in a row, and lack of screening planting contribute to the negative effect on towards the escarpment.]

**Applying planning policies in the AONB**

The Conservation Board is not the planning authority for the Chilterns but is the statutory body for the AONB and can play a strong role in advising local planning authorities on both planning policy and planning applications. This AONB Management Plan is a material consideration in planning application decisions\(^{49}\) and planning weight can be appropriately attached. This AONB Management Plan should be considered when developing local plans and neighbourhood plans within or affecting the Chilterns AONB. The AONB Management Plan policies apply alongside government policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and policies in local authority development plans and community’s neighbourhood plans.

The effects of development on the Chilterns AONB are not just visual; it is not simply a landscape issue. Simply screening a development, or siting it on a plot to reduce visual harm, or cladding it with local materials, is not enough. The requirement is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, which means more than physical and visual aspects. Natural beauty includes the flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of the AONB\(^{50}\). Natural Beauty covers everything that adds together to make the area distinctive, such as landscape quality, scenic quality, relative wildness, relative tranquillity, natural heritage and cultural heritage\(^{51}\) (see box in this Plan’s Introduction ‘what is natural beauty’). Impacts can be direct (e.g. loss of habitat by building on it) or indirect (e.g. development generating more traffic and harming air quality or tranquillity in the AONB).

**Strategic Objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DO1</th>
<th>Ensure planning decisions put the conservation and enhancement of the AONB first.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DO2</td>
<td>Ensure that where development happens, it leaves the AONB better than it was before – richer in wildlife, quieter, darker at night, designed to have a low impact on the environment, and beautiful to look at and enjoy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO3</td>
<td>Embrace opportunities to restore natural beauty on sites currently degraded by unsympathetic development, infrastructure or dereliction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Policies**

To achieve these objectives we must work together to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DP1</th>
<th>Ensure planning decisions take full account of the importance of conserving and enhancing the AONB and the weight given to its protection in the NPPF.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DP2</td>
<td>Refuse development in the AONB unless:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{49}\) [https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment) see Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 8-004-20140306

\(^{50}\) Defined in section 92 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 in a non-exhaustive list

\(^{51}\) List of the natural beauty criterion in Natural England’s AONB Designation and Management Guidance
• it is a use appropriate to its location, and
• it is appropriate to local landscape character, and
• it supports local distinctiveness, and
• ecological and environmental impacts are acceptable, and
• there is no additional water abstraction from the chalk aquifer or chalk streams, and
• there is no harm to tranquillity through the generation of noise, motion and light that spoil quiet enjoyment or disturb wildlife, and
• there are no negative cumulative effects when considered with other plans and proposals

DP3 Refuse planning permission for major development in the AONB unless there are exceptional circumstances and where there is a clear demonstration it is in the public interest.

DP4 In the setting of the AONB, take full account of whether proposals harm the AONB. In particular, avoid development of land visible in panoramic views from the Chilterns escarpment, or which generates traffic in or travelling across the AONB, or which increases water abstraction from chalk streams.

DP5 Require a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that meets the standards in the GLVIA\(^\text{52}\) latest edition for all developments in the AONB or affecting its setting.

DP6 Support sustainable farming and forestry, nature conservation and facilities for visitors appropriate to the special qualities of the AONB.

DP7 Make sure that all development that is permitted in the AONB or its setting delivers a net gain for the Chilterns by

- on-site improvements for biodiversity, landscape, the rights of way network, AONB visitor facilities and/or

- financial contributions, secured through s106\(^\text{53}\) or CIL\(^\text{54}\), towards green infrastructure projects that enhance the AONB by meeting the aims of this AONB Management Plan.

DP8 Where a local community need is shown, support the development of well-designed, small-scale homes within villages that is affordable\(^\text{55}\) for people who work within or have long-standing family connections to the Chilterns AONB.

\(^{52}\) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, produced by the Landscape Institute

\(^{53}\) Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken (under section 106 of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act).

\(^{54}\) The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure or support development.

\(^{55}\) Affordable housing is housing for eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.
| DP9 | Only support development that is of the highest standards of design that respects the natural beauty of the Chilterns, the traditional character of Chilterns vernacular buildings, and reinforces a sense of place and local distinctiveness. Require a Design and Access Statement to accompany every application, explaining how it complies with the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide. |
| DP10 | Ensure that the design of HS2 complies with the Detailed Design Principles prepared by the AONB Review Group. |
| DP11 | Keep skies dark at night by only using light where and when needed. All new lighting should be the minimum required and meet or exceed guidance for the environmental zone it is in. For example, downward pointing, shielded, operated on timer, and with a ‘warm white’ colour temperature of 2700-Kelvin maximum. Avoid architectural designs that spill light out of large areas of glazing. |
| DP12 | Support sympathetic proposals that enhance the Chilterns as a place to visit, explore and enjoy. Protect existing visitor and community facilities, such as rural pubs, public transport, B&Bs, youth hostels, village shops and cafes. Support sensitively designed new visitor facilities. |
| DP13 | Support opportunities for enhancing the AONB by removing derelict or detracting developments and infrastructure. |
| DP14 | Avoid new or upgraded infrastructure (roads, the expressway, railways, airports, pylons, masts etc) which harm the AONB landscape, nature, air quality, tranquillity or the visitor experience. Fully assess impacts on the AONB, including increased recreation pressure, traffic, overflying and severance of ecological connectivity in the AONB. Avoid, mitigate and compensate to achieve a net gain for the AONB. |
| DP15 | Seek opportunities to remove or replace existing poor external lighting to restore dark skies at night. |

**O3 Restore natural beauty**

**Key Actions**

1) Work together to ensure all development plans covering the Chilterns conserve and enhance the AONB, for example by incorporating the [Chilterns AONB model policy](#).

2) Apply the CRoW Act 2000 [Section 85 duty](#) and refer to it when making decisions on planning proposals in or affecting the Chilterns AONB.

3) Apply the advice in the [Chilterns Buildings Design Guide](#) to ensure high quality sympathetic development.

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4) Work together to develop AONB enhancement projects that can be funded by development through s106 contributions, CIL and funding packages to offset the impacts of major urban growth or infrastructure projects.
11. Implementation and Monitoring

The creation of a Management Plan for the Chilterns AONB is led by the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) on behalf of those who have a responsibility or duty for the Chilterns; and for those who have an interest in and commitment to caring for the Chilterns.

The CCB has gathered feedback and input from the public, partners and stakeholders to create this plan. The plan describes what is needed to continue to conserve and enhance the AONB and to engage and benefit people and sets out key areas for partnership action. The Management Plan is high-level and to implement the plan, the CCB will work with partners to agree and take forward detailed action plans.

These detailed action plans will take account of the new Environmental Land Management system once agreed and outcomes of the Glover Review of National Parks and AONBs.

Implementation

Implementation requires three key components to be secured:

- partnership working;
- capacity and expertise; and
- appropriate resourcing.

Many organisations have a remit to deliver elements of this Management Plan and all potential partners will be invited to work with the CCB to plan implementation.

To ensure this Management Plan is delivered, it is necessary for the following to be in place:

1. Secure funding from central government for the CCB to allow it to lead and facilitate the implementation and carry out core functions such as planning advice.

2. Commitment and funding from local authority partners who have a duty to care for the AONB and contribute to the CCB to ensure the duty is co-ordinated effectively across authorities. The financial contribution from local authorities is an essential element of the funding model, partly matching the contribution from central government.

3. Support from farmers, landowners and land managers for policies and actions to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB is critical, for example, working to shared conservation objectives through farmland clusters.

4. Commitment from partner organisations to deliver the critical actions which fall within their remit e.g. the maintenance of Rights of Way by local authorities; low flow alleviation work by water companies; under grounding of power lines by utility companies; or ensuring phone masts are placed sensitively.

5. Strengthened relationships with parish councils, community organisations and NGOs etc within and near the AONB.

6. A new Environmental Land Management system which provides support for land and woodland management, targeting natural capital protection, nature’s recovery and access, providing public funding for public benefit.

7. Joint working to develop a menu of green infrastructure AONB enhancement projects that can be funded by development through Section 106 contributions, Community Infrastructure
Levy and funding packages to offset the impacts of growth, recreation pressure and infrastructure projects in and around the Chilterns.

8. Expertise and support from statutory agencies including Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and Historic England

9. Commitment from partner organisations to raising additional funding for priority projects e.g. Thames Water and Affinity Water providing support to the Chalk Streams Project.

10. Design and development of initiatives which attract additional sources of funding e.g. LEADER funding for the Chilterns Walking Festival and HLF funding for Beacons of the Past.

11. An effective partnership forum which allows partners to collaborate effectively, agree key actions, share resources and expertise and learn and share best practice from one another.

12. Contributions from many people who give their time freely, volunteering for conservation charities, maintaining footpaths and nature reserves, acting as walking festival walk guides etc.

13. Data for monitoring outcomes which is accurate, accessible, repeatable, up to date, and relevant to the geographic area of the AONB.

**Monitoring**

This Management Plan sets out a series of policies and actions which, together, aim to

- conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns
- enhance public understanding and enjoyment of the special quality of the AONB.

Effective long-term planning and decision-making requires evidence of the condition of the AONB together with an understanding of long-term changes and drivers for change.

In the 2008 – 2013 Management Plan the CCB set out a series of 20 Headline condition monitoring indicators, and the first State of the Chilterns Environment report was published in 2009, These condition monitoring indicators have been refined and adapted over the intervening years and reported against at intervals. (see p x for summary of most recent update).

Gathering the evidence against these headline indicators is an ongoing challenge. Many of the indicators originally proposed are no longer viable as data is no longer collected or costs of doing so have become prohibitive in light of declining budgets and growing pressures. In other cases, there have been changes in what data is collected, or frequency of collection, making long term trend monitoring difficult.

Taking account of these challenges, our proposal for monitoring and evaluation over the period of the current plan is to create a 2 tier set of monitoring indicators:

**Core monitoring indicators**

This is the set of indicators which we consider essential for long term trend monitoring and which we will aim to report on regularly (at least twice) over the course of the plan period (subject to availability of data).
These are based largely on data sets currently provided to AONBs by Natural England or readily available from other sources. Fulfilling this reporting relies upon these partners/third parties providing the data.

Over the course of the plan period we will work with partners to develop a series of additional measures (including themed studies and indicators) to deepen our understanding and provide insight to inform delivery of the policy objectives of the Management Plan.

**CORE MONITORING INDICATORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Core Monitoring Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Farmland management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental Land Management Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- area of overall take up and of specific options</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- % of Utilisable Agricultural Area in ELMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- predecessor scheme, area of take up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Woodland management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area of woodland/ % woodland under active and positive management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Priority habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area and condition of priority habitats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sites of scientific interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- % SSSI units in favourable condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- condition of SSSI units by broad habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- % geological SSSI units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Water bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of water bodies in good ecological status (Water Framework Directive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Heritage assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Scheduled Monuments;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Listed buildings (Grade 1/11*/11);</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Registered Parks and Gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% at risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% in improved condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Land enhanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area of land in positive conservation management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% change in number of volunteers/volunteer days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THEME INDICATORS
We will work with partners to devise measures in relation to each of the following themes:

1. Conservation and Enhancement of natural beauty

For example, we will explore options to measure:

- Landscape change e.g. fixed point photography/ volunteer survey
- Invasive non-native species – spread, and number/impact of management schemes e.g. for deer, grey squirrels
- % change in key species groups and character species – presence, range, abundance
- Number of non-designated heritage sites identified & mapped
- River fly monitoring as measure of pollution incidents
- Length of hedgerow restored per year
- Number of hedgerow trees planted per year
- Length of field margin managed per year
- Net biodiversity gain
- Investment of developer contributions in the AONB & its setting
- Number of planning applications in the AONB per year (above agreed threshold)
- Air quality
- Tranquillity/noise

2. Enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the Chilterns

For example, we will explore options to measure:

- Number of young people engaged
- Number of community groups engaged
- Web hits/ leaflet downloads
- Leisure use of the Chilterns – new visitor survey, including survey of ‘non-users’
- Number of members of conservation groups in the Chilterns (e.g. BBOWT, Chiltern Society, National Trust, Woodland Trust etc.)
- Perceptions of the value of the AONB

3. Social and economic wellbeing

For example, we will explore options to measure:

- Participation in health walks
- Growth of population with AONB and within 5km of AONB
- Number / value of visitors/tourists.
- % employed in tourism
- Number of rural exceptions sites and community-led housing schemes to meet local needs