

CHILTERNNS

CONSERVATION BOARD



ANNUAL REVIEW 2018/19

Welcome to the Chilterns Conservation Board's annual review. This report highlights the work of the Board during 2018-19, to conserve and enhance the Area of Natural Beauty, for the benefit of those living in, around or visiting this special place.

Much has been achieved this year. From our decision to request that the Chilterns is considered for National Park status, to receiving the news that our bid to the National Lottery for the largest ever conservation venture in the UK was successful. Combined with conducting the largest ever archaeological aerial survey of its type in the UK through our Beacons of the Past project, 2018-2019 has seen a series of firsts.



We have also undertaken our five-yearly task to review, with partners and the public, the Management Plan, which sets out the steps that are needed to continue to care for the AONB.

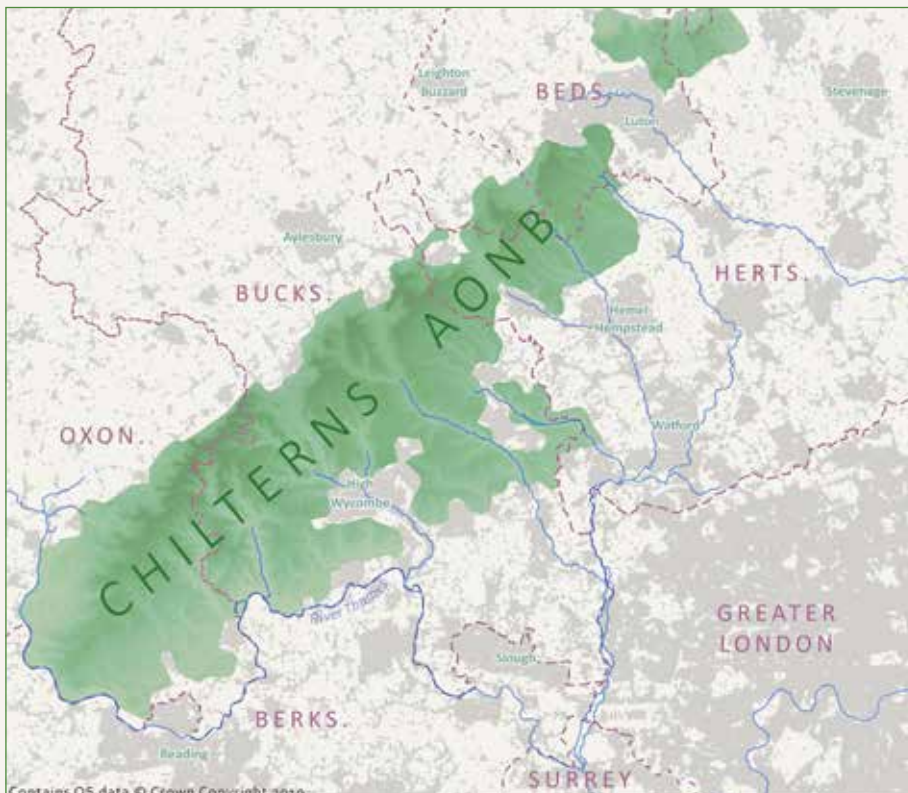
Our Walking Festival has grown in popularity with more themed walks and activities. The Chiltern Chalk Streams Project

has worked hard by securing projects to enhance habitats for water voles, train riverfly monitors and introduce water quality monitoring.

As you will see throughout this report, we have many achievements of which to be proud. However, there are still immense challenges facing the AONB: increased pressure for new housing and infrastructure; Ash Dieback, a major threat to millions of Ash trees across the Chilterns, and the critical status of our precious chalk streams. All of which contribute to a period of extreme concern.

We will continue to work hard to care for and enhance the Chilterns AONB and to mitigate the challenges we face, but it cannot be done alone. We rely on the help of volunteers, important partnerships with likeminded organisations and local authorities. We thank each and every one for your continued support. Together we can care for the Chilterns AONB forever and for everyone.

Ian Reay, Chairman



About the Chilterns AONB

The Chilterns is a beautiful area of rolling chalk hills, woodlands, streams and quiet valleys with brick and flint cottages. It is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), in recognition of one of the finest landscapes in the country.

About the CCB

Established in 2004, the Chilterns Conservation Board is a public body with two key purposes:

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

Whilst fulfilling these purposes, the board also seeks to foster social and economic well-being in local communities.

HOW WE MADE A DIFFERENCE

2,600
participants at
the Walking
Festival



70+
partners
engaged
in the
development of
Chalk Cherries
& Chairs Project



£2.8m new project funding
secured from the National Lottery



2000
survey & consultation
responses to our
Management Plan



50 woodland
owners advised



7 jobs created

14 farmers engaged
in Chilterns first ever
Farmer Cluster



1,400 km² of landscape
mapped in the UK's largest
bespoke archaeological LiDAR
survey



163
planning
applications
responded to



400ha
covered in advice
on designs for
work on the HS2
infrastructure



218,268
brand new
website visitors

25% increase in
Facebook followers



59
species of birds
recorded in Chilterns first
ever Big Farmland Bird Count



420
volunteers signed up for
the Hillforts project



PROJECT UPDATES & NEWS



The CCB team celebrate the fantastic news

Chalk, Cherries and Chairs: Landscape Partnership Scheme

In December 2018 we were thrilled to discover that our Chalk Cherries & Chairs project was successfully awarded a £2.4 million National Lottery grant, to run the largest partnership conservation project in the Central Chilterns to date.

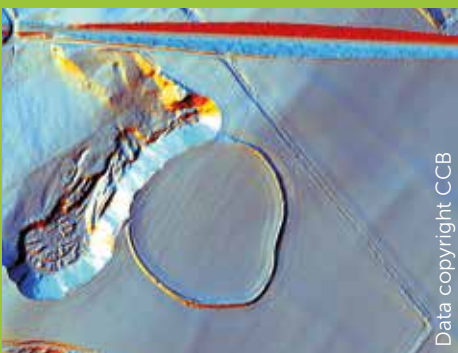
The five-year environmental programme is designed to restore and enhance the wildlife habitats, landscape features and cultural heritage of the Central Chilterns, whilst educating and

inspiring communities to become protectors of their local heritage and landscapes.

The Scheme will connect people to wildlife and cultural heritage of 278km² through 18 individual, but interwoven, projects which will include volunteering opportunities, education, digital media and a Small Grants Scheme to support community initiatives.



Beacons of the Past – Hillforts in the Chilterns Landscape



Data copyright CCB

A new LiDAR visualisation of Maiden Bower Hillfort.

In the year since the Hillforts team came on board, we have commissioned the largest bespoke archaeological LiDAR survey in the UK, recruited over 420 volunteers and trained over 165 volunteers on the GIS and LiDAR identification systems. We have also commissioned five reconstruction artists who will be creating images of what many of our Chilterns hillforts may have looked like in the past. We've begun conservation efforts on several sites, removing scrub, Ash Dieback and litter. Now we begin the exciting work of interpreting the LiDAR results and identifying new archaeology. We're using Citizen Science, where anyone who wants to can log on to our Online Portal to help spot new features in the landscape.

The image on the left shows Maiden Bower Iron Age hillfort, Bedfordshire. The north western section of the defensive boundary was largely destroyed by medieval and post-medieval quarrying for Totternhoe Stone. The quarry is now a SSSI and a nature reserve, the old spoil heaps reverted to chalk grassland, home to scarce plant species including orchids and butterfly species including the Duke of Burgundy and the Small Blue.



Chilterns Walking Festival

Over 2,600 participated in 142 events during our May and September 2018 Walking Festivals. The Festivals have been expanded to include a programme of family events during May half-term, and a series of 'Meet the Maker' walks taking in artists' studios, farmers and food producers. We have recruited and trained additional volunteers to help deliver and promote the Festivals.

- Over 60 organisations and partners helped deliver walks
- 20% of participants are new to walking/not regular walkers
- 60% of participants visited one or more local business

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Funding secured from the Radcliffe Trust to organise a series of Art & Craft walks
- National publicity including the Mirror's Top Ten things to do this May half term
- Two outdoor cooking events delivered by Path Hill Outdoors and aimed at Reading audiences

Chilterns Chalk Streams Project

This year the CCSP continued to work with a range of partners across the Chilterns to enhance and restore more Chilterns chalk stream habitat. This included:

- Restoring chalk stream habitat on the Wycombe Marsh Brook with Chiltern Rangers
- Enhancing habitat for water voles on 500m of the R. Chess at Latimer with Chiltern Rangers and the River Chess Association
- Supporting "Impress the Chess" project to improve access to the river at Canon's Mill Wood in Chesham and remove Himalayan balsam from the upper Gade
- Working with Groundwork South to deliver the Colne catchment plan and with Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (and partners) to train 30 new riverfly monitors for the Colne & Lea catchments
- Securing £22,000 funding for a water quality monitoring project for the R. Chess, in partnership with Queen Mary University of London and the River Chess Association
- Securing £50,000 from Thames Water to support an Education and Engagement Project



2019 proved to be a challenging year for the Chilterns chalk streams, with most suffering from low flows and some drying out completely due to a sustained period of below average rainfall. The long, hot and dry summer led to declining groundwater levels, dwindling flows and at times unprecedented levels of demand for water from the public. Due to drier than average soils, less than half the total amount of rain that fell was able to percolate down into the chalk to recharge the groundwater store. With such a poor recharge season and groundwater levels already below average for the time of year, most of the Chilterns rivers have long dry sections at a time when they should be flowing strongly. Without a wet summer, the prospects for the Chilterns' chalk streams this year look bleak.



Chiltern Woodlands Project

Over the last year the CWP provided tree and woodland management advice and assistance to 50 woodland owners. This included 22 ancient woods, 4 SSSI, 4 commons and an ancient monument, covering over 445 ha (1100 acres).

The project also ran a series of educational events including nine training days, which included woodland archaeology and tree identification, with a total of 123 participants. Project Director John Morris, also led eight Chiltern Society volunteer work parties on Friday mornings.

HS2

As part of the Chilterns AONB Review Group, the CCB helped prepare the HS2 Detailed Design Principles document, which was published in September 2018 and is used in assessing and advising on draft designs for viaducts, vent shafts and all elements of the new railway.

The Chilterns Conservation Board has also become the lead on a new project, which secured £500k from the HS2 Review

Planning & Development

2018/19 saw ongoing pressure for new housing and infrastructure in the Chilterns AONB. Several of our local authorities' draft Local Plans were submitted for independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate, proposing developing greenfield sites in the AONB at sites including: Lane End; Princes Risborough; Goring; North of Luton, and in the Hughenden Valley.

Our planning officer gave evidence at 5 plan examinations and made formal written responses to 34 consultations on local plans, neighbourhood plans, government consultations and infrastructure consultations. We also responded to 163 planning applications – more than ever before. Successes included refusal at appeal of harmful proposals for 80 homes at Woodcote and 95 dwellings at Sonning Common.

More housing and infrastructure development is planned for the Chilterns and surrounding area. To shape this at the early stages, we have got involved as stakeholders in proposals for housing growth at Hemel Hempstead, in a major new road and development area north of Luton, the expansion of Heathrow

Group to restore and enhance connections in the landscape and habitats, to provide greater resilience to change from HS2 through the Chilterns.

We will continue to press for the best possible design for wildlife, landscape and people's enjoyment of the AONB.

and Luton Airports with flight paths over the Chilterns, plans for Aylesbury Garden Town, and emerging plans for the Ox-Cams expressway and growth arc.

As the only public body looking across local planning authority boundaries at the Chilterns AONB as a whole, we continually press for assessment of the cumulative impacts of development in the Chilterns AONB, from individual planning proposals which could result in the loss of the special qualities of the AONB.

As well as pressing to avoid any harm to the AONB ever occurring, we also try to ensure that developers contribute more thorough on-site mitigation and off-site compensation, so that habitats and landscape of the AONB can be invested in, restored and enhanced. Our concerns about the design for the overhead rail electrification equipment on the Great Western mainline has borne fruit, with agreement for Network Rail to fund a major compensation package for the AONB, amounting to £750,000 for new mitigation tree planting, and £3 million for enhancing the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs along the rail corridor

Board News

Management Plan: In February 2019 the Chilterns Conservation Board adopted a new AONB Management Plan. The Management Plan offers policies and guidance to all those who have responsibility for caring for the Chilterns. It sets out a road map for improving the AONB's special qualities, reducing the impacts of threats, and identifies opportunities for conservation, enjoyment and community wellbeing. An important statutory duty, the Management Plan took 18 months to create with six staff seeking input from partners, communicating with the public and writing content.

Our public survey and consultations attracted almost 2000 responses. Thanks go to all those who contributed to its production. We commend the Plan to all our partners but particularly to our local authorities, who have a major role to play in ensuring its delivery. The Plan will be published in June and can be found on our website at: www.chilternsaonb.org/management-plan.

National Park status: In June 2018 the Board unanimously agreed to request a review to consider National Park status. The Board feels the Chilterns AONB deserves enhanced recognition to enable it to fulfil its purposes for caring for the Chilterns. There are few other designated landscapes which could claim to have as much recreational opportunity as the Chilterns, due to our extensive network of rights of way, available to 1.6 million people living within 8km and to ten million people living within an hour. National Park status would give a greater recognition to the value of the Chilterns and would create the potential for a more strategic view to be taken on the planning of development across the whole geography.

The request has been sent to Natural England and we have put the case to the Landscapes Review, which was launched in July 2018 to consider whether AONB and National Park designations are fit for purpose.

New Project Development

Open for Business: We have secured a £120,000 provisional grant offer from the HS2 Business and Local Economy Fund for a 3 year 'Open for Business' tourism project in the central Chilterns.

Chalkscapes: We are developing a £2.4 m landscape and community scheme for the North Chilterns countryside around Luton and Dunstable. The project is designed to address the most pressing challenges facing the natural environment and cultural heritage of the North Chilterns, including the unprecedented levels of housing and infrastructure growth.

A suite of projects will help improve habitats and connectivity, whilst innovative volunteering and community initiatives will help inspire a new generation of people to understand and care for the landscape on their doorstep.



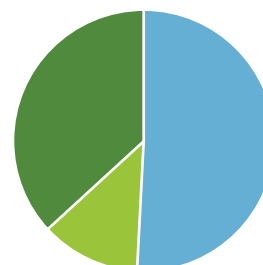
OUR FINANCIAL YEAR

CONSOLIDATED REVENUE ACCOUNT 2018-19



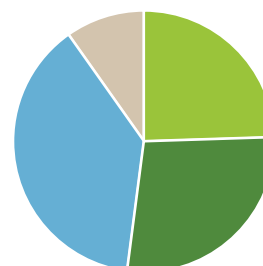
Income

Defra	●	434,541
Local Authorities	●	109,958
Project Income and Other Income	●	314,035
Total income		£858,534



Expenditure

Overheads	●	212,335
People and Society	●	238,150
Landscape and Conservation	●	334,084
Planning and Development	●	82,932
Total expenditure		£867,501
Deficit for year		-£8,967



Our Vision

Our vision is that the Chilterns will be cared for, forever and for everyone. A place where people are inspired by its distinctive natural beauty, space and tranquillity, to enjoy and care for the landscape. A place where natural beauty and cultural heritage is celebrated and enhanced. A place which gives space for nature to flourish and which provides us with the ingredients for healthy living, such as clean water, healthy soils and thriving wildlife. A place where communities live, work and breathe. A haven for people and wildlife.

To achieve this vision, the CCB advocates that:

- All special qualities and natural resources of the Chilterns will be protected forever for everyone, current and future generations.
- The wildlife and natural beauty of the Chilterns have an intrinsic value that will be preserved and restored.
- The landscape is designated for the nation and will be protected by the nation.
- To ensure its future care, more people need to understand the value of the Chilterns as a unique and special landscape, of national and international significance.
- The Chilterns provides a valuable resource for the enjoyment, health and wellbeing of a significant proportion of the country's population.
- The landscape is a place where many people live and work, where community facilities must be retained to foster sustainable, vibrant communities.
- Viable, sustainable and diverse farming, forestry and rural economy sectors are essential to conserve and enhance the wildlife and natural beauty of the Chilterns and public benefits of land management are supported by public funding.
- As one of the most accessible protected landscapes in Europe, more people should use the Chilterns, for quiet recreation, especially the 1.6 million people who live within 8km of the boundary and the adjacent urban populations, with carefully managed access to ensure the special qualities are protected.
- Those who live in or near, make a living from, visit and love the Chilterns are encouraged to help care for it.
- Given the Chilterns is already more developed than most protected landscapes and the potential benefit of the landscape to millions, there should be no major development in the AONB; only the most essential development should take place and where it takes place, there should be no adverse impact on landscape, special qualities or access, and it should deliver an environmental net gain.

To find out more about the Chilterns Conservation Board or to find out how you can get involved please contact us:

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