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PRESS RELEASE

A new future for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty announced in ambitious new Landscape Designation Programme.

Today, Natural England publishes its ambitious new Landscape Designation Programme, forming part of broader Government plans aimed at delivering better outcomes for nature, landscapes and people.

As part of its Programme, Natural England has announced that it will explore a 'boundary extension' to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), taking into account an application made by the Chilterns Conservation Board in 2013 and proposals set out in the Landscapes Review (the "Glover Review") – an independent review commissioned by the Government.

Natural England has also announced plans to work with the Chilterns Conservation Board, local authorities and other stakeholders to jointly consider new management and governance arrangements to support the improved conservation, understanding and enjoyment of the Chilterns landscape.

The Chilterns is home to many vibrant and growing communities. An extension to the Chilterns AONB would provide direct access to high-quality natural environments from many urban areas such as Luton, Hemel Hempstead and Slough. Newly designated land would provide people living in these areas with greater opportunities to access to the countryside, benefit from the tranquillity it provides and get away from the pressures of everyday life.

Today's announcement is equally important for Chilterns' wildlife and habitats. With its globally rare chalk streams, wildflower-rich chalk grassland and prehistoric settlements - including Bronze and Iron Age hillforts - extending the boundaries of the AONB provides opportunities for a more strategic approach to caring for the special features of the Chilterns' that are currently outside the protected area.

Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive Officer at the Chilterns Conservation Board, said: *“We are delighted that Natural England has chosen to consider our proposal for the Chilterns AONB to be increased in size. This is an exciting chapter in our history, which will help bring more people closer to nature and increase opportunities for recreation and enjoyment of this special landscape.*

We are also excited at the opportunity to explore new and innovative approaches by which we can tackle the impacts of climate change, reverse declines in nature, support our local businesses and improve people’s wellbeing and access to our special landscapes. This is even more important as we all work to recover from the impacts of the Covid pandemic.”

The Chilterns Conservation Board is looking forward to working in partnership with Natural England, local authorities and other stakeholders in the region to take forward this element of Natural England’s Landscape Designations Programme to help address the huge challenges facing the Chilterns landscape, while also helping improve its resilience for nature and for people.

Images: Turville May 21 Credit Hedley Thorne

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Notes for Editors:

1. Natural England is the Government’s advisor for the natural environment in England. Natural England’s FAQ is [here](#).
2. The Chilterns Conservation Board’s FAQ is [here](#)
3. The independent [Landscapes Review](#), or "Glover Review", was commissioned by the Government and published its recommendations in a report in September 2019.
4. [The Chilterns Conservation Board](#) is an independent public body set up following the passing of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000, to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and increase awareness and understanding of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Board, which also aims to foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities, employs a staff team of 24 that works in partnership with local authorities, voluntary organisations, businesses, local communities and others who live and work in the Chilterns.
2. The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1965 and covers 833 sq km (326 sq miles) stretching from Goring, in Oxfordshire, to near Hitchin, in Hertfordshire. A home and workplace for over 80,000 people, the Chilterns AONB is the third largest AONB in England and is designated as one of the finest landscapes in the country.
3. Some 10 million people live within one hour of the Chilterns AONB, and it is the only AONB directly accessible by tube from central London – in fact it is only 35 miles from Trafalgar Square. Leisure visits to the Chilterns generate around £500 million for the local economy per annum.
4. The Chilterns AONB is home to England’s largest population of red kites as well as a stronghold of rare flowers such as the Chiltern Gentian, the Military Orchid, Lady Orchid, Monkey Orchid and Pasqueflower. It is also home to nine colonies of the threatened Duke of Burgundy butterfly. Its 700 hectares of chalk grassland supports a diverse range of plant and animal species and can have up to 40 different species per square metre. The Chilterns AONB is also home to nine globally rare and threatened

chalk streams, one of which, the River Chess, hosts the only known remaining population of water vole in the Chilterns.

Further information

For further information, images and interviews please contact Vicki Pearce, Communications Officer at the Chilterns Conservation Board at vpearce@chilternsaonb.org.

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