



**Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural
Beauty
Management Plan
2014 - 2019**

**Adoption Statement
April 2014**

The Chilterns Conservation Board
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CHILTERNs AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY MANAGEMENT PLAN ADOPTION STATEMENT ¹

Background

1. The Chilterns Conservation Board ('the Board') adopted the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2008-13 on 16th October 2008.
2. Under the provisions of Section 89(7) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CRoW Act) the Board is required to review the Management Plan within five years of adoption i.e. by 15th October 2013.

Revision process

3. At the Chilterns Conservation Board meeting held on 29th March 2012 it was agreed that the Board should commence the process of determining whether it was expedient to amend the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2008-13 by undertaking a review of the Plan that would commence in 2013. The Board agreed a draft timetable for such a process.
4. The revision process commenced with an in-house review by officers and then a series of discussions at meetings of the Conservation Board, the Board's Executive Committee and Planning Committee, the various task groups and planning and environmental forums. At these meetings, which took place throughout 2012 and 2013, key influences and issues were discussed, and revisions to the current plan were suggested.
5. At a seminar for Board members held on 7th November 2012 a list of priority considerations for the revision of the existing Plan was agreed.
6. In December 2012 official notification letters were sent to statutory consultees and local planning authorities within the Chilterns informing them of the proposed review of the Management Plan.
7. The outcomes of the various meetings were considered by the Conservation Board and the need for a formal review of the existing plan was approved by the Board on 27th March 2013. The Board also approved the timetable which would see the draft Management Plan issued for public consultation on 27th September 2013. A sub-group of Members approved the various changes prior to publication of the draft Management Plan.
8. Work on a draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report commenced in January 2013 and the report was subject to public consultation between 8th May and 19th June 2013. The results of the consultation were

¹ Required under Section 89(10) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

reported to the Conservation Board on 17th October 2013 and responses to the comments and a series of changes were approved.

9. The Conservation Board meeting on 17th October 2013 also noted the publication of the draft of the Management Plan and the fact that it would be subject to a formal public consultation exercise with statutory bodies and numerous partner organisations which would run from 27th September to 20th December 2013.
10. The consultation exercise resulted in 530 comments, from 48 respondents, on the Management Plan and 40 comments, from 15 respondents, on the Environmental Report. The responses were considered by Members and Officers of the Board at a special workshop which took place on 26th February 2014. The proposed responses and amendments were suggested and these were then reported to the Conservation Board at its meeting on 25th March 2014.
11. The Chilterns Conservation Board adopted the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 at its meeting on 25th March 2014, with publication to take place as soon as possible thereafter.

Changes to Plan

12. The Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 as adopted does not differ significantly from the previous Plan.

12. The revised Plan fulfils three functions:

Firstly, it is the statutory plan which sets out the Board's policies for the management of the Chilterns AONB and for the carrying out of its functions in relation to it.² The actions the Board itself will take to deliver the Plan's objectives are set out in the Board's business plan.

Secondly, it informs public bodies of the means by which they can demonstrate compliance with their statutory duty to "have regard to" the purpose of designation of the AONB when undertaking their functions.³

Thirdly, it guides the engagement of public bodies, landowners, businesses and individuals in the management of the AONB. It includes information regarding available and potential delivery mechanisms. The types of actions the Board would encourage others to take individually or in partnership with others, including the Board, to deliver the Plan, are set out in the Engagement Plan.

13. The revised Plan is placed within global, national and regional contexts and key influences are described. The Plan stresses the economic and social benefits which arise from a well managed protected landscape, and the important

² Section 89, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended by the NERC Act 2006

³ Section 85, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

contribution that a resilient and dynamic rural economy makes towards providing these benefits.

14. The revised Plan stresses the links between the delivery of ecosystems services and the objectives of the Plan.
15. The six cross-cutting themes of the Management Plan are detailed – climate change; social inclusion; health and well-being; lifelong learning; ecosystems services and environmental sustainability. Each of these themes are addressed in a series of chapters which are grouped under three sections: ‘Conserving and enhancing natural beauty’; ‘Understanding and Enjoying’ and ‘Social and economic well-being’, which are based on the Board’s statutory purposes. Each section details: broad aims; special qualities; key issues and a series of policies.
16. The ‘Conserving and enhancing natural beauty’ section includes the following chapters: Landscape; Farming, forestry and other land management; Biodiversity; Water environment; Historic environment, and Development. The ‘Understanding and Enjoying’ and ‘Social and economic well-being’ sections are separate chapters in their own right.
17. The policies are clearly written so as to represent Board policy towards a particular issue. The policies will be used to both devise Board programmes of activity and also to respond to proposals by others involved in the management of the AONB. The local authorities are encouraged to adopt similar policies.
18. The Plan continues with a section showing how the cross-cutting themes are integrated with the policies in the Plan. The next section details the Engagement plan. The purpose of this is to set out the Board’s view of actions that itself, partner organisations and individuals involved in the management of the AONB could take. Whilst not all suggested actions may currently be possible, the Board considers that taking them would:
 - better deliver the purpose of designation of the AONB;
 - assist the Board to better deliver its own purposes; and
 - deliver the objectives of the Management Plan.
19. The last main section of the Plan deals with implementation and monitoring and contains a detailed list of monitoring indicators.
20. Due to the scale of changes made to the former Plan, it is not feasible to produce a schedule detailing these changes. However, the following paragraphs detail the key changes that were made as part of the drafting process.
21. Many previous policies were reworded to read as policies rather than actions. A number of new policies have been added to deal with:

- HS2;
- grazing (of both ecologically important grasslands and on those sites which need it to achieve good conservation status);
- the Sandford principle (where there is conflict, priority will be given to conservation of the environment rather than its use);
- Biodiversity Offsetting;
- raising awareness of how actions can affect the water environment;
- long-term sustainable management of rivers and their catchments;
- using the planning process to protect and enhance the rights of way network, and
- facilitating young people’s exploration and understanding of the habitats and species of the Chilterns.

22. The following table details a series of changes that arose from the sub-group meeting on 26th February 2014.

1. Many of the policies have been amended to read as policies and not actions.
2. A number of new actions have been added to the engagement plan to reflect the new policies that have been included.
3. Policies L6 and L7 have been combined (both dealt with mitigation of detrimental impacts in slightly different ways).
4. A new policy dealing with HS2 has been added. This is in 3 parts which cover; opposition to the project as proposed at the present time; the desire for a full-length bored tunnel, and if such a tunnel is not provided then full mitigation should be provided.
5. A number of policies have been slightly reworded to make them clearer without affecting the basis or detail of the policy (affects L1, L2, NC2, NC7, WE2, WE9, HE1, HE2, HE11, UE6 and SE7).
6. Policy FF6 has been amended to ensure that the AONB should predominantly remain an actively farmed landscape.
7. A new policy has been added to encourage initiatives that secure sensitive grazing on ecologically important grasslands.
8. A new policy has been added to reflect the Sandford principle – where there is conflict, priority will be given to conservation of the environment rather than its use.
9. A new policy has been added which supports and promotes grazing on

those sites which need it to achieve good conservation status.
10. A new two-part policy has been added which deals with Biodiversity Offsetting. The first part stresses that Biodiversity Offsetting should only be used to secure net biodiversity gain where harm cannot be avoided or mitigated and should not be used to justify destruction of irreplaceable habitat. The second part tries to ensure any offset is close to where the initial loss occurs.
11. A new policy has been added to try and increase the awareness of how the actions of owners and occupiers can affect the quality of the water environment.
12. A new policy has been added which supports long-term sustainable management of rivers and their catchments in order to reduce flooding and secure aquifer recharge.
13. Policy HE11 has been amended to more closely reflect the Sandford principle. In this case where there is conflict, priority will be given to conservation of the historic environment rather than its use.
14. Policy UE10 has been reworded to encourage visits to the AONB by environmentally sensitive modes of transport (rather than sustainable visits being encouraged). In addition, reference has been added to the new provision of such modes of transport being encouraged. This had previously been suggested as part of an additional new policy but would have led to repetition.
15. A new policy has been added which encourages the planning process to protect and enhance the public rights of way and access networks for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
16. A new policy has been added which encourages young people's exploration and understanding of habitats and species in the Chilterns.

23. During the Review process the Board has been mindful of guidance produced by the former Countryside Agency as to how to carry out such a review⁴, whilst also bearing in mind the particular status and purposes of the Conservation Board and the time since that guidance was issued.

The Significance of the Plan for Public Bodies

24. The introduction of the Plan draws the attention of public bodies to the provisions of Section 85 of the CRoW Act. These require all public bodies e.g. local authorities, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of an AONB when exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB. DEFRA guidance issued in 2005⁵

⁴ "Guidance for the review of AONB Management Plans, CA221, Countryside Agency (2006)

⁵ "Duties on relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads." DEFRA 2005

sets out how 'relevant authorities' can demonstrate compliance with this duty, including reference to AONB Management Plans.

The Chilterns AONB Management Plan and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations (the SEA Regulations)

25. After the Revised Management Plan has been adopted, the SEA Regulations require the Board to publish a statement describing how the environmental considerations arising from the SEA, the Environmental Report and the consultation responses were taken into account in formulating and agreeing the Plan.
26. The preceding paragraphs describe the various key changes that have been made to the previous Management Plan in order to produce the draft Management Plan 2014-2019. In addition, key changes following the consultation exercise are also detailed in the table shown above. Further information is also contained in the final version of the Environmental Report and particularly Appendix A which details: the various comments made; Conservation Board responses, and proposed changes. Additional information is contained in the final versions of the SEA Scoping Report and its appendices. All of these documents are published separately and are available from the Conservation Board. Most are included on the Chilterns AONB website and can be accessed via the following link - <http://www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation-board/management-plan.html>.
27. This Board considers that this adoption statement fulfils the requirement placed on it by the SEA Regulations.