

Section 5

Engagement Plan



View from Sharpenhoe Clappers, Beds

The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2014 - 2019 has a number of closely interrelated functions.

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

The Management Plan 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.

It also 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 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 this Engagement Plan.

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 in delivering its own purposes; and
- deliver the objectives of this Management Plan.

	Landscape actions
1.	Should the AONB boundary be reviewed, consider the case for inclusion of suitable landscape character areas adjacent to the AONB.
2.	Promote and support green infrastructure planning for new areas of development and to better link existing settlements with surrounding countryside.
3.	Undertake a five yearly survey of public perception and views on changes in the landscape.
4.	Publish good practice guidance for land managers, and target new owners of land and those involved in equestrianism and other non-traditional uses of land.
5.	Assess planning applications and development proposals for their impact on the landscape.
6.	Promote the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and other relevant guidance to ensure all new development respects and enhances the landscape.
7.	Support provision of training in the skills needed by land managers to conserve and enhance the landscape.
8.	Support initiatives which help local people and visitors understand and enjoy the landscape.
9.	Develop a better understanding of the likely impacts of climate change on the landscape and support mitigating and adaptive action.
10.	Campaign actively to prevent fragmentation of the countryside (e.g. by division into small plots) where this results in unacceptable impacts on the landscape and other forms of natural beauty.
11.	Promote targeting and uptake of environmental stewardship schemes generally and actively lobby for provision of options most appropriate to the AONB.
12.	Support management of trees, woodlands, chalk grassland, commons, hedges, chalk streams and other characteristic landscape features.
13.	Develop a strategy and work programme to conserve and enhance the River Thames and its landscape corridor.
14.	Encourage the use of the Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation.
15.	Develop a programme to raise awareness of hill forts and a site management programme.

	Farming, forestry and other land management actions
1.	Organise regular fora on farming and forestry issues.
2.	Provide advice and training for both land managers and contractors that encourage sustainable land management. This will include both traditional skills, such as hedge laying, and modern resource efficient techniques, such as precision farming - where agricultural operations and inputs (fertilisers and pesticides) are carefully matched to crop requirements.
3.	Provide advice and training to promote sustainable management of woodlands, production and marketing of timber and other woodland products.

4.	Use European funding programmes to develop appropriate infrastructure that supports traditional land management practices, for example processing and marketing of local farm produce and woodland products (particularly wood fuel).
5.	Publish guidance and provide training on the survey, identification and conservation of archaeology in woodland for owners, land managers and the wider public.
6.	Publish regular articles that promote the heritage value of special trees and woods within the Chilterns and their continued care.
7.	Survey and identify remaining areas of box woodland and support projects to conserve and extend these areas.
8.	Disseminate knowledge and promote best practise concerning current and developing plant and animal health issues.
9.	Provide advice and training on woodland planting and management that creates greater resilience to pests, diseases and weather extremes. This might include training on venison marketing as a means to support management of wild deer populations.
10.	Encourage landowners and managers to enter new agri-environment and woodland management schemes particularly where these contribute to landscape and biodiversity gain.
11.	Engage with landowners – in particular horse owners and equine businesses - to encourage good pasture and hedgerow management and use of infrastructure that complements the Chilterns landscape.
12.	Encourage farmers, landowners and communities to undertake appropriate management of landscape features and habitats, in particular chalk grassland, chalk streams, ponds, traditional orchards, ancient and semi natural woodlands and hedgerows. Survey existing hedgerow trees, support their management and planting of new hedgerow and in-field trees to help replace those lost through disease or old age.
13.	Develop new landscape scale initiatives which will engage with farm and woodland owners and others to deliver measurable biodiversity improvements across the AONB. Local Nature Partnerships have a particular role in identifying Nature Improvement Areas which aim to secure habitat improvements on a landscape scale.
14.	Undertake and publish a regular survey of land use and analysis of land use change.
15.	Engage with local planning authorities, farming communities and other land owners to support viable rural businesses and diversification which maintain landscape character and the sustainable use of traditional farm buildings.
16.	Support the Commons Network, landowners and community groups to secure practical management of commons and identify appropriate funding to support future management.
17.	Organise, support and coordinate activities which help local politicians, communities, new landowners and the wider public to better understand and appreciate the importance and value of farming and forestry.
18.	Work with landowners and user groups to develop sustainable, enjoyable and considerate leisure use of appropriate sites and recreational routes across the AONB.

	Biodiversity actions
1.	Review and agree provisional Biodiversity 2020 targets for the AONB with partners.
2.	Support the development of new and existing landscape scale initiatives including Biodiversity Opportunity Areas/Conservation Target Areas and Nature Improvement Areas, and prioritise habitat creation and restoration within these areas.
3.	Provide management advice and support for Local Site owners and managers, and raise awareness of their importance as part of wider ecological networks.
4.	Promote uptake of appropriate environmental management scheme options and appropriate management of farmland wildlife.
5.	Research the distribution of rare or notable early successional species for example associated with cultivated land, old quarries, chalk pits and trackways.
6.	Carry out practical management of habitats and features on commons e.g. veteran trees, ponds and grassland habitats.
7.	Deliver a wildlife conservation training programme for volunteers, local groups and land managers..
8.	Carry out a Chilterns biodiversity audit to extend understanding of the requirements for conservation of rare and notable species for which the Chilterns is important.
9.	Establish a Chilterns Ecology Group to support State of the Chilterns Environment reporting on the status of species for which the Chilterns is important. Increase involvement of research institutes.
10.	Monitor the spread of pests, diseases and invasive non-native species through updates to the annual State of the Chilterns Environment report. Provide advice and guidance to land managers and the public on appropriate control strategies and biosecurity measures.
11.	Provide advice and guidance on biodiversity in the built environment of the AONB, including appropriate species selection for planting schemes.
12.	Ensure that initiatives to promote access and regulation take account of habitat/species sensitivity to visitors and dogs.
13.	Ensure that Green Infrastructure plans emphasise the need for good quality well-managed habitat, including within and adjacent to developments.
14.	Develop a programme of awareness raising events, activities and publications to increase public awareness, understanding and involvement in wildlife conservation and recording in the Chilterns.
15.	Work with the Local Nature Partnerships to promote greater awareness and understanding of the ecosystems approach and the benefits that the natural environment of the Chilterns provides for people and the economy.
16.	Develop a Chilterns Historic Land Use study to influence current thinking and practice in habitat restoration.
17.	Promote awareness, management and restoration of infield and hedgerow trees, wood pasture, roadside verges and orchards.
18.	Identify sites requiring improved grazing management to secure nature conservation objectives and promote schemes which help to achieve this.
19.	Develop principles and guidance regarding the application of Biodiversity Offsetting in the AONB.

	Water environment actions
1.	Support the delivery of environmentally sustainable abstraction, through the Environment Agency's Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme.
2.	Work with partners to promote and deliver measures to increase water efficiency and reduce water demand.
3.	Work with partners to improve the ecological status of Chilterns' water bodies through development of the catchment-based approach in the Chilterns. Work with partners to develop and deliver catchment management plans.
4.	Provide site-specific advice and support for management of the water environment, particularly targeting areas with priority species such as water voles.
5.	Work with partners to deliver improved water quality through catchment sensitive farming.
6.	Work with partners to identify and report pollution issues where they occur and raise public awareness through targeted pollution prevention schemes.
7.	Work with partners to raise public awareness of the impact of invasive non-native species, map their distribution and develop and implement strategies for their control.
8.	Work with partners to identify and implement river restoration schemes.
9.	Work with partners to build an evidence base for the statutory designation of chalk streams and identify and designate Local Wildlife Sites.
10.	Promote education and interpretation programmes to enhance understanding of chalk streams and to raise awareness of the need for greater water efficiency.
11.	Encourage the management of existing ponds – particularly those on farmland and commons - to enhance their biodiversity and support the creation of new ponds.
12.	Encourage and support the involvement of local communities in managing and improving the quality of their local water environment.
13.	Support measures to promote environmentally-sustainable recreation and tourism initiatives based on the water environment.
14.	Work with partners to maintain and promote riverside walks.
15.	Promote the aims and objectives of the Riverfly Monitoring Initiative and support the development of a Chilterns-wide network of riverfly monitoring groups.
16.	Collate existing data on ponds in the AONB and support further pond survey initiatives.
17.	Oppose proposals that reduce the environmental quality of the water environment and seek improvements through new development proposals.
18.	Encourage Local Planning Authorities to include a requirement for Sustainable Drainage systems with biodiversity benefits within the AONB in their Local Plan policies.

	Historic environment actions
1.	Develop an ongoing programme of practical advice and skills training to meet the management needs of heritage assets and the wider historic environment.
2.	Implement the Environmental Guidelines for the Management of Highways in the Chilterns, to help protect the historic character of highways and adjacent land.
3.	Identify and promote opportunities to improve the management of registered and non-registered parks and gardens.
4.	Undertake research and survey work to improve knowledge and understanding of the historic environment in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • farmsteads • hill forts and associated structures • holloways and ancient trackways.
5.	Promote the use of the Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation Project by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising training workshops • Publishing web pages and advice note.
6.	Implement a programme to raise public awareness of the historic environment including provision of information, holding of events and improving physical access to suitable sites.
7.	Deliver a programme to develop visitor appeal based on the historic environment.
8.	Develop a special initiative to celebrate and perpetuate the Chilterns cherry (and apple) orchards.
9.	Develop a strategy and work programme to celebrate and conserve the historic Thames including ancient crossings, ferries and bridges.
10.	Develop a special initiative to celebrate the history of the Chilterns furniture and wood working industries and their relationship with woodlands and local villages.
11.	Develop a special initiative to commemorate the Chilterns' role during the Great War.
12.	Develop a special initiative to survey historic farmsteads.
13.	Develop a special initiative to record the influence of religion on the historic landscape of the Chilterns.
14.	Develop a special initiative to record the influence of transport and trading routes on the landscape and settlements of the Chilterns.
15.	Develop a special initiative to identify and promote the follies, monuments and memorials of the Chilterns.
16.	In the event of major developments or infrastructure schemes ensure there is a full programme to record, rescue, catalogue, archive and present all special historic and archaeological finds.

	Development actions
1.	Comment on significant planning applications which would affect natural beauty or its enjoyment, or which might foster economic and social well-being.
2.	Review and comment on all relevant development plans and policies which would affect the Chilterns.

3.	Promote the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and Supplementary Technical Notes on Chilterns Building Materials (flint, brick and roofing materials) and review, as appropriate.
4.	Develop a monitoring system for the built environment to enable an assessment of changes in character.
5.	Produce position statements, in connection with certain forms of development, that seek to ensure that full account is taken of the need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.
6.	Seek the undergrounding of overhead powerlines wherever possible, and particularly in the Misbourne Valley and Risborough Gap.
7.	Support the local planning authorities in their efforts to bring about the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure in cases where development is within, or in close proximity to, the AONB.
8.	In conjunction with others publish and promote advice on how building design should reflect the need to adapt to climate change and how developments should demonstrate energy and water efficiency.
9.	Promote the use of the Environmental Guidelines for the Management of Highways in the Chilterns.
10.	Contribute to and promote studies undertaken to assess tranquillity in the AONB.
11.	Seek a reduction in noise pollution from all transport networks and services and infrastructure schemes.
12.	Encourage the use of low noise surfacing in connection with all new roads and any re-surfacing work.
13.	Encourage highway authorities to switch off street lights in appropriate circumstances.

	Understanding and enjoyment actions
1.	Support and promote 'Access for All' initiatives including Miles without Stiles, especially in locations where provision is poor. This includes both physical improvements and information. Design new accessible circular walks and promote their use.
2.	Promote investment in access and recreation facilities on appropriate sites to improve the quality of visitor experience.
3.	Promote investment in on-site interpretation including the use of QR codes and mobile technologies.
4.	Promote enjoyment of common land for recreation, access, healthy lifestyles and education.
5.	Identify and bridge gaps in the public rights of way network, especially the bridleway network and town/countryside links.
6.	Promote the Countryside Close to Home initiative to increase awareness of, and encourage use of, countryside on the doorstep as an alternative to driving to more distant locations.
7.	Promote and continue to develop the Chilterns Cycleway with a linked network of shorter routes, promoted day rides and short break itineraries.
8.	Actively promote the health and well-being benefits of visiting the countryside by encouraging participation in the health walks programme and other countryside activities.

9.	Facilitate and promote a programme of guided walks, rides and events with broad appeal.
10.	Promote the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails, the Chiltern Way and other promoted walking routes, including the Chilterns Country series, as part of a network of linked routes.
11.	Maintain and develop the Chilterns AONB website incorporating information on the Chilterns for all types of visitor and all types of visit.
12.	Provide a range of information to assist visitors to plan and enjoy their visits. This will include electronic information, leaflets, Apps, use of QR codes and information suitable for mobile devices.
13.	Provide information on the many opportunities for countryside access, including the rights of way network, open access land and countryside sites. Raise awareness of user rights and responsibilities by promoting the countryside code and promoting the need to respect other users through awareness campaigns.
14.	Promote the Electric Bike Network(s) in the Chilterns and support the spread of the network to suitable new locations.
15.	Undertake the 2017 Chilterns Leisure Visitor Survey.
16.	Deliver the Countryside Access Management Plans (previously known as Rights of Way Improvements Plans).
17.	Develop the Chilterns Tourism Network and promote the Visit Chilterns brand and Visit Chilterns website, with a focus on staying visitors and short break tourism.
18.	Support and promote tourism initiatives such as Our Land and Cycle Chilterns which aim to increase sustainable tourism in the Chilterns, with a special focus on walking and cycling short breaks.
19.	Promote the Chilterns market towns as gateways to the countryside, promote Walkers are Welcome and Cyclists Welcome.

	Social and economic well-being actions
1.	Provide support and advice to national and EU grant programmes enabling sensitive diversification of the rural economy.
2.	Actively promote local products which benefit the local environment.
3.	Promote the Chilterns as a visitor destination to local people and potential tourists from further afield, for example through the Chilterns Tourism Network and Our Land project.
4.	Assist local businesses to develop marketing and activities sensitive to the local environment.
5.	Publicise volunteering opportunities through an up-to-date volunteering directory, developed in conjunction with local partners.
6.	Promote health walks and Green Gyms and work with local Clinical Commissioning Groups and Strategic Health and Well-Being Boards to promote countryside activities.
7.	Organise and support training courses in rural skills.
8.	Seek mitigation of the negative impacts of major development on the economy and well-being of communities within the AONB and its setting.
9.	Publicise the importance of providing high speed broadband to rural communities.
10.	Have active involvement with local LEPs to influence their activities.