



Chalkscapes

North Chilterns Community Landscape Initiative

About *Chalkscapes*

The fast-expanding urban areas of Luton and Dunstable, with the rolling chalk hills that surround them, lie at the core of *Chalkscapes*, an exciting new community landscape partnership project with a total value of around £3.14 million.

The *Chalkscapes* partnership forges connections between town and countryside, past and present, linking urban communities to the landscape on their doorstep, cultural histories and natural heritage, building collaboration at landscape-scale.

This is a landscape under pressure: relentless development, changes in land management and environmental pressures are triggering alarming wildlife declines. Nearby urban communities are increasingly disconnected with the landscape and heritage which surrounds them.

Chalkscapes will give people new opportunities to engage with, learn from and care for their landscape – throwing a lifeline to vanishing wildlife habitats and species. It reaches out to urban, disconnected audiences where they live, providing pathways to a greater understanding and appreciation of the natural heritage and landscape which has served urban centres for generations.

With communities at its heart, *Chalkscapes* will seek creative ways to engage diverse audiences and forge a new sense of place and belonging. Strengthening the connection and between people and place is crucial if we are to secure a more sustainable future for our North Chilterns chalkscapes.

The *Chalkscapes* partnership, led by the Chilterns Conservation Board, has secured Stage 1 funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other partners to develop a five-year delivery project which, subject to a successful Stage 2 funding bid, is expected to run between 2023 and 2028.

Why is *Chalkscapes* needed now?

The chalk hills of the North Chilterns and their precious natural resources – fragile chalk streams, chalk grasslands, ancient woodlands and the wildlife they support – are under pressure from development, infrastructure, pests, diseases and climate change.

This is an intricate landscape where chalk downland, farmland, scrub, woodland, quarries, chalk streams and springs are found alongside ancient earthworks and trackways, closely interwoven with urban areas.

The *Chalkscapes* project area includes some of the most densely populated, diverse and deprived wards in the country, with a fast-growing population facing multiple social, health and economic challenges.



The urban conurbations of Luton and Dunstable have one of the finest national landscapes, green space and historic sites on their doorstep, yet levels of engagement with heritage, and levels of physical activity are amongst the lowest in the country.

As people continue to come to terms with a global pandemic, the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of nature and being outdoors have taken on an even greater significance.

The juxtaposition between one of the most treasured landscapes in the country and some of the most densely populated urban communities is a key driver for this community-centred conservation project.



Chalkscapes Development Phase

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded the Chilterns Conservation Board and its project partners Stage 1 (Development) funding of £232,600 to develop the Chalkscapes project in preparation to submit a Stage 2 (Delivery) funding bid.

This funding, along with cash and in-kind support from project partners, will be used to develop detailed project plans that will be submitted to the Heritage Fund in November 2022.

Development Stage - Aims

1. To inspire communities in and around Luton and Dunstable to learn about, explore and love their local landscapes - strengthening communities through a sense of place;
2. To involve many more people, and more people from traditionally under-served audiences, in caring for local heritage - contributing to a sense of wellbeing and belonging through experience of natural and cultural heritage;
3. To forge strengthened partnerships across community and conservation interests, delivering mutual benefits for both;
4. To create more wildlife-rich, resilient chalk landscapes and habitats, securing enthusiasm and commitment from land managers to collaborate on landscape-scale conservation strategies over the long term;
5. To develop, test and share learning and best practice from innovative approaches to chalk landscape management.

Developing a community-led, inclusive project

Pilots planned between 2021 and 2022...

PILOT 1

Beds, Cambs and Northants Wildlife Trust will work with groups of young people at Tokko Youth Space and Team Beds & Luton to design and test activity with the identification and conservation of the Project's historic routeways at its heart.

PILOT 2

Working directly with BAME community groups, this pilot will explore how the National Trust's 'Everyone Welcome' work on diversity and inclusion could feed into *Chalkscapes*.

PILOT 3

The Culture Trust will lead and manage a brief for a dedicated community artist to explore new ways of connecting *Chalkscapes* with BAME and lower socio-economic groups through art.

These pilots will test models to be applied across the project area. We are looking for new project partners in Central Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Luton to help us develop and test our plans.

Please contact Claire Readey for more information

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Outline Projects

Project 1: COMMUNITY CHALK (working title)

Meaningful community engagement which extends beyond our traditional audiences requires an investment of time, resource and expertise. 'Community Chalk' will be the outreach project providing the interface between the Chilterns landscape and urban communities.

Project 2: CHALKSCAPES CHAMPIONS

People and communities are placed firmly at the heart of the Chilterns landscape with Chalkscapes Champions, our volunteering project. Local people will be encouraged to design and lead projects which care for the landscape, wildlife and heritage whilst helping to inspire and involve others.

Project 3: ROUTEWAYS & WAYSIDES

A network of ancient trackways – including the Icknield Way, connecting Luton and Dunstable to the Chilterns – were once the lifeblood of the North Chilterns. This project will focus on understanding and promoting the significance of these prehistoric routeways for both people and wildlife and will carry out practical enhancements on key routes.

Project 4: TALES OF THE CHALK

An inter-generational programme of arts activities inspired by the North Chilterns landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage. We will design, test and deliver arts outreach activities which will bring stories of the landscape to life.

Project 5: WILD CHALK

The practical conservation and land management element at the heart of *Chalkscapes*, delivering landscape scale conservation – creating bigger, more joined up, more diverse and better for outcomes for chalk habitats and species in decline - across five focus areas, covering 4825ha. Landowners and managers will be supported to develop joined up approaches to land management. A programme of training and advice will be organised, and a small grant scheme will help support managementwork across the focus areas.

Our priority audiences

1. Black, Asian, Minority & Ethnic communities in the urban areas of Luton & Dunstable
2. Underprivileged young people between the ages of 13 and 19 in Luton & Dunstable
3. Lower-socio-economic people and families in Luton & Dunstable, particularly people who feel unable to, or do not prioritise, access to the outdoors due to issues attributed to lower economic status or poor health.

Timeline

Chalkscapes will be developed between 2021 and 2022 and delivered between 2023 and 2028*

JANUARY 2021 - NOVEMBER 2022

Project Development
Pilots, testing and research
Securing match funding
Preparing the bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund

NOVEMBER 2022

Anticipated bid submission date to the National Lottery Heritage Fund

MARCH 2023

Anticipated bid outcome from the National Lottery Heritage Fund

JULY 2023 - JUNE 2028

Anticipated delivery of the *Chalkscapes* project

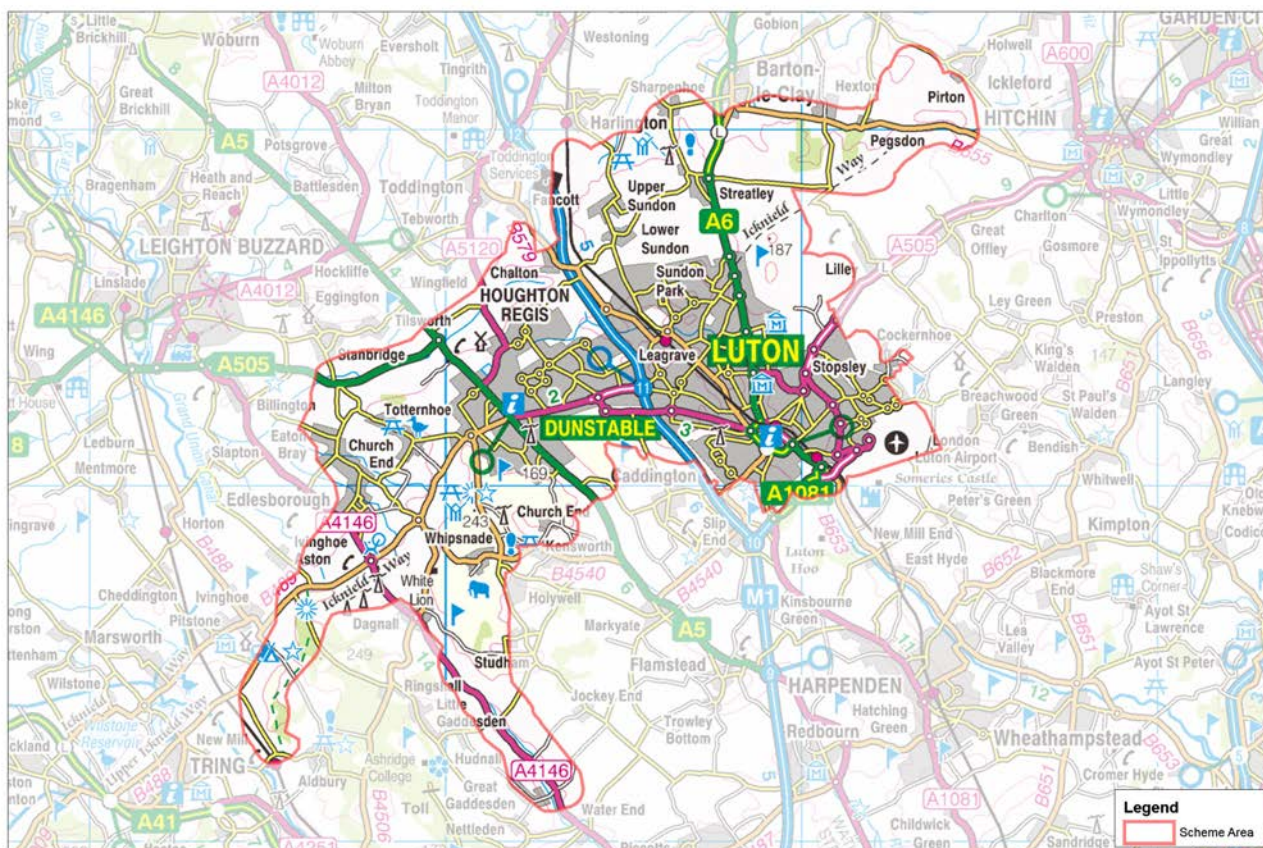
**subject to the development of a successful Heritage Fund bid and associated match funding*



The Chalkscapes project area

The Chalkscapes project will deliver landscape-scale conservation in five focus areas across 172 km² of protected landscape. A suite of complimentary projects will connect people and communities with the landscape and nature around them.

Careful legacy planning will ensure habitats and heritage will be restored and maintained for the long term, and more people, from a wider range of communities, are aware of, appreciate and enjoy the landscape that surrounds them.



Map 2a: Chalkscapes - Scheme Area

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For more information please visit:

www.chilternsaonb.org/projects/chalkscapes.html

Or contact Claire Readey, Development & Funding Manager, Chilterns Conservation Board

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