

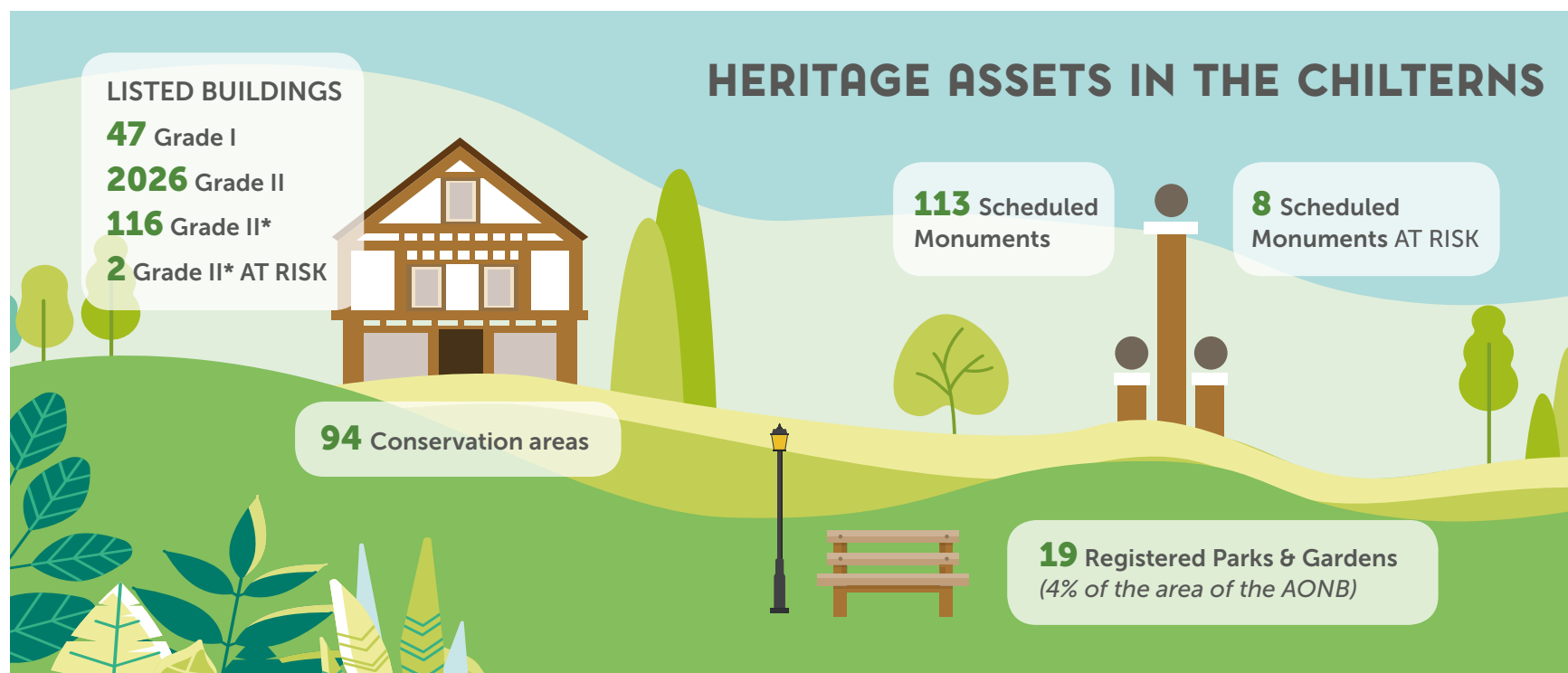
Working to protect our historic landscape



6. HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The Chilterns AONB has been influenced by thousands of years of human activity. Traces of each successive generation are left as a legacy; written on the landscape as archaeological sites, monuments, buildings, route ways and patterns of land use. These tell rich stories of cultural heritage and history.

Parish and private records, folk memory, and artefacts attest to the relatively recent lives and work, culture and customs, beliefs and politics of locals. These range from the bodgers with their workshops, lathes, and saw pits hidden in the Chilterns beech woods, to the country houses of notable figures of British history, whose designed gardens and estates have become nationally important sites.²⁸ The Chilterns has proved the inspiration for renowned artists, poets and novelists. Some 45% of the Chilterns landscape has preserved its character from before the beginning of the 18th century, with high potential for yielding evidence of the medieval period and earlier.²⁹ Prominent throughout the Chilterns are the historic towns and villages with buildings and churches in characteristic flint, brick, and timber materials.



²⁸The Changing Landscape of the Chilterns: Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation Project Final Report (2009) p. 101. ²⁹The Changing Landscape of the Chilterns: Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation Project Final Report (2009) p. 101.

Many sites are undesignated (recorded in local Historic Environment Records) or have yet to be found.³⁰ The earliest settlers in the region left their mark through field systems, surviving from the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and early medieval periods. These are joined by displays of their wealth and power, and their ritual and funerary practices, through monuments such as the 20 known hillforts, the kilometres of linear earthworks known as Grim's Ditch, and hundreds of burial barrows.

The natural and historic landscapes of the Chilterns have provided home and inspiration for some of Britain's greatest artists and writers, including John Milton, Wilfred Owen, John and Paul Nash, Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton. At the same time the nation's politics has regularly been framed in the Chilterns, home to Prime Ministers including Edmund Burke and Benjamin Disraeli, and Chequers the country house of the PM since 1921.³¹

In summary, the region's historic environment and cultural heritage underpin the essential nature of the Chilterns.

Key Issues

The Chilterns AONB faces significant threats to its historic environment in the next five years. Archaeology is a finite asset, and many sites in the Chilterns are highly sensitive, surviving only as subtle earthworks or fragile deposits of finds. In the next five years the Chilterns AONB faces unprecedented demands for development in housing and infrastructure, directly impacting the archaeology beneath them and the landscapes surrounding them. Numerous undesignated or unknown sites are at even greater risk, lacking statutory protections.

Development pressures: Developments can lead to the destruction of sites of national importance and the alteration of the character, cultural heritage and spirit of the Chilterns AONB. For example, the construction of HS2 will erase a section of Grim's Ditch, a Scheduled Monument. Unsympathetic design choices, inappropriate locations for development, unsuitable materials, and lack of knowledge and time in the planning process are all risks to the historic environment of the Chilterns.

Changes in land management: The decline of traditional agriculture and industry has led to changes in land and woodland management, and the funding given to farmers for protecting heritage assets is uncertain.

Sites and landscapes unprotected: While designated assets, such as Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, and Scheduled Monuments are protected, their wider setting that is often integral to the character is not. Furthermore, the majority of known archaeological sites are 'undesignated heritage assets', lacking statutory protection and are at increased risk.

The condition of the Chilterns' designated assets, that is the Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, and Scheduled Monuments, has remained largely stable in

the recent past. This is due to statutory protections and proactive management from owners. Only two Listed Buildings are designated 'At Risk' by Historic England, along with eight Scheduled Monuments. However, the approach to designation takes a site specific, rather than landscape scale approach. This means the wider setting of monuments, often integral to their character, and perhaps beyond the bounds of the AONB, is not protected.

Lack of understanding and engagement: The heritage of the Chilterns is less well recognised and understood than other protected landscapes, making protection and presentation of sites and heritage more difficult. Limited resources are also a problem for many agencies involved in tourism and heritage promotion.

Historic assets are an irreplaceable resource. They deliver wide social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits. Change is inevitable and so in the face of mounting threats, careful management is needed. Through holistic, landscape scale approaches to planning, land use, and development, and through collaboration and coordination between partners, we can preserve the rich legacy of the past for the benefit of future generations.

³⁰The Changing Landscape of the Chilterns: Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation Project Final Report (2009) pp. 34, 99, Fig. 69; Historic England Statutory Figures for AONBs (2017). ³¹Cf. www.chilternsaonb.org/Products/34/20/Famous-People-of-the-Chilterns-booklet



GRADE II LISTED
COTTAGE IN TURVILLE,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Strategic Objectives

- HO1** Better protect the Chilterns historic environment, both formally designated and unprotected heritage assets.
- HO2** Seek new discoveries of unknown heritage assets and improve understanding of those already identified, to reveal the significance of the historic environment and cultural heritage of the Chilterns.
- HO3** Increase the knowledge and enjoyment of Chilterns heritage and culture by local residents, visitors and the wider public, and bring a love of heritage to wider parts of society.



EROSION ON IVINGHOE
BEACON HILLFORT,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Beacons of the Past

Beacons of the Past: Hillforts in the Chilterns Landscape is an exciting three and a half year project which will engage and inspire communities to discover, conserve, and enjoy the Chilterns' Iron Age hillforts and their prehistoric chalk landscapes. The project will carry out the largest archaeological LiDAR survey ever undertaken in the UK.

Supported and part-funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project will provide a real focus for community and public involvement through public involvement through Citizen Science survey, practical excavation and research, as well as a programme of events and educational activities.



Policies

To achieve these objectives, we must work together to:

HO1

HP1 Encourage owners of designated heritage assets to create Conservation Management Plans and manage/restore assets appropriately.

The ongoing protection of heritage assets is largely in the hands of landowners, farmers, and other land managers. Partnerships will develop mutual understanding and consultation between landowners, Conservation Officers and Historic England.

HP2 Encourage and facilitate work to improve the condition of assets in order to remove them from 'At Risk' status and explore the designation of new assets through work with local Historic Environment Records and Historic England.

The work of projects such as Beacons of the Past³² and Chalk, Cherries & Chairs³³ will present opportunities for coordinating improvement of known assets. The Beacons of the Past LiDAR survey of the Chilterns will discover hundreds if not thousands of currently undesignated heritage assets, whose significance and protection will be discussed with landowners, local Historic Environment Records, and Historic England.

HP3 Encourage the use of the Chilterns Building Design Guide and the Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation Project by developers and planners. Encourage sensitive restoration prioritising local and in-character materials.

Active promotion of the Chilterns Building Design Guide and of the Chilterns HLC dataset and documentation through the CCB website, will assist individuals, communities, and planners with conserving the special character of Chilterns buildings and landscape.

HP4 Work towards the coordination of groups with an interest in/responsibility for the historic environment of the Chilterns.

There are multiple community groups across the Chilterns with interests in the historic environment, including the Chiltern Society and local history and archaeology societies, which are of great value to the AONB for their work in protecting and learning more about its history. CCB can provide coordination, skills training, data and expertise to groups in order to assist in their activities.

HP5 Help communities to create robust Neighbourhood Plans which take heritage assets into account.

Expertise, information, and advice from CCB, will assist in signposting Neighbourhood Plan authors towards resources for creating robust plans, with consideration for the historic environment assets and their settings.

HO2

HP6 Improve knowledge of heritage assets through facilitating research and investigation.

The Beacons of the Past project and Chalk, Cherries & Chairs project, will greatly enhance knowledge of heritage assets throughout the Chilterns, with hundreds if not thousands of new sites expected to be discovered. Partners and the public will be involved in these discoveries through Citizen Science and Open Data approaches. County Historic Environment Records will be closely involved in the investigation of these sites.

HP7 Identify and record the cultural history of Chilterns inhabitants and settlements to preserve memory for future generations.

Memory and understanding of 'how things used to be' can quickly disappear with each generation. Modern recording methods, including utilising GIS technology alongside video, audio, photographic and written sources allow the capture of precious cultural history.

HP8 Improve the sharing of heritage information of the Chilterns, signposting individuals to appropriate sources such as local Historic Environment Records and History Centres.

Communication to all audiences of the results of research into the historic environment is essential, from academic communities to the general public. The Beacons of the Past project will start initiatives

KEY ACTIONS

covering this whole spectrum, from the organisation of academic conferences based on the findings of the LiDAR survey, through to the provision of Key Stage 1 learning materials, and historic interpretation panels at popular visitor sites such as Ivinghoe Beacon, and archaeology-themed guided walks. A revamped 'History' section of the Chilterns AONB website will provide visitors with accessible information, as well as guidance on where to learn more and what other resources are available to them.

HP9 Encourage initiatives to highlight the importance of the Chilterns to political history, artistic history and literary history, as well as the industrial history of the area.

Partnership projects will provide opportunities for greater understanding of the Chilterns' rich cultural and industrial heritage. Improved web resources will make it easier for visitors to find an engaging day out in the Chilterns focused on history, art or literature, while our understanding of the industrial history of the AONB will be greatly enhanced through the study of its traditional crafts.

HO3

HP10 Improve public understanding of the historic environment of the Chilterns through projects, events, information, and campaigns.

A far greater focus than ever before is being placed on the history and archaeology of the Chilterns through funding won by the CCB for large projects. These present fantastic opportunities to build momentum across the AONB for engaging with its historic environment.

HP11 Create e-learning resources concerning history and archaeology for primary and secondary school curricula.

Following a programme of engagement with school history and geography teachers to hear their opinions on the types of resources they would like, lesson plans and activities will be made available online and artefact handling collections will be offered on loan to schools.

1. Implement the Beacons of the Past project by working closely with other bodies, to learn more about Chilterns archaeology through LiDAR survey, Increase data sharing and Communicate the narrative of Chilterns prehistory to the public. In addition more heritage walks will be developed, work to remove Scheduled sites from the At Risk register will be undertaken and local groups will be empowered to conduct further research and more effectively protect heritage assets.
2. Implement the Chalk Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership Scheme, engaging the public in cultural heritage projects (e.g. Woodlanders, Cherry Orchards, Routes to the Past, Grim's Ditch) and traditional skills training, helping with neighbourhood plans, and supporting landowners managing heritage assets.
3. Make the Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation project data accessible online for communities, local history societies, schools and decision makers.
4. Offer new history and cultural trails at Walking Festivals and integrate information on public transport links with heritage routes.
5. Make the Chilterns Building Design Guide available to Parish Councils.