

## 2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHILTERNNS

### Special Qualities

The Chilterns' special qualities are considered so important, nationally and internationally, they require protection.

**PANORAMIC VIEWS** from and across the escarpment interwoven with intimate dipslope valleys and rolling fields.

Nationally important concentrations of **CHALK GRASSLAND**, extremely **DIVERSE IN FLORA AND FAUNA**, and home to some **SCARCE AND THREATENED SPECIES**. Once extensive, the chalk grassland now only covers 1% of the AONB mostly in small fragments. Species for which the AONB is particularly important include Chiltern gentian, wild candytuft, pasque flower, silver-spotted skipper and glow-worm.



Significant ancient hedgerows, hedgerow and field trees, orchards and parkland weaving across **FARMLAND THAT COVERS** approximately **60% OF THE CHILTERNNS**.



Relative **TRANQUILITY** and peace on the doorstep of **TEN MILLION PEOPLE**, one of the most accessible protected landscapes in Europe;



relatively dark skies, of great value to human and wildlife health; unspoilt countryside, secret corners and a surprising sense of remoteness.

One of the most **WOODED LANDSCAPES IN ENGLAND**, with **23% WOODLAND COVER** concentrated in the central and southern areas; **56% OF THE WOODLAND** is Ancient, a particularly rich, distinctive and prominent feature, including the Chilterns Beech Wood Special Area of Conservation; significant box, juniper and beech yew woods; many veteran trees and relict wood pasture.



**NINE PRECIOUS CHALK STREAMS,**

a globally scarce habitat and home to some of the UK's most endangered species; associated UK BAP priority species include otter, water vole, reed bunting and brown trout; numerous chalk springs occur along the base of the escarpment.



An extensive and diverse **ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE**, including ancient parish boundaries, medieval field patterns and **IRON AGE HILLFORTS**; extensive remnants of woodland heritage including sawpits, charcoal hearths and wood banks.



**A DRAMATIC CHALK ESCARPMENT**, a globally rare landscape type which gives rise to rare ecology and distinctive cultural heritage.



**OVER 2000ha OF COMMON LAND**, heaths and greens, **RICH IN WILDLIFE** and cultural heritage; **3700ha OF OPEN ACCESS LAND**.



A dense network of 2000km of rights of way; two **NATIONAL TRAILS**, the Ridgeway and Thames Path; notable regional routes such as the **CHILTERN WAY** and the **CHILTERN CYCLEWAY**.



An **INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE** around wood-working, furniture making, chalk quarrying, brick making, and food production with windmills and watercress beds.



**DISTINCTIVE BUILDINGS** made from local brick, flint and clay tiles; many **ATTRACTIVE VILLAGES**, popular places to live in and visit; many notable individual buildings and follies including **STATELY HOMES, MONUMENTS** and **MAUSOLEUMS**; a wealth of **MEDIEVAL CHURCHES**, many built from flint.



Numerous **ANCIENT ROUTEWAYS** and **SUNKEN LANES** including the Icknield Way, considered by many to be the oldest road in Britain.

