



Chilterns National Landscape

Caring for the Chilterns forever & for everyone:

The area of outstanding natural beauty management plan for the Chilterns National Landscape, 2025-2030

Illustrative ‘clean’ version of Management Plan text

For illustrative purposes only. The Schedule of Amendments is the definitive version.

[Title page:]

Caring for the Chilterns forever & for everyone:

The area of outstanding natural beauty management plan for the Chilterns National Landscape, 2025-2030

Contents

[add section contents with page numbers in design stage]

Temporary contents:

1. Introduction	2
About the Chilterns	2
What is a National Landscape?	2
Global and national context of the Chilterns National Landscape	2
What is natural beauty?	3
What is a management plan and why is it important?	3
The Chilterns Conservation Board	4
Board Members	4
2. The Significance of the Chilterns	5
Special Qualities	5
Landscape Character Map [map]	5
The Landscape Character	5
Timeline of the Chilterns [timeline infographic]	6
Geology of the Chilterns Countryside [infographic]	6
3. The State of the Chilterns	7
Headline Indicators: Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework	7
Local Indicators	9
Priority Habitats [map]	9
Forces for Change	10
4. The Future of the Chilterns	13
Vision	13
General Policies	13
Benefitting People and Nature - an Ecosystems Approach	14
5. Nature	16
Nature Recovery	16
Designated Wildlife Habitat Sites [map]	16
Key Facts	17
Grassland, heathland and bare ground	17
Long term trends	18
Recent trends	18

Key Issues	19
Rebuilding Nature – the ‘Lawton Principles’	19
Strategic Objectives.....	19
Policies	20
6. Historic Environment	24
Key Issues	24
Strategic Objectives.....	25
Policies	25
7. Land, Woodland and Water	27
Key Issues	27
Strategic Objectives.....	28
Policies	28
Woodland Cover [map]	30
Water Framework Directive Status for Chiltern Surface Water Bodies	31
8. Enjoyment and Understanding.....	32
Key Issues	32
Strategic Objectives.....	33
Policies	33
9. Social and economic wellbeing	36
Key Issues	36
Strategic Objectives.....	37
Policies	37
10. Planning and Development.....	40
Protocol for consulting the Chilterns Conservation Board.....	40
Key Issues	41
Strategic Objectives.....	41
Policies	42
11. Implementation and Monitoring.....	48
Implementation.....	48
How will the delivery of the Management Plan be monitored?	49

1. Introduction

[Please see Schedule of Amendments for note concerning the status of Chapter 1 – Introduction.]

About the Chilterns

The Chilterns is a landscape of remarkable beauty and distinctive character with a unique interaction of geological, ecological and cultural heritage features. The underlying chalk gives rise to a steep chalk escarpment and hillsides of velvety, flower-rich downland. Attractive villages with brick and flint cottages nestle in quiet valleys, while woodlands, commons and meadows are criss-crossed by ancient routes and peppered with historic hillforts and chalk figures. Water stored in the chalk emerges as springs that feed clear, sparkling chalk streams like the Chess and Misbourne.

Designated in 1965 and extended in 1990, the Chilterns National Landscape covers over 838 km² (324 square miles) of mainly privately-owned countryside across Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire. With 1.6 million residents within 8km and 10 million within an hour, it's among Europe's most accessible protected landscapes, offering ample recreational opportunities and peaceful countryside sites perfect for relaxation, reflection, picnics and walks.

[insert key image: boundary & county map]

What is a National Landscape?

A National Landscape, previously an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)' is a formal designation for an area of land that is of national importance for its natural beauty. National Landscapes have the same level of landscape quality and similar legal and policy protections as National Parks. However National Parks benefit from being their own planning authority.

In policy and law, a National Landscape currently remains designated as an AONB. The sole purpose of AONB designation is 'to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area' (section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000). All public bodies have a legal duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of an AONB (section 85 of the CROW Act).

[consider insertion of new subsection providing an explanation of the **s.85 duty** here, summarising and linking to Defra's published guidance (which clarifies that the duty must be complied with in "the issuing of licences and permits") – precise text needs agreement with Natural England – (design stage)]

Global and national context of the Chilterns National Landscape

National Landscapes are part of the global network of protected landscapes. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) has six management categories covering all types of protected areas. National Landscapes and National Parks fall into Category V: protected landscapes and seascapes, which are protected areas managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation. The IUCN published "Management Guidelines for IUCN Category V Protected Areas: Protected Landscapes/Seascapes" in 2002.

There are 46 National Landscapes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland safeguarded in the national interest for their distinctive character and beauty.

The work National Landscape teams do is important, not least because:

- National Landscapes cover just under one fifth of the UK
- 66% of people in England live within an hour of their nearest National Landscape
- 170 million people visit National Landscapes every year

The Chilterns National Landscape is an active member of the National Landscapes Association, the organisation established to advocate, communicate and manage national programmes, to support the UK's network of National Landscapes, and help them be as effective as possible.

To find out more about the National Landscapes Association visit: <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/>

To find out more about the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) visit: <https://iucn.org/>

In recognition of the international nature crisis, more than 100 countries, including the UK, have signed up to a global target (included in the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), 2022) to protect 30% of the planet (lands, rivers, lakes, wetlands and sea) for nature by 2030. The '30by30'

pledge aims to reverse biodiversity decline and increase resilience to climate change. National and local action must now follow the international commitment to prevent continued and irrecoverable declines in nature, and Defra is clear that National Landscapes will provide the backbone of 30by30 in England.

What is natural beauty?

While the term 'natural beauty' is no longer directly referenced in the name 'National Landscape', these areas are still designated and managed in relation to this quality. It is the natural beauty of a designated National Landscape that is required to be conserved and enhanced.

The understanding of the term 'natural beauty' has evolved since it was first applied (but not defined) in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 ("the 1949 Act").

Natural beauty is a subjective characteristic of a landscape and ultimately involves a value judgment in the designation process. Flora and fauna, geological and physiographical features obviously contribute to the perception of natural beauty, as does cultural heritage, including visible and concealed physical features (archaeology) as well as artistic and literary associations and traditions. It is now widely accepted that the beauty of all our most cherished landscapes is in part due to human intervention including agriculture, forestry and settlement. It has long been the practice to include such factors in the assessment of natural beauty. Section 99 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 clarified that land is not prevented from being treated as having outstanding natural beauty by the fact that its features are the product of human intervention in the landscape. Natural England defines six factors that contribute to the perception of Natural Beauty:

- Landscape quality: A measure of the current physical state or condition of the landscape and its features.
- Scenic quality: The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses.
- Relative wildness: The degree to which relatively wild character can be perceived contributes to a sense of place.
- Relative tranquillity: The degree to which tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape relative to areas outside of the landscape (i.e. not absolute tranquillity).
- Natural heritage features: The influence of flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features on the perception of the natural beauty of the area.
- Cultural heritage: The influence of cultural heritage on the perception of natural beauty of the area, including physical heritage features and associations with traditions, people, artists, writers or events in history.

The natural beauty of an area is often expressed in terms of certain 'special qualities' of the area (as in the next section). However, while the conservation and enhancement of those special qualities is sought through legislation and policy, including this Plan, the primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance the overall natural beauty of the whole area: once designated, the purpose applies to all parts of the National Landscape.

What is a management plan and why is it important?

All National Landscapes are required, under section 89 of the CROW Act, to prepare a plan, known as the Management Plan, which formulates their policy for the management of the landscape and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

While the preparation of a management plan is a requirement in law, at the time of preparing this plan the delivery of the plan's objectives depends upon stakeholders' agreement to do so. However, under new section 90A of the CROW Act, introduced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the Secretary of State is now empowered to issue regulations requiring all public bodies to contribute to the plan's preparation, implementation and review.

In most National Landscapes, local authorities prepare this plan but, in the Chilterns, it is prepared by the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) on behalf of, and in partnership with, local authorities, communities and other stakeholders. The plan usually runs for five years and is then reviewed to see if its content needs to be updated. This plan covers the period 2025-2030.

The Management Plan is a guiding tool for all those who live, work, visit or have an interest in the future of the Chilterns, and is the only plan that guides the management of the whole of the Chilterns National Landscape. The plan contains a comprehensive summary of the key issues facing the area and is intended to influence and help coordinate across local authority boundaries other key

strategies and activities affecting the area, including development plans, infrastructure plans and local nature recovery strategies.

It must be emphasised that successful delivery of the vision and objectives set out in the Management Plan depends on resources being available to support action, and on the cooperation of public, private and voluntary sector partners, including most importantly the area's local authorities, all of whom are invited to endorse the Plan. For public sector partners, reference to the Plan will be a key indicator of compliance with their duty under s.85 of the CROW Act; partners in other sectors are also encouraged to refer to the Plan, especially in relation to applications for consents, licences and funding.

The Chilterns Conservation Board

The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) is an independent body created in 2004 by Parliamentary Order to manage the Chilterns National Landscape.

In summary, the CCB's statutory purposes, under s.87 of the CROW Act, are as follows:

- a) The CCB's key responsibility is to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Chilterns, i.e. the purpose of the designation.
- b) In addition, where doing so would not conflict with that key responsibility, the CCB will:
 - Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the Chilterns' special qualities.
 - Seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities by working with local authorities and other relevant organisations.
 - Consider the needs of agriculture, forestry, and the local economy.
 - Ensure water resources, both surface and underground, are protected from pollution, especially in coordination with the Environment Agency and water companies.

Board Members

The Board has 27 members, who are independent and do not represent any other organisation.

This comprises 13 local authority appointed members, six Parish Council elected members, and eight Secretary of State appointed members. All Board members will have expressed an interest in becoming a Board member for the Chilterns Conservation Board.

- Members appointed by the Secretary of State must go through a formal application and selection process and are appointed for a period of three years, which can be extended twice by another three years, nine years maximum.
- Parish Council members are elected by the parish councils in their appropriate county within the Chilterns National Landscape: two Buckinghamshire, two Oxfordshire, one Hertfordshire and one Bedfordshire. They can remain Board members as long as they are parish council members and are willing to remain Board members.
- Local Authorities in the Chilterns National Landscape appoint their members usually in May – some do it annually, and some appoint them for years. There are five for Buckinghamshire Council, and one each for Oxfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Central Bedford Council, Luton Borough Council, Dacorum Borough Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Three Rivers District Council.

The Chilterns Conservation Board and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) have no formal influence over who is appointed or elected to the Board.

2. The Significance of the Chilterns

Special Qualities

The Chilterns' special qualities are considered so important, nationally and internationally, that they require specific protection. The primary purpose of conserving and enhancing the area's natural beauty depends on positively managing the integrity of the whole National Landscape, not just those parts of the landscape in which these special qualities are embodied.

- A dramatic chalk escarpment, a globally rare landscape type which gives rise to rare ecology and distinctive cultural heritage.
- Panoramic views from and across the escarpment interwoven with intimate dip-slope 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 1.5% of the National Landscape mostly in small fragments. Species for which the National Landscape is particularly important include Chiltern gentian, wild candytuft, pasque flower, silver-spotted skipper and glow-worm.
- One of the most wooded landscapes in England, with 24% 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 Biodiversity Action Plan priority species include otter, water vole, reed bunting and brown trout; numerous chalk springs occur along the base of the escarpment.
- Significant ancient hedgerows, hedgerow and field trees, orchards and parkland weaving across farmland that covers approximately 60% of the Chilterns.
- 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 Chilterns Cycleway.
- Over 2,300 ha of common land, heaths and greens, rich in wildlife and cultural heritage; 3700ha of Open Access land.
- Numerous ancient routeways and sunken lanes including the Icknield Way, considered by many to be the oldest road in Britain.
- 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.
- An industrial heritage around wood-working, furniture making, chalk quarrying, brick making, and food production with windmills and watercress beds.
- 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.
- Relative tranquillity 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.

Landscape Character Map [map]

This map highlights the location of the main landscape character areas.

The Landscape Character

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a tool to help understand what the landscape is like today, how it has come to be like that and how it may change in the future. LCAs identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas.

There is no single LCA for the Chilterns National Landscape. A number of county and district-based LCAs cover the whole of the National Landscape. These have been undertaken using similar (but not identical) specifications.

These give us four broad types of landscape in the Chilterns as follows:

Scarp Foothills and Vale Fringes

Gently undulating chalk slopes with chalk springs between the base of the scarp and the clay vale to the west. Mainly managed within intensive agriculture with large fields and relatively few hedgerows, this landscape forms a narrow band only a few fields wide, towards the north of the National Landscape, but widens as it approaches the Thames in the south.

Chalk Scarp

The 'spine' of the Chilterns is the chalk scarp that runs roughly north-east to south-west along the western side of the National Landscape. A spectacular ridge rises high above the vale to the west and dominates views over a wide area.

Combes and prominent hills, often locations for chalk figures, monuments, burial mounds or hillforts, form a deeply convoluted steep scarp edge which supports a mosaic of chalk grassland, woodland and scrub.

River Valleys

The Chilterns contains a series of larger river valleys that cut through the scarp and dip-slope. Arterial valleys run north-west to south-east and, create dramatic 'wind gaps' where they cut through the scarp, as at Tring and Wendover

Often asymmetrical in shape these valleys contain the internationally rare, aquifer-fed chalk streams. As natural corridors through the Chiltern Hills, there is a long history of travel from ancient drovers routes, turnpikes and canals to modern day road and rail links. A number of large historic houses presiding over estates and parkland, are scattered throughout the valleys while settlements have grown up associated with the water supply, woodland industry, farming trade and transport links to London.

Plateau and Dip-slope

A large proportion of the National Landscape is covered by plateau and dip-slope as the land gradually falls away to the east and Greater London. Though less visible and striking than the scarp, this landscape forms a key part of the classic Chilterns landscape.

The topography is complex, with areas of plateau dissected by long, narrow, often dry valleys. Extensive woodlands and arable fields interspersed with commons, villages, scattered farmsteads (often dating from medieval times) and designed parklands characterise the plateau. Commons, heaths and greens would once have been far more extensive. Many Chilterns commons are wooded or former wood pasture, with areas of heathland, acid grassland, ponds and other open habitats. Grazed fields can still be found on the steeper valley sides and valley bottoms where settlements often formed around water sources or stretched out along the valley roads.

Further detail on the landscape character of the Chilterns, including a timeline of the area's formation, is available on the CCB website here: <https://www.chilterns.org.uk/our-landscape/landscape-character/>

Timeline of the Chilterns [timeline infographic]

Geology of the Chilterns Countryside [infographic]

3. The State of the Chilterns

The Chilterns National Landscape faces unprecedented pressure. From housing and transport infrastructure to climate change, there are many challenges to the natural beauty and special qualities of the Chilterns. The effect of Ash Dieback is clearly visible in our ash-dominated woodlands e; squirrels, deer and *Glis glis* (edible dormouse) mean that very few young trees survive and the chalk aquifer, which we rely on for drinking water, is under threat from pollution, over-abstraction and climate change.

This section provides a snapshot of the state of the Chilterns framed in terms of the government's new Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOFs) and a number of local indicators, and summarises key issues affecting the National Landscape. Tackling these issues requires collaborative action at many levels, from local to national and international. This Management Plan outlines what is needed and creates an agenda for action. Further details on the targets and outcomes defined for nature are included in the Chilterns Nature Recovery Plan (see chapter 5), and a Climate Adaptation Management Plan will be published by the government's target date of 2028.

Headline Indicators: Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

The Protected Landscapes Target and Outcomes Framework (PLTOFs) sets the ambition for Protected Landscapes to achieve those outcomes from the government's Environmental Improvement Plan which are considered as most relevant to National Landscapes' statutory purpose.

The framework sets out ten targets which are expressed at national level. Some of the baseline data have yet to be released by the relevant authority. The Table below summarises the targets and the baseline data that the National Landscape has received at the time this Plan is published.

National PLTOF Target	Target Indicator	Chilterns Baseline Statistic
1. Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).	Extent of wildlife-rich habitat created or restored within Protected Landscapes, outside of protected sites	To be released by Natural England in July 2025
2. Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042	Percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes in favourable condition	CNL has 58.9% of SSSI features in favourable condition (cf. average of 41.3 % for all 34 NLs) (© Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2025.)
3. For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028	Percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition	CNL has 29.4 % of actions 'on track' to achieve favourable condition (cf. average of 20.7 % for all 34 NLs) (© Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2025.)
4. Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042	Extent of priority habitat within Protected Landscapes, outside of protected sites, in favourable management through agri-environment schemes	To be released by Defra in June 2025
5. Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt	Percentage of land managers adopting	To be released by Defra in June 2025

nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.	nature-friendly farming on a percentage of their land	
Mitigating and adapting to climate change targets		
6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.	Level of greenhouse gas emissions within Protected Landscapes	Estimated net annual greenhouse gas emissions from CNL were 613.6 kt CO ₂ e in 2022 compared to 1,072.8 kt CO ₂ e in 2005 (Data published by Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, June 2024). Data for 1990 are not yet available for National Landscapes.
7. Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.	Extent of peat under restoration in Protected Landscapes	Not of relevance to CNL due to landscape setting
8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).	Extent of tree canopy and woodland cover in Protected Landscapes	<p>Total area of National Forest Inventory woodland in CNL is 19,423 ha.</p> <p>Total area of Trees Outside Woodland (including Orchards) is 4,043 ha.</p> <p>(© Forestry Commission copyright 2023. © Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023.)</p> <p>Baseline figures to be supplied in 2025.</p>
Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment targets		
9. Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme		<p>A number of PLTOF access indicators are being measured by the Chilterns Conservation Board as part of the Defra Access for All and Farming in Protected Landscape programmes. Data capture commenced in 2022/23. These are providing a baseline for reporting in 2025. The metrics relate to access improvements delivered through these two programmes and include:</p> <p>Metres of accessible path Number of accessible toilets and rest stops Number of disability accessible parking spaces Number of accessible gates and gaps Number of visits and volunteer days facilitated by new equipment Number of schools engaged (primary and secondary) Number of volunteer days Number of accessible or easy access routes for which wayfinding has been created or improved</p>
10. Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes	Number and percentage of nationally designated heritage assets in	There are 3 Grade II* listed building, 9 scheduled monuments and 2 Grade II* Registered parks and Garden at risk (Grade II* and II respectively)

	Protected Landscapes to be deemed at risk	(At risk figures May 2025 data, Historic England.)
--	---	--

Local Indicators

The objectives and policies of the Management Plan also relate to a number of local indicators that support and complement the PLTOFs as set out below.

1. Environmental Land Management (ELM scheme coverage and take up)

15,000 ha of land (18% of total area and 33% of farmed land) were included in agri-environment schemes (AES) in Chilterns National Landscape, including Countryside Stewardship (CS), Environmental Stewardship (ES) and the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) schemes in 2023. The details of ELM payment schemes have been gradually rolled out since 2021, so these figures are likely to be in a state of flux and to change over the next few years.

(© Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023.)

2. Woodland Management

67% of the woodland in the National Landscape is in active management (public and private combined). Woodland management is important to create the conditions in which wildlife can thrive.

(© Forestry Commission copyright 2023. © Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023.)

3. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

There are 64 SSSIs in the National Landscape, totalling 3,213ha. SSSIs are sub-divided into units characterised by features of special interest such as wildlife, geology or landform. Out of a total 163 SSSI features in the Chilterns National Landscape, 58.9% are in favourable condition and 27% of the SSSI features have 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition. A feature can only be on track to achieve favourable condition if it has an up-to-date condition assessment by Natural England and a management plan has begun to be implemented. (© Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023.)

Priority Habitats [map]

4. Priority Habitat Extent and Condition

Natural England mapping shows 17,572 ha of priority habitat in the Chilterns National Landscape (see table and map below). These figures do not include linear priority habitats such as the rivers, hedgerows and arable field margins. Many of the priority habitats in the Chilterns, as elsewhere, are likely to be under recorded due to the small and scattered nature of the parcels. Datasets on condition are currently only available for priority habitat within SSSIs.

Priority habitat	Area (hectares)	Priority Habitat as % of total land area
Deciduous woodland	14,151	16.99
Lowland calcareous grassland	1,309	1.57
Good quality semi-improved grassland	493	0.59
Lowland heathland	289	0.35
Traditional orchard	142	0.17
Lowland meadows (dry)	51	0.06
Floodplain grazing marsh	49	0.06
Lowland dry acid grassland	38	0.04
Lowland fen	17	0.02
Purple moor grass and rush pastures		<0.01
No main habitat	1029	1.23

Total	17,572	21.1
--------------	---------------	-------------

(© Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023.)

5. Chalk Streams

There are nine chalk streams in the National Landscape. None are currently assessed as achieving good ecological status. Of the nine, none are assessed as in bad condition, four are in poor condition, four in moderate condition and one is both poor and moderate condition (this latter river is split into two assessments for the purpose of the Water Framework Directive. The issues behind the poor state of these rivers are numerous and complex and include impacts of pollution, development, channel modification, invasive species, abstraction, droughts and climate change.

6. Historic Environment

The condition of most designated heritage assets in the Chilterns has remained largely stable over the past decade.

Heritage Asset type	Number	Number at risk (April 2024)	% at risk	Average % at risk across National Landscapes in England
Listed building (Grade I)	47	0	0.0%	3.1%
Listed building (Grade II*)	119	3	2.5%	2.3%
Listed building (Grade II)	2045	0	0.0%	0.05%
Scheduled Monument	113	9	8.0%	11.9%
Registered Parks and Garden	18	2	11.1%	5.3%

However, the vast majority of known heritage assets, including archaeological sites, are either 'non-designated heritage assets' (NDHAs) or are not formally designated or recognised, and therefore not protected. There are significant gaps in our knowledge, particularly in the wooded areas of the Chilterns.

(At risk figures April 2024 data, Historic England.)

7. Health Walks

The Chilterns has some of the most popular health walks programmes of any protected landscape in the country. There has been a 45% increase in health walk footfall in the last five years, with 64,000 health walk attendances in 2016-2017 across the National Landscape.

8. Visits to Countryside Sites

Visitor numbers to formal countryside attractions have increased over recent years, in some cases substantially. For example, Wendover Woods, in Buckinghamshire saw a 13% increase in visitors (2013-2017) and College Lake, near Tring, in Hertfordshire saw a 16% increase (2013-2016).

Forces for Change

The following is a summary of the main forces for change relevant to the Chilterns National Landscape.

Topic	Key Issues	Predicted Trends and Impacts without Intervention
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline in traditional land management (e.g. mixed farming, crop rotation, grazing, woodland management, orchards, watercress beds and exercise of common rights), Change of land use including increase in area of land used primarily for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declines in abundance and range of flora and fauna Reductions in habitat connectivity and resilience Increasing impacts of pests and diseases Loss of species diversity within semi-natural habitats

	<p>recreation (e.g. golf, liveries, and new businesses such as paintballing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of housing and infrastructure development • Declines in diversity within habitats • Eutrophication • Impacts of systemic pesticides • Impacts of non-native invasive pests and diseases • Climate change; increasing climatic variation • Visitor impacts on sensitive sites and habitats, especially along the escarpment • Unprotected sites • Habitat fragmentation 	<p>including ancient woodlands and chalk grassland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of hedgerow trees particularly ash • Scrubbing up of grassland sites • Declines in characteristic species and habitats
Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development pressures • Changes in land management • Unprotected sites and landscapes; site specific focus of designation • Heritage of the Chilterns less recognised and understood than other protected landscapes • Limited resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of historic landscape character • Decline in condition of wider setting of monuments • Condition of designated assets largely stable but a few at risk • Increased archaeological understanding through housing and infrastructure development • Initiatives developed in isolation
Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in land management practices • Global markets contributing to demise of local industry for example furniture making • Growing markets in wood fuel and local products • Brexit – opportunities for influence and change alongside uncertainty for land managers and farmers • Impact on rural workers of high cost of housing • Fewer people employed in land management • Subdivision of woodlands into small plots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced commercial need to manage landscape features such as hedgerows and trees; loss of historic field patterns • Declines in soil health • Sheep grazing of chalk grassland is currently uneconomic leading to declining biodiversity • Under managed woodlands • Decreasing number of holdings, increase in larger holding, more contractors, land sold off for amenity, changes in area of land farmed • Farm diversification resulting from growth in marketing of local products and tourism
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmentally unsustainable levels of abstraction from chalk aquifer leading to chronic low flows and shortening of river habitats • Abstraction for River Thames at level of no more capacity • High levels of water usage • Modifications to water courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality decline • Further degradation of chalk streams, streams and rivers running dry • Failure to reach required Water Framework Directive status • Loss of key landscape features

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor ecological condition of chalk streams • Pollution, diffuse and non-diffuse • Non-native invasive pests and diseases • Impact of climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on ecology and loss of associated wildlife
Settlement and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly desirable area, commutable to London • Unprecedented housing and infrastructure growth within and in setting of the National Landscape • Construction of HS2 • Airport expansion and increased over-flying • Creeping suburbanisation and gentrification • Lack of affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erosion of character • Increased noise, air/light pollution • Habitat severance, degradation/loss • Less enjoyable to visit • New building designs not locally distinctive • Housing even less affordable for local community
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population in and around the Chilterns is increasing rapidly • Some large urban populations on the edge of the Chilterns with relatively high incidence of health issues compared to the National Landscape; this provides major opportunities for enhancing health and wellbeing through outdoor activity • Public understanding of the benefits provided by the Chilterns is low • Low levels of engagement with some audiences (e.g. urban young people, Black and ethnic minority communities) • Declining public sector funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradually increasing profile for the area and the opportunities it presents to increase health and wellbeing • Increased number of visitors • Risk of negative impacts of additional visitors to sensitive habitats and sites • Risk of anti-social behaviour (e.g. fly tipping, vandalism, wildlife crime) • Continued lack of engagement with under-represented audiences • Gradual decline in maintenance of rights of way and countryside access infrastructure unless public funding is maintained or new funding secured

4. The Future of the Chilterns

Vision

Our vision is that the Chilterns will be cared for, for ever and for everyone. A place where people are inspired by its distinctive natural beauty, space and tranquillity, to enjoy and care for the landscape. A place where natural beauty and cultural heritage is celebrated and enhanced. A place which gives space for nature to flourish and which provides us with the ingredients for healthy living, such as clean water, healthy soils and thriving wildlife. A place where communities live, work and breathe. A haven for people and wildlife.

To achieve this vision, the CCB advocates that:

1. All special qualities and natural resources of the Chilterns will be protected forever for everyone, current and future generations.
2. The wildlife and natural beauty of the Chilterns have an intrinsic value that will be preserved and restored.
3. The landscape is designated for the nation and will be protected by the nation.
4. To ensure its future care, more people need to understand the value of the Chilterns as a unique and special landscape, of national and international significance.
5. The Chilterns provides a valuable resource for the enjoyment, health and wellbeing of a significant proportion of the country's population.
6. The landscape is a place where many people live and work, where community facilities must be retained to foster sustainable, vibrant communities.
7. Viable, sustainable and diverse farming, forestry and rural economy sectors are essential to conserve and enhance the wildlife and natural beauty of the Chilterns and public benefits of land management are supported by public funding.
8. As one of the most accessible protected landscapes in Europe, more people should use the Chilterns for quiet recreation, especially the 1.6 2.25 million people who live within 8km 10km of the boundary and the adjacent urban populations, with carefully managed access to ensure the special qualities are protected.
9. Those who live in or near, make a living from, visit and love the Chilterns are encouraged to help care for it.
10. Given the Chilterns is already more developed than most protected landscapes and given the potential benefit of the landscape to millions, there should be no major development in the AONB National Landscape; only the most essential development should take place and where it takes place, there should be no adverse impact on landscape, special qualities or access, and it should deliver an environmental net gain.

General Policies

To achieve the above, we have set out four general policies across three key areas, to help conserve and enhance the Chilterns.

GP1 Continue to explore opportunities to enhance the status of the Chilterns National Landscape, including securing increased powers and resources, at least equivalent to redesignation as a National Park

In 2018, the CCB submitted a request to Natural England to consider redesignation of the Chilterns as a National Park. Whilst on paper the protections for National Parks and National Landscapes are identical, in reality National Parks benefit from increased resources and status as a planning authority.

That request was supported by the Glover Landscapes Review in 2019, which recognised that the area met the designation criteria in terms of both natural beauty and opportunities for access and enjoyment, and recommended that if not redesignated a National Park, the Chilterns be given increased resources and powers to address the specific challenges that it faces.

Redesignation is not universally popular as a solution in the Chilterns area, however, and there are questions about whether National Parks, based on legislation that has not been revisited for 75 years, offer the best value or necessarily achieve the best outcomes in terms of 21st century priorities. Nonetheless, National Park status is currently a benchmark for landscape-scale environmental management in the UK and the CCB continues to actively explore opportunities to create a new gold standard in this sector.

GP2 Review the boundary of the National Landscape to cover a larger area of the Chilterns and adjoining landscapes that merits it.

In 2021 Natural England committed to undertaking a review of the boundary of the designated area, undertook through consultants an extensive and positive assessment of the surrounding area, engaging with local authorities and other key stakeholders across Berkshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire, with the support of many local communities. However, the process was cancelled just before statutory public consultation was scheduled to begin in May 2025 as a result of budgetary constraints. It is known that the outcome of the assessment identified significant areas that met the criteria for designation, and were identified as being desirable to designate. The Board and its partners therefore strongly advocate that the process of designation should be completed as soon as resources become available.

GP3 Establish a strong partnership to deliver the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan working together in the best interests of the area, its environment, communities, economy and visitors.

There are a significant number of organisations who are dedicated to caring for the Chilterns and there is a need for a strong strategic partnership across the Chilterns. Collaborative working with local organisations, local authorities, charities and government agencies on delivery of the Management Plan will ensure more is achieved and there is a consistent approach to the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns as the National Landscape expands. Strong partnership working and effective engagement is also going to become more important in the context of the strengthened duty on public bodies to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape, and as the government's intentions become clearer on how the same public bodies will be expected to contribute towards developing future iterations of the Management Plan and delivering their objectives.

Benefitting People and Nature - an Ecosystems Approach

A healthy natural environment underpins the health and wellbeing of society and the economy. The natural resources – or 'Natural Capital' – of the Chilterns include its trees and woodland, chalk streams, aquifer and other water bodies, farmland and grassland, soils, landscape and cultural assets. The benefits or services that we get from these natural resources are known as Ecosystems Services, which can be broken down into four types:

[Ecosystems services infographic]

The National Landscape can support the wider ecological network of surrounding areas so that they can all become more resilient. Examples of Ecosystem Services provided by the Chilterns include:

- Flint and timber for construction
- Wood for fuel
- Natural flood defences from woodland and grassland
- Pollination by insects
- Carbon storage by woodland and soil
- Chalk aquifer for water supply
- Cultural benefits from a recreational perspective
- Opportunities for people to enhance their physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Sustainable production of food and drink, including locally distinctive produce

The Management Plan aims to manage the Chilterns' natural capital more sustainably, to enhance the National Landscape and contribute to the delivery of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

Climate change is expected to have a major but unpredictable influence on the natural beauty and natural capital of the Chilterns. It is likely that the long-term changes will, for example, alter the species composition of woodlands and the type of crops grown by farmers, leading to alteration to the landscape.

Climate mitigation in the Chilterns National Landscape

An important aspect of the value of the natural capital of the Chilterns is that it makes a significant contribution to helping mitigate climate change in ways that are compatible with conserving and enhancing its natural beauty. Climate change mitigation refers to actions to slow down, and potentially reverse, the effects of climate change.

Example climate mitigation actions for the Chilterns might include:

- Supporting nature recovery actions to help maintain ecosystem services which support carbon sequestration e.g. in chalk grasslands
- Increasing capture and storage of greenhouse gases in natural systems through tree planting
- Reducing carbon and methane emissions in agriculture and other sectors
- Retrofitting old buildings to make them more energy efficient
- Purchasing local food and wood products to reduce air miles
- Holidaying in the Chilterns as a sustainable alternative to travel abroad

Adaptation to climate change in the Chilterns National Landscape

Climate change adaptation involves ways of adjusting to the effects of climate change. Adaptation requires us to adjust our environment and develop actionable solutions to protect communities and ecosystems from changes that we cannot prevent.

Examples of climate change adaptation suitable for the Chilterns might be:

- Reducing runoff and enabling greater infiltration of water into soils to recharge chalk aquifers
- Introducing shading and managing vegetation to help regulate air, river and standing water temperatures
- Creating resilient ecological networks to allow species movement in response to climate change
- Restoring chalk streams and other habitats to improve species resilience to climate change

The government's Third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) requires the Chilterns Conservation Board to produce a Climate Adaptation Management Plan that will be embedded in or linked to the management plan by 2028. The plan will include actions and objectives designed to adapt to climate change.

GP4 Support projects and proposals that have a positive impact on the ability of the Chilterns to contribute sustainable Ecosystem Services by:

- Sustainably managing land and water environments
- Protecting and providing more, better and joined up natural habitats across the AONB and with adjacent areas, enhancing networks through the landscape
- Protecting and conserving water resources and improving water quality
- Improving the Chilterns' resilience and adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change
- Increasing the ability to store carbon through new tree planting, woodland creation, wetland restoration or other means
- Conserving and improving soil structure and quality
- Reducing litter and environmental pollution, especially air and water pollution, including sewage
- Managing and mitigating the risk of flooding
- Supporting the sustainable production and local use of food, forestry and raw materials
- Improving opportunities for peoples' health and wellbeing, including provision of high-quality green infrastructure close to where people live
- Stimulating sustainable tourism and economic activity
- Delivering high-quality sustainable design that protects the local distinctiveness of the Chilterns
- Managing or controlling non-native invasive species

5. Nature

The Chilterns is home to a wonderful variety of wildlife, including many protected and notable species. The National Landscape is particularly important for its chalk grassland, chalk streams, ancient woodlands (especially beech) and arable habitats. Fine-grained variations in soils, topography and past management have given rise over millennia to rich habitat mosaics. These include box woodland and juniper scrub, scarp slope and dip-slope chalk streams, wayside verges and disused quarries. Wood pasture and veteran trees, heathland and acid grassland (habitats often associated with common land) add to the mix.

The habitats associated with the Chilterns are often a by-product of traditional management – grazing, woodland management and quarrying – over many millennia by farmers, woodland owners and other land managers. Its chalk escarpment provides a crucial stepping stone for species moving through the landscape, often in response to climate change and other pressures.

While this refreshed management plan recognises the value of nature, the increasing need to identify measures to mitigate against climate change and the intrinsic value the Chilterns landscape provides to the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors alike, significant advances in understanding have happened since the original plan, on which this refresh is based, was published in 2019.

Nature Recovery

Recognising the great value protected landscapes can offer to the country as a whole, later the same year (2019), our National Landscapes joined together to sign the [Colchester Declaration](#). The declaration made ambitious commitments for nature recovery and woodland planting. From this time, each protected landscape, including the Chilterns, started the process of producing its own bespoke Nature Recovery Plan.

The Environment Act 2021 led to Defra requiring certain local authorities to produce their own Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This process started in earnest in 2023. Working with the four evolving LNRSs covering the Chilterns (Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire), we will publish the first Chilterns Nature Recovery Plan this year. In future, this Nature Recovery Plan will become an integral part of the Chilterns Management Plan. The Plan describes how the Chilterns National Landscape can respond to the government's ambitions for a nature recovery network and its commitment to the 30by30 target, recognising that National Landscapes have a critical role to play.

Understanding whether our nature recovery actions across the landscape achieve the desired outcomes is essential and requires monitoring and evaluation. The Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework provides a national dataset to enable monitoring of trends in nature recovery across the landscape (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, the duty in s.85 of the CROW Act requires relevant authorities to '*seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty*' which includes the landforms, geology, plants and animals that are critical to nature recovery (see Chapter X).

Taken together, the Chilterns National Landscape management plan, nature recovery plan and embedded Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework provide strategic direction to inform how individuals and organisations can work together to co-ordinate nature recovery actions across the landscape at scale.

Designated Wildlife Habitat Sites [map]

The Chilterns has many sites designated for their wildlife value, including nationally and internationally important sites, totalling 10,673 ha (12.8% of the National Landscape). These include:

- Three Special Areas of Conservation (SACs – sites of international importance), including the Chilterns Beechwood SAC (made up of nine separate sites), Aston Rowant SAC and Hartslock Wood SAC
- 64 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (national importance)
- 494 local sites recognised for their wildlife or geology

The charity Plantlife identifies part of the Chilterns as an 'Important Plant Area' for internationally important plant populations.

The map doesn't show local wildlife sites (almost 500). Total area of designated sites is greater than 10,673 ha (12.8% of the National Landscape).

Key Facts

Grassland, heathland and bare ground

- The Chilterns supports important concentrations of species rich grassland including chalk, neutral and acid grassland
- Remnant heathland is also found in the Chilterns, often on common land
- Quarries/former quarries provide bare ground, an important habitat for many species
- Chalk grassland is an internationally rare, fragile, wildlife rich habitat which has developed over centuries of grazing on nutrient-poor chalk soils
- Home to populations of chalk specialist species, including wild candytuft, pasque flower, silver-spotted skipper and glow-worm
- Grassland and heathland scrub up quickly if left unmanaged
- Livestock grazing is the best way to manage chalk grassland and should be encouraged
- Chalk scrub is often of high wildlife value –habitat mosaics, including small areas of scrub and longer grassland as well as short turf are important
- Juniper and box scrub habitats are notable in the Chilterns
- Many grassland and heathland sites are popular with visitors; this requires management to prevent disruption to sensitive species and habitats.

Trees and woodland

- The Chilterns is one of the most heavily wooded areas in England, famous for its extensive beech woods and ancient woodland
- Ancient woodlands cover only 2% of England, while they cover 13% of the Chilterns. They are home to many rare and threatened species
- Priority habitats in the Chilterns include lowland beech and yew, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, wood-pasture and parkland
- The Chilterns has a rich heritage of parkland, wood pasture and common land, with high concentrations of veteran trees, associated deadwood invertebrates and fungi
- The Chilterns has the largest native box woodland in the UK
- Active management of woodlands is needed to let in light and create habitat mosaics
- Plantations on ancient woodland sites need to be restored through a mix of natural regeneration and appropriate planting
- Invasive non-native pests (including Grey Squirrel and Glis glis - Edible Dormouse) and disease, as well as increasing deer numbers, are a serious and growing concern for our woodlands that needs management
- Management of woodlands to increase diversity species mix and age is needed to ensure resilience to climate change, pests and disease
- Traditional orchards, particularly cherry, were once important in the Chilterns and the mix of old fruit trees and grassland are valuable for wildlife

Water bodies and wetlands

- Rivers and wetlands are scarce but precious habitats in the Chilterns
- Chalk streams are a globally scarce habitat – nine of the 283 chalk streams in the world are found in the Chilterns and they are home to some of the UK's most endangered species including water vole, otter and brown trout
- Chalk streams are shallow, fast flowing watercourses with a gravel bed and low banks. Flows depend on groundwater levels in the underlying chalk aquifer
- Winterbourns, the upper reaches of streams that are dry in the summer months, support unique plants and animals
- The chalk aquifer underlying the Chilterns supplies water to millions of people in the south east
- Besides the main chalk streams there are numerous chalk springs at the foot of the scarp
- Of the nine chalk streams, none are currently assessed as being of 'Good Ecological Status/Potential' according to the latest Environment Agency assessment
- Low flows are the key issue affecting the area's chalk streams
- Pollution is also a significant concern, especially from urban and sewage effluent, as well as diffuse pollution. Pollution becomes more concentrated at times of low flow

- All our chalk streams have been heavily modified for example due to milling, agriculture and urban development leaving fragmented habitats, degraded natural river channels and interrupted natural processes
- The spread of non-native invasive species such as Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and North American mink have had an impact on the ecology of Chilterns chalk streams
- The River Thames forms the boundary between the North Wessex Downs and the Chilterns
- Other wetland habitats include lakes, gravel and mineral extraction pits, reservoirs, canals, ponds and temporary waterbodies, all providing important wildlife habitat
- Many ponds on farmland and common land were created to water livestock or from small scale mineral extraction. They provide habitat for a variety of specialist wildlife e.g. newts and starfruit. The number and ecological condition of ponds in the Chilterns has significantly declined over many years

Farmland habitats

- Farmland is the main land use in the Chilterns, covering over 60% of the National Landscape and providing a wide range of wildlife habitats
- Farming has created a mosaic of arable and grassland habitats, stitched together by hedgerows and interspersed with woodland, commons and downland
- Species-rich ancient hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide important wildlife habitat and corridors
- Hedgerows need the right management to sustain their value for wildlife
- Farmers play an important role planting and restoring hedgerows; with the declines in livestock farming, the function of many hedges as barriers to movement of stock has gone.
- Farmers also have a crucial role to play in protecting and maintaining soil health to support soil invertebrates, fungi and microbes
- Modern farming techniques and the move towards larger fields has impacted farmland wildlife; much of this change was concentrated in the early post-war period, yet declines in biodiversity continue
- The Chilterns was once a stronghold for rare arable plants and farmland birds, such as lapwing, yellowhammer and skylark; many of these species are in decline

Long term trends

The Chilterns saw major losses in area of characteristic habitats and landscape features over the course of the 20th century including:

Chalk grassland 54% lost

Commons, greens and heaths 43% lost

Ancient woodland 9% lost

(See [“The Changing Landscape of the Chilterns”](#) The Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, Buckinghamshire County Council & Chilterns Conservation Board, 2009.)

Recent trends

- The UK State of Nature Report 2023 found that across the UK, species studied have declined on average by 19% since 1970 and 16%, nearly 1 in 6 species from Great Britain, are threatened with extinction. This trend is mirrored in the Chilterns with many wildlife species in long-term decline in both abundance and range. Much of the best surviving wildlife habitat lies within designated sites and nature reserves, and many formerly abundant species of the wider countryside are in decline.
- Species with specialist habitat requirements are hardest hit
- Over the past 10 years many woodland and farmland birds have declined or disappeared. The decline in specialist woodland bird species reflects a long-term reduction in woodland management across the Chilterns
- Plant species – particularly specialist chalk loving plants – are also under pressure; the northern Chilterns is one of the top three most important chalk floras in the UK, yet ten of the 60+ rarer species are thought to be extinct. Many others are restricted to a single site

Key Issues

Despite the dedication and hard work of many people and organisations over many years – not least farmers and land managers, volunteers and community groups, NGOs and statutory agencies – wildlife habitat and species are still being lost from the Chilterns. This is due to a range of factors, many of which are listed below. More effective action is needed, for example, landscape scale conservation initiatives, to halt and reverse these declines.

Habitat degradation takes many forms including direct loss of habitat, decline in habitat quality, fragmentation and increased isolation of habitat and increased leisure and recreational use. Species that require habitat mosaics rather than single habitats are often the hardest hit.

- **Changes in land management practices:** A decline in traditional land management practise, such as extensive grazing crop rotation, small scale quarrying and hedge-laying has led to a decline in biodiversity.
- **Lack of wildlife habitat management:** A lack of support and resources to manage existing wildlife sites, semi-natural habitats and important ecological networks, such as roadside verges and hedgerows.
- **Environmental and ecological change:** Including climate change, loss of pollinators and impacts of pests, diseases and invasive non-native species (INNS)
- **Impacts of people and dogs:** The actions of visitors to the Chilterns can damage many of the area's wildlife habitats. For example, dogs can disturb ground nesting birds and high visitor numbers can make it harder to carry out appropriate site management.
- **Habitat fragmentation:** Housing, transport infrastructure and changes in land use, continue to leave a legacy of habitat fragmentation from severed hedgerows, culverted chalk streams and lack of buffer zones along the rivers, to isolation of chalk grassland and ancient woodland. Wildlife habitats need to be big enough and sufficiently well connected for wildlife to thrive and species need corridors to move through the landscape in response to a changing environment.

Rebuilding Nature – the 'Lawton Principles'

Sir John Lawton's landmark report 'Making Space for Nature' concluded that "There is compelling evidence that England's collection of wildlife sites is generally too small and too isolated, leading to declines in many of England's characteristic species" This would include keystone species and species characteristic of the Chilterns. The report identified the essence of what needs to be done to enhance the resilience and coherence of England's ecological network in four words: more, bigger, better and joined.

We need to: (i) Improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management (ii) Increase the size of current wildlife sites (iii) Enhance connections between, or join up, sites, either through physical corridors, or through 'stepping stones' (iv) Create new sites (v) Reduce the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering wildlife sites.

[Bigger, better, connected amoeba image]

Strategic Objectives

The Government's [Biodiversity 2020](#) Strategy stated the ambition that, "*By 2020, we will see an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and will have prevented further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species.*" So far, not enough has been done to achieve this, either in the Chilterns or nationally. The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan contains ambitions for nature and the aim of becoming the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. The Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework described in Chapter 3 provides the national ambitions for Protected Landscapes. This Management Plan sets out a framework for joint action to progress these ambitions in the Chilterns.

The following objectives have been put in place to help prioritise and invest in the natural environment, and in the people and organisations that care for it, to deliver 'more, bigger, better, more joined up spaces for nature.'

NO1 Ensure that spaces for wildlife are expanded, well connected, well managed and diverse.

NO2 Increase the range and abundance of populations of key wildlife species.

NO3 Minimise development impacts on the National Landscape and its setting; where they are unavoidable, ensure they provide net environmental gains.

NO4 Ensure that chalk habitat management in the Chilterns is widely considered an exemplar of best practice.

NO5 Enable people to understand and be inspired by the natural environment of the Chilterns, ensuring that policies and decisions recognise the Chilterns' value to society and in its own right.

NO6 Secure greater protection for chalk streams as a globally rare habitat.

NO7 Encourage people from different organisations, communities and backgrounds, to work together to 'make space for nature' in the Chilterns.

Policies

To achieve these objectives, we must work together to:

NO1 & NO4

NP1 Create large, more joined up, functional habitat networks, reconnect surviving pockets of habitat, and develop landscape-scale conservation initiatives.

Strong collaboration, leadership and resources are needed to reverse the declines in wildlife and follow the rationale set out in the Lawton Report. Funding needs to be targeted firstly at supporting management of good quality existing habitat and secondly at re-creation of habitat in target areas, such as biodiversity opportunity areas and conservation target areas, to support the delivery of the Lawton Principles.

Options for creation of more 'wilded' landscapes, linking core areas (e.g. priority habitat, designated sites, ancient woodland) with the wider countryside also need to be explored.

NP2 Promote and support landowner and farmer-led initiatives that prioritise nature and deliver wildlife conservation and enhancement at a landscape/catchment scale.

Farmers and other land managers are key to sustaining landscape-scale conservation initiatives over the long term.

NP3 Look for and promote opportunities for restoring natural processes.

To help nature recover, we need to help natural processes re-establish themselves. This could, for example, include restoration of natural chalk stream flow, natural flood management or introduction of extensive grazing across different habitats. It could also include reintroduction of key species to the Chilterns to achieve better ecological balance, and action to support populations of pollinator species.

NP4 Protect important, under-represented habitats and natural features through new designations and sensitive management.

Protect important habitats through nature conservation designations, including Local Wildlife Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Local Wildlife Sites are an important component of our ecological networks; their identification, monitoring and management is a high priority. There is a strong case for more Chilterns habitat, for example chalk streams, to be included in the national suite of SSSIs.

NP5 Control and eradicate (where possible) invasive non-native pests and diseases in the Chilterns and develop strategies to reduce their impact.

Damaging impacts of deer, grey squirrel, *Glis glis* (edible dormouse) and mink need to be addressed, alongside a concerted effort to manage impacts of ash die back, acute oak decline, oak processionary moth, Phytophthora, Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed.

Collaborative action to reduce grey squirrel and deer damage is identified as a priority.

Support schemes need to be put in place to promote good bio-security and prevent the spread and introduction of other invasive non-natives.

See also Land, Woodland & Water (LO4, LP18,)

NP6 Protect and enhance important wildlife habitats

The Chilterns' key wildlife habitats are the core of our ecological networks. They include species-rich grassland and disturbed/bare ground, ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, beech woodland, chalk streams, arable field margins, hedgerows, wayside verges, traditional orchards, and habitats associated with common land. The conservation of existing semi-natural habitat and ancient woodland, including restoration of PAWS (Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites), is high priority.

NP7 Improve ecological condition, resilience and diversity of important wildlife habitats

Best practice management is required of all important wildlife habitats. We need to test and develop new ways of sustaining the diversity within our habitats that is characteristic of the Chilterns. For example, we need glades in woodland, bare chalk in chalk grassland and flourishing ground flora at the base of our hedgerows.

Regeneration, restoration and active management of the Chilterns' woodland and trees is needed to preserve the wooded landscape that the National Landscape is renowned for.

There are also places where less active management is required – for example, we need to leave dead wood in our woodlands to provide homes for beetles or fungi.

We need to learn from our history of land management whilst developing new and contemporary ways of allowing nature to flourish.

NP8 Maximise 'win-win' opportunities where restoration/expansion of wildlife habitats can, at the same time, provide benefits to society and respect/strengthen landscape character.

To do this we need to understand the key components of the Chilterns' natural capital and how past management has shaped the landscape. This includes understanding the benefits of good land management, such as reduced flood risk and provision of clean water. This understanding should inform decisions about investment in the natural environment. We also need a good understanding of landscape character and how past management has shaped the landscape we see today.

NP9 Ensure those who make decisions that impact Chilterns' wildlife are able to do so on the basis of robust, up-to-date and readily available ecological information.

This underlines the importance of support for local record centres, but also other sources of information such as remote sensing data.

NO2

NP10 Halt and reverse declines in rare, protected and characteristic wildlife species.

This needs to be based on solid scientific evidence and understanding of species population ecology. Effective monitoring and record keeping are crucial. Record centres need to be properly valued and supported to achieve this.

Focus should be on species at the edge of their range and initiatives developed that encourage expansion and favourable management of their habitats. 'Keystone' species – those that play a critical role in maintaining the structure and composition of an ecological community (e.g. earthworms) – should also be helped to thrive.

NO3

NP11 Ensure delivery mechanisms are in place to secure net gains for biodiversity in the National Landscape and its setting.

Planning policies and decisions must contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. This includes minimising the impact on and providing net gains for biodiversity. The Environment Improvement Plan (2023, due to be reviewed 2025) takes this further, setting out ambitions for net environmental gains. To secure these objectives for the Chilterns effective mechanisms need to be developed and implemented.

NO5

NP12 Engage with more, and a greater variety of, local groups, communities, volunteers and young people to support wildlife, farming, land management and the local environment.

The demographic profile of those involved in wildlife conservation is very narrow, given the diverse communities within and close to the Chilterns. Everyone needs to feel they have a stake in the natural environment if we are to make progress. In 2024 the HLF-funded Chalkscapes Partnership published its report '[Chalkscapes: co-creating spaces for supporting diverse communities to use greenspaces and the countryside](#)' which shows how diverse communities engage with the Chilterns National Landscape and the wider countryside. Communities can get involved in several ways, including buying local food and products, as well as wildlife monitoring and practical conservation activity.

Supporting and promoting citizen science initiatives can broaden engagement, recruit volunteers and support environmental recording. At the same time, we need to support and sustain the interest of local amateur naturalists who make a huge contribution to our knowledge of the local area. School and outdoor activity programmes can encourage younger generations to develop a long-term interest and involvement.

NP13 Help visitors to discover and enjoy wildlife in the Chilterns while not harming or disturbing it.

Part of our mission is to inspire many more people with a sense of wonder in the natural world and the confidence to venture out into the countryside to enjoy the health benefits of green and beautiful, wildlife-rich spaces.

- At the same time, some of our most precious habitats are particularly sensitive to impacts of visitors and their dogs. There needs to be a carefully planned and strategic approach to managing visitors, targeting areas with the capacity and infrastructure to accommodate additional use in order to protect the more sensitive sites from damage. This means better mapping of habitat sensitivity and current hotspots to support development of a strategy. Where there is a conflict between access and nature conservation, legislation requires that the natural environment be given priority.

NO6

NP14 End environmentally unsustainable abstraction from Chilterns chalk streams to restore their ecology and improve their resilience to climate change.

Low water flows are the key issue affecting the area's chalk streams. Too much water has been abstracted from the Chilterns aquifer over recent decades. This, together with prolonged periods of low rainfall and an increasing frequency of droughts, has reduced the functioning length of chalk streams and severely degraded their ecology. Physical degradation of the rivers and their riparian corridors can further amplify the impact.

See also Land, Woodland & Water (LP14, LP21,), Development (DP4)

NO7

NP15 Create opportunities for farmers and other land managers, land agents, research institutes and nature conservationists to share learning on best practice wildlife conservation relevant to the Chilterns.

Opportunities for networking and learning are important in themselves and they help to develop wider thinking and a landscape scale approach.

NP16 Create partnerships within and across sectors to drive forward better networking, decision making and action for wildlife.

Significant change will come through more joined up working within the nature conservation sector and, importantly, across sectors.

NP17 Manage land to enhance the resilience of key habitats and species to the impacts of climate change.

Climatic variation and extreme weather events are already affecting our wildlife communities. We need to monitor and understand likely changes and their impacts on key species and habitats. This

will help farmers and other land managers to make good decisions regarding future management. Well-connected habitat networks are crucial to allow species movement through the landscape in response to a changing climate.

6. Historic Environment

The Chilterns National Landscape 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. 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. Prominent throughout the Chilterns are the historic towns and villages with buildings and churches in characteristic flint, brick, and timber materials.

[Infographic of Heritage Assets in the Chilterns – requires figure for scheduled monuments at risk to be updated from 8 to 9]

Many historic sites, features and monuments are formally designated as Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, and so on, but many more are only recognised and designated locally (e.g. as locally listed buildings, described confusingly as 'non-designated heritage assets'); still more are undesignated (e.g. are recorded in local Historic Environment Records or have yet to be found). All deserve recognition, management and protection commensurate with their significance.

The landscape is filled with the evidence of people in the past living and working in the Chilterns - from farmer's field systems that survive from the Bronze and Iron Ages through the Roman and early medieval periods, to the great earthwork monuments such as Grims Ditch, hillforts and burial mounds. The landscape also includes more recent creations, such as the industrial heritage of works such as the Grand Union Canal, constructed here to carry freight over the Chilterns between the midlands and London, as well as a large number of great houses with their parks and gardens designed by the likes of Humphry Repton and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

The natural and historic landscapes of the Chilterns have provided home and inspiration for some of Britain's most prominent 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 being the country house of the Prime Minister since 1921. In summary, the region's historic environment and cultural heritage underpin the essential nature of the Chilterns.

Key Issues

The Chilterns National Landscape 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 National Landscape 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. For example, the construction of HS2 has destroyed 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 neither nationally nor locally designated, 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 nine 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 National Landscape, is not protected.

- **Lack of understanding and engagement:** The heritage of the Chilterns is less well recognised and understood than in 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.

Strategic Objectives

HO1 Better protect the Chilterns' historic environment, including 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.

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 Past and Chalk, Cherries & Chairs have presented opportunities for coordinating improvement of known assets. The Beacons of the Past LiDAR survey of the Chilterns discovered 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 National Landscape 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, have greatly enhanced knowledge of heritage assets throughout the Chilterns. Partners and the public are involved in these discoveries through Citizen Science and Open Data approaches. County Historic Environment Records are 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.

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 National Landscape 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 have created fantastic opportunities to build momentum across the National Landscape for engaging with its historic environment.

7. Land, Woodland and Water

Through the centuries, human influence has shaped the Chiltern's landscape. Stock and arable farming, firewood and timber production have created the mosaic of fields and woodlands, interlinked with hedgerows dotted with hedgerow trees. Even the courses of many of the area's characteristic chalk streams have been modified by human intervention. Such changes were for a variety of purposes, such as milling, water cress growing, agriculture, urban development and landscaping. Overlaying all this is a network of ancient rights of way. These may have originated as paths for farm workers or extraction tracks for timber. Some developed as paths for drovers or trade routes for commodities on their way to London. Often, years of use have left incised tracks and sunken lanes cutting across the chalk escarpment and winding down the steep valley sides.

Key Issues

Farming: Stock farming (sheep, beef, dairy) continues to decline. It is uneconomic to graze chalk grassland yet, without grazing, our species rich chalk grassland is lost to scrub. More intensive stock management, sometimes associated with equine, alpaca and deer enterprises, can lead to the introduction of numerous paddocks and other infrastructure that degrades traditional field patterns. There is now no need for hedgerows to keep stock in as farmers rely on fencing. An annual flail keeps surviving hedges in check but each year their quality deteriorates. With Arable farming, current economics and farming systems are leading to fewer people farming larger areas. Less time and resources are available to manage the 'non-farmed' areas.

Commons: In the past, many commons would have been grazed and wooded areas managed through the exercise of common rights. Most of these rights are no longer exercised, though over half of the wooded areas have Management Plans.

Orchards: Once widespread, during Victorian times, extensive cherry orchards attracted visitors to the Chilterns during blossom time and cherry pickers would travel from London to help with the harvest. Today, many of these orchards are gone though there is a resurgence in interest of traditional fruit varieties (apple, cherry and pear) with community orchards and a small number of commercial enterprises.

Woodland: The demise of the Chilterns furniture industry led to reduced timber production and now, due to both the rapid increases in deer and grey squirrel numbers, and the constant spread of new diseases, very few quality timber trees reach maturity. Further, there is a trend to split some large estate woodlands into small wood lots and sell them. The result can be inconsistent management, pressure for fencing, access roads and buildings. Fragmented management means that the control of pests and diseases becomes even more difficult.

Demand for locally sourced wood products can support the management of small woodlands.

Chalk Streams: The porous chalk of the Chilterns Hills forms part of the most significant aquifer in the water-stressed south-east of England. Flow in the Chilterns' internationally rare chalk streams is reliant on water that is held within this aquifer. Water companies also make use of the aquifer, extracting (a process known as abstraction) drinking water for millions of people – residents of the Chilterns and beyond.

The Chilterns has one of the highest levels of domestic water use per head of population in the UK. Abstraction increased exponentially after the Second World War, leading to many chalk streams suffering from chronic low flows. Although water companies have reduced the amount of water that they abstract since the 1990s leading to flow recovery in a number of chalk streams, abstraction continues to be a significant contributory factor to low flows, and new development further increases water demand.

Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of droughts and flooding events. Although annual rainfall totals have so far not changed appreciably, rainfall intensity has increased. Heavy rain runs quickly off valley sides causing flooding rather than soaking into the ground and recharging the aquifer. Increasing temperatures are leading to a contraction of the winter recharge window as the growing season is extending later, and beginning earlier, in the year. Higher summer temperatures are driving up water temperature with knock on effects to key chalk stream species.

Climate change and unsustainable abstraction have a disproportionate impact on chalk stream headwaters (winterbournes) as droughts and long-term declines in groundwater levels are causing the functioning length of chalk stream habitat within the Chilterns to decrease.

Chalk streams have been extensively altered by man over thousands of years. This has left a legacy of highly modified river channels that are disconnected, fragmented and possess degraded habitat. The National Landscape's chalk streams remain under threat of further modification by factors such as urban development and poor land management.

Pollution is a key threat to the health of the area's chalk streams. There are a multitude of sources and types of pollution that are affecting these rivers. However, the most significant are sewage effluent, storm sewage overflows and urban runoff. An additional threat comes from chemicals of emerging concern such as fluorinated flame retardants known as PFAS.

A range of invasive non-native species is impacting the health of the National Landscape's chalk streams such as signal crayfish and Himalayan balsam. New species such as demon shrimp, and red swamp crayfish are emerging and, as yet, unquantified threats to their ecology.

Currently, all nine chalk streams that flow through the National Landscape are failing to attain the Water Framework Directive (WFD) objective of Good Ecological Status (GES) or Potential (GES/P). This failure is primarily due to a combination of low flows, poor water quality, and biology.

Farming, forestry, and utility companies all depend on the natural capital resources provided by the Chilterns. We all have a duty to protect and, where degraded, improve these resources – our soils (prone to erosion), our chalk aquifer and chalk streams (vulnerable to over-abstraction and diffuse pollution), our air (that benefits from ammonia and carbon uptake by trees and grassland) and the diverse range of plant and animal life these resources support.

Many farmers and woodland owners do their best to protect the land they work on and look after the wildlife it supports. Many organisations and an increasing army of members of the public, volunteer to protect reserves, habitats and the countryside they enjoy.

Continued support through developing DEFRA schemes, expanding numbers of 'farm clusters' and initiatives developed within the Chilterns National Landscape will help farming and forestry remain viable and protect wildlife at the same time. Farm clusters are groups of farmers working together to identify and deliver their own priorities for nature.

Strategic Objectives

LO1 Protect and, where degraded, improve the Chilterns' natural capital resources, including soils, water, clean air, plant and animal life.

LO2 Ensure that the Chilterns remain a functional, working landscape with viable, sustainable and diverse farming, forestry and rural economy sectors.

LO3 Safeguard the Chilterns landscape by maintaining and enhancing all landscape features (such as hedges and trees), important wildlife habitats and cultural heritage at all times.

LO4 Increase resilience to and effective management of pests, diseases, non-native invasive species and climate change.

LO5 Achieve Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives for the Chilterns water environment – rivers, valleys, wetlands and other riparian habitats.

LO6 Ensure that those who work in the landscape, local and national policy makers, and the public, understand the link between environmentally sustainable farming, forestry, rural economy sectors and a healthy Chilterns National Landscape

Policies

To achieve these objectives, we must work together to:

LO1

- **LP1 Make agreed best practice advice (farming, forestry and other land management) accessible to all.**
- Best practice will ensure healthy soils, well managed chalk streams, clean water and unpolluted air, vital for farming, forestry, wildlife, local communities and visitors. It can also help existing landowners and new entrants to the farming and forestry sectors appreciate how they can look after the landscape features under their control including hedgerows, hedgerow and in-field trees, and pollard willows alongside chalk streams.

- **LP2 Publicise and promote appropriate land-based skill training and advances in new technology across the National Landscape.**
- Both traditional rural skills and modern technology have their place in securing a healthy Chilterns landscape; from hedge laying to GPS guided farming operations that avoid compaction, damage to soils and over use of fertilizers and pesticides.
- **LP3 Promote the production and processing of local produce, including venison, traditional orchard fruit juice and wood-fuel.**
- Local produce can reinforce a sense of place for visitors and residents alike. However, successful marketing can also benefit the environment. For example, venison sales can help support deer management, fruit juicing can encourage interest in and viability of traditional and community orchards, wood-fuel harvesting can help re-structure woodland affected by Ash dieback.

LO2

- **LP4 Support landowners and land managers to continue or re-introduce favourable grazing management on all areas of Chilterns chalk grassland.**
- Grazing animals are needed to maintain the important mosaics of grassland and scrub, particularly found on the chalk escarpment and steep valley sides. Unfortunately, for many farmers, this is currently uneconomic. Support (both financial and non-financial) and collaboration between farmers and other groups managing land, should be encouraged.
- **LP5 Ensure that more landowners sensitively manage hedgerows.**

Recent DEFRA statistics (PLTOF 2022) suggest there are 3,300 km of hedgerow in the Chilterns. Between 2006 and 2008, 330 hedges in the Chilterns were surveyed and only 38% were in good condition. On the basis of this limited 'condition' dataset, 62% (approximately 2,500km or just over 1,500 miles) of our Chilterns hedgerows need attention. Reducing nutrient enrichment and buffering from cultivation would allow hedges to become wider and taller. Further, an average Chilterns hedge may need laying or coppicing every 40 years. This means that across the Chilterns, 100km (62 miles) of hedge needs rejuvenating every year.

Maintaining the hedge network will protect wildlife corridors, the linking fabric of our countryside and will preserve ancient field patterns that are still discernible today (particularly when rejuvenating old hedgerows).

Consideration should be given to remove fencing, particularly barbed wire, where it is no longer required for stock control. Concerns have been raised over injuries to wildlife, particularly deer, and to walkers on footpaths

- **LP6 Encourage landowners and local communities to plant over 500 new hedgerow trees across the Chilterns per year.**
- Some 44,000 standard trees grow in Chilterns hedges but most of these are over mature. Many will succumb to old age or diseases, such as Ash dieback or Sudden Oak Decline, in the coming years. Even without the rapid spread of pests and diseases, based on an average mature age of 100 years (looking at a range of trees from the relatively short-lived cherry to longer lived oak), we will need to plant 440 new trees per year to maintain hedgerow tree numbers. Replanting 500 hedgerow trees a year is a minimum; to keep up with disease pressure, we should be aiming for nearer 1,000. Detailed proposals will need to be developed by those living and working within the National Landscape.
- **LP7 Link and buffer valued habitats – including grasslands, woodlands, rivers and streams – by a network of field margins (both grass and annually cultivated unsown arable margins as appropriate), new tree and woodland planting and low intensity grassland areas.**
- Farmland, woodland, orchards, commons, streams, golf courses, public open space, even road verges can all provide important links to connect wildlife habitats.
- **LP8 Ensure there is no net loss of woodland and no loss of irreplaceable ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees within the National Landscape.**

- The Chilterns is renowned for its woodland, which covers 23.74% of the National Landscape. Much of this contains important wildlife and archaeology. 56% is classed as ancient woodland, which has been in constant woodland management for over 400 years. It is important that no woodland is lost to building works or infrastructure. In line with government policy, we should see to increase the woodland area, but resources will be needed if the total area is to increase.
- **LP9 Manage woodlands to achieve a greater diversity of tree species and varied age structure to ensure economic sustainability, enhance biodiversity and make them more resilient to disease and climate change.**
- It is important that statutory agencies and advisers work together with woodland owners and managers. They can provide advice, training and support identifying the most appropriate tree species and on-going woodland management to achieve this policy. Species selection tools, such as Forest Research's Ecological Site Classification, can help plan site appropriate planting which will help connect wildlife habitats and replace trees lost to disease.

Woodland Cover [map]

- **LP10 Restore Planted Ancient Woodlands (PAWS) returning them to predominantly broadleaf species and implement sensitive long-term management.**
- Ongoing support and advice need to be maintained and management plans for these important sites are recommended. Restoration, particularly of non-native conifer plantations, will offer significant wildlife, landscape and cultural heritage benefits.
- **LP11 Manage glades, other open areas and woodland edges to provide a varied habitat for woodland birds, butterflies and plants.**
- Partnerships between woodland owners, statutory agencies, local wildlife and volunteer groups will help achieve this policy.
- **LP12 Maintain and enhance traditional Chilterns orchards and encourage their use.**
- Orchards were once scattered across the Chilterns, valuable for their fruit crops and providing useful grazing between the trees. Many of the remnant orchards contain veteran fruit trees some of which may be 'forgotten' varieties once grown in specific localities within the Chilterns.
- **LP13 Protect and sensitively manage historic and cultural features.**
- These features include ancient parish boundary hedges and field patterns, medieval Strip Lynchets, woodland boundary banks, saw pits and traditional orchards.

LP14 Restore chalk stream flows through reduction of abstraction to environmentally sustainable levels.

The ongoing work of the Environment Agency's 'Restoring Sustainable Abstraction' programme, together with an abstraction licencing scheme that provides appropriate protection of the water environment, will be essential for the long-term health of the area's chalk streams.

See also Nature (NP4), Development (DP4)

LP15 Support a catchment-based approach to the enhancement and sustainable management of the Chilterns water environment.

This will include natural flood management (through farming, woodland planting and management practises) and help reconnect rivers with their flood plains.

LP16 Enhance and restore the natural form, function and connectivity of chalk streams and associated habitats.

Encourage and support the development and delivery of projects where statutory agencies, water companies, landowners and other stakeholders work together to recreate more natural, wildlife rich chalk streams.

LP17 Encourage management that conserves and enhances the characteristic river valley landscape.

Smaller and irregular field patterns, wet meadows, woodland carr and pollard willows often characterise river valleys within the National Landscape

LO3

- **LP18 Raise awareness of pest, diseases and non-native invasive species along with the need for improved biosecurity.**

Up to date training and advice on the best methods and continued action to reduce, and where possible eliminate, the threats posed by pests, diseases and invasive non-native species is vital. Care must be taken to source pest and disease-free trees for planting, possibly from seed grown on in UK nurseries.

- *See also Nature (NP7)*

- **LP19 Control and manage native pests and, where possible, seek to eradicate non-native invasive species, coordinated at a landscape scale.**

Species include both native and introduced deer, grey squirrel, Glis glis (Edible Dormouse), American mink, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, Signal crayfish and Demon shrimp (an example of an emerging threat that could devastate all our chalk streams if action is not taken).

Statutory agencies will need to support landowner collaboration and partnership groups (similar to the 'Farmer Cluster' model) if this policy is to succeed.

- *See also Nature (NP7)*

LO4

- **LP20 Make relevant, informative and interesting information about farming, forestry and the rural economy readily available to all residents and visitors to the National Landscape.**

The Chilterns is a working environment. It is important for visitors and residents to understand the processes that shape the environment they enjoy and the wider environmental benefits that are provided. These benefits include carbon capture and flood water management provided by both grassland and woods.

- It is also important for the farming and forestry sectors to appreciate both the challenges and opportunities provided by working within a much loved and visited nationally protected landscape.
- **LP21 Promote public awareness and understanding of the link between water demand, abstraction and chalk stream flows and support measures to reduce demand and increase water use efficiency.**

Very few people are likely to understand how their use of water might affect a Chilterns chalk stream. Water companies need to continue work to reduce leakage in the public water supply system, but members of the public can also do a lot to reduce wastage.

- *See also Nature (NP4), Development (DP4)*

Water Framework Directive Status for Chiltern Surface Water Bodies

[map]

8. Enjoyment and Understanding

The landscape of the Chilterns with its great variety of habitats, extensive network of rights of way and many attractive countryside and destination sites makes it a valuable resource for recreation and leisure. It is a landscape ideal for walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding, as well as a wide array of other outdoor activities including mindfulness activities such as forest bathing. It also offers peace and tranquillity, an escape from busy and pressured lives, which is enjoyed by millions of visitors every year. With rapid housing growth and increasing population in the urban areas surrounding the Chilterns, the Chilterns landscape has become more important than ever as a recreational resource.

It is now clearly evidenced and widely recognised that a lack of physical activity and time spent in scenic, nature-rich greenspaces has major impacts on people's physical and mental wellbeing. The Chilterns provides an accessible natural health service, offering health walks, green gym programmes and a growing number of social prescribing activities. A huge array of groups use the Chilterns for recreation, health & wellbeing activities, education and learning experiences and volunteering. With the climate crisis becoming more acute as well as a growing public interest in issues such as the state of our chalk streams and species decline, people are more inspired to take action for the environment. Citizen Science programmes, such as the RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch and Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count, have become more popular, and in the Chilterns there are now lots of varied conservation volunteering opportunities. It still attracts a narrow demographic, and the challenge now is to make the volunteering offer more inclusive.

Despite being one of the most accessible landscapes in the UK with abundant opportunities for leisure and recreation, substantial sectors of the population face barriers to accessing the Chilterns countryside. A [study](#) by the University of Bedfordshire on how diverse communities engage with greenspaces and the countryside, found that only around 33% of participants in the Luton/Dunstable area visited greenspaces weekly, with older individuals, those facing various challenges, and people from minority ethnic backgrounds being the least frequent users. Addressing this inequality of access and working to make the countryside more welcoming and inclusive, including through accessible signage, information and infrastructure, is an overriding priority for the Chilterns.

We are seeing gradual change. People from communities who have historically experienced barriers to accessing our National Landscapes are now breaking down those barriers, getting outside and inspiring others to do the same. Groups such as Muslim Hikers, Black Girls Hike and The Outdoor Lads have been leading the way nationally, along with local groups in the Chilterns such as Dadimas intergenerational walking group. Organisations are working to create change, with more focus on diversifying their audiences and engaging underserved communities. However it will require a widespread, long term and committed partnership approach to make the sustained and large-scale change which is necessary.

There is capacity for more people to visit, enjoy and engage with the Chilterns, but there needs to be more investment in visitor management to be able to do this. Visitor management pressures have increased. There has been a marked increase in dog ownership, a greater volume of traffic on country lanes used by recreational users and an increase in organised cycling and challenge events which can create issues if not properly managed.

Key Issues

Today, people are working longer hours, spending less time outdoors and leading lives that are more sedentary. The need for tranquil outdoors space is greater than ever. The Chilterns has capacity to accommodate greater use to help fill this need.

Attracting greater visitor numbers: The Chilterns already attracts a large numbers of local leisure users and this is increasing with new housing growth, however it has capacity for greater use. It can benefit a much greater proportion of the 1.6 million people who live within 8km of the Chilterns, in particular the least active.

Protecting sensitive sites: At present visitor numbers are unevenly spread with pressure concentrated on the most sensitive chalk downland. The challenge is to manage visits and countryside services to protect the most popular and vulnerable countryside sites and habitats. The development of a Chilterns-wide visitor management initiative will help with this ambitious vision, which will need to be adequately resourced and require new sources of funding.

Engaging the surrounding community: Establishing a multi-partner network extending beyond the Chilterns National Landscape to surrounding urban communities, greenspaces and new growth areas is needed. Public engagement will be an important part of the vision, attracting greater support for the National Landscape and more volunteers and stewards to help care for it in the future.

Strategic Objectives

EO1 Secure national recognition and greater resources for the wealth of accessible recreational opportunities the Chilterns countryside offers to residents and visitors.

EO2 Ensure more high-quality opportunities for outdoor recreation, life-long learning and volunteering for all.

EO3 Ensure more people can enjoy healthier and happier lives by enjoying the Chilterns.

EO4 Make more people aware of what makes the Chilterns special and encourage them to help care for it and contribute to its protection. Inspire young people to build a lasting interest in the Chilterns.

EO5 Reduce barriers to accessing the countryside and encourage more diverse audiences to access and engage with the Chilterns, especially underserved audiences who currently have little connection.

Policies

To achieve these objectives, we must work together to:

EO1

EP1 Secure greater support and funding for a well-maintained, high quality and better-connected rights of way network for walking, wheeling, cycling and horse-riding.

The recreational opportunities in the Chilterns rely on a high-quality rights of way network; it is one of the main ways to explore the Chilterns National Landscape. Local Authorities have faced funding and staff cuts over the last few years, making it much more challenging to maintain standards and develop new opportunities. New funding opportunities should be sought, for example, planning gain could be secured through new developments. A new Environmental Land Management scheme could reward farmers and landowners to improve access, improving rights of way and creating new and better access to Open Access land.

EP2 Encourage greater use of the National Trails and regional promoted routes and maximise their contribution to the local economy.

The Chilterns has some iconic long-distance promoted routes. This includes two National Trails (the Ridgeway and the Thames Path) and regional routes such as the Chiltern Way and Chilterns Cycleway. Links routes to settlements should be developed and promoted.

EO2

EP3 Support initiatives to improve the accessibility of rights of way and countryside sites.

The Chilterns has benefited from widespread stile-removals, new 'access for all' trails and other initiatives to improve physical accessibility which makes it one of the leading accessible landscapes. Accessibility should be further improved to provide more and better opportunities for everyone to enjoy the countryside. Priorities include improved access for those with limited mobility, new or improved access links between the Chilterns National Landscape and urban areas, more multi-user routes, better bridleway connectivity and provision of accessible facilities both on appropriate sites (e.g. waymarked trails, information boards, cycle and car parking) and through digital tools (e.g. smartphone information, wayfinding and story-telling apps).

EP4 Expand opportunities for volunteering and lifelong learning, removing barriers to participation and making it more accessible and inclusive.

Volunteers are more important than ever to countryside organisations and they are a critical resource to help care for the Chilterns. Volunteering can bring multiple health benefits; it can increase people's skills and confidence, and it can decrease health inequalities and isolation. However volunteering attracts a traditional audience and people can face numerous barriers to participation which need to be addressed. Consideration should be given to a more coordinated approach across the Chilterns, starting with volunteering opportunities for young people and offering skills development and pathways to long-term involvement including paid traineeships to encourage entry into the conservation sector.

EP5 Ensure all young people in the Chilterns and surrounding towns have opportunities to experience and learn about the Chilterns informally and through formal education.

Many young people from urban areas have never experienced the Chilterns countryside even though it is on their doorstep. There is potential to nurture greater exploration and understanding at an early stage which will build a lasting interest. This can be done through events at countryside sites, Forest Schools, outreach to schools, getting young people involved in conservation projects or outdoor activities.

EO3

EP6 Broaden public engagement activity to attract new audiences and increase understanding and enjoyment of the Chilterns National Landscape, targeting urban communities.

Many residents from towns adjoining the Chilterns do not visit the special landscape on their doorstep. Awareness of the AONB as a protected landscape is low, especially outside the AONB. Events can attract new and diverse audiences and stimulate an interest in the Chilterns.

EP7 Encourage better provision and take-up of car-free visitor experiences to access and explore the Chilterns.

Opportunities should be sought to reduce car use by visitors and residents by offering good alternatives and promoting their use. This should include:

- Safe, attractive and accessible infrastructure for walking and cycling in and around the Chilterns
- Promoting integrated public transport and Active Travel Plans to and across the Chilterns National Landscape
- Lobbying for more and safer cycling routes
- Encouraging additional bike hire and cycle parking

EO4

EP8 Promote greater understanding of the Chilterns landscape and respect for other users, through communication and education.

An increasingly urbanised population means people are becoming more disconnected from the countryside and lack awareness and appreciation of the Chilterns as a living, working landscape. People need to be aware of the potential effects their activities can have on habitats, species, historic features, residents, businesses (including farming and forestry) and other recreational users. There needs to be greater awareness of the Countryside Code and of the specialness of the Chilterns landscape. This can stimulate an interest in the Chilterns and encourage behaviour change including taking active steps to help care for the Chilterns.

EP9 Raise the profile and visibility of the Chilterns through high quality information, interpretation and appropriate Chilterns National Landscape gateway signage.

Awareness of the Chilterns as a protected landscape is low, even within the Chilterns National Landscape. People are often unaware they are in the National Landscape as there is little on the ground to welcome you and provide a sense of place. Raising the profile of the Chilterns is crucial to attracting support for the area and ensuring its future. There are many ways this can be achieved, for

example through information boards, interpretation, National Landscape gateway signs/artworks, signage, leaflets and digital communications.

EO5

EP10 Increase the sustainable use of the Chilterns for recreation and physical activity.

The number of people living in or close to the Chilterns is increasing. However, there are still large numbers of people who do not make use of the Chilterns countryside. There is potential for more people to benefit from countryside recreation within the Chilterns National Landscape, but this needs to be managed effectively to ensure visitor pressure does not adversely impact sensitive habitats.

There is a much greater volume of traffic on country lanes which are also important recreational routes used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. This can cause particular issues on narrow lanes with no footpaths, making it an unpleasant and potentially dangerous experience. Organised cycling events can create conflicts, with some parts of the Chilterns unsuited to large-scale participation events. They need careful visitor management to ensure they do not conflict with other events, that routes are designed to minimise impacts, start times staggered and participant numbers are appropriate. Good visitor management should be encouraged, including promoting greater awareness of the Chilterns landscape and the Countryside Code.

EP11 Develop and secure support for a visitor management strategy for the Chilterns

Increased recreational use of the Chilterns countryside must be managed in order to protect vulnerable sites and address the uneven spread of visitor pressure in the Chilterns. Visitor footfall has increased substantially at countryside sites. This, along with the marked increase in dog ownership over the last few years, creates additional impacts on sensitive habitats and other landscape features which needs managing carefully. Adapting to these pressures requires resources and needs close partnership working to plan effective and joined up visitor management approaches. Multi-partner visitor management approaches will be supported..

EP12 Ensure the Chilterns benefits from new and improved access and green space provision linked to new built development.

The number of people living in or close to the Chilterns National Landscape is increasing, large numbers of whom still do not make use of the countryside even though there is potential for more people to benefit from opportunities for recreation here. However, this needs to be managed effectively to ensure visitor pressure does not adversely impact sensitive habitats and archaeological features. This is especially the case in relation to the Chilterns Special Areas of Conservation, including the Chilterns Beechwoods at Ashridge and elsewhere. Part of the solution is to support the creation of appropriately located and designed 'suitable alternative natural greenspace' (SANG) sites. The CCB will be producing guidance on SANGs during the lifetime of this Plan.

9. Social and economic wellbeing

The Chilterns is a living and working landscape, shaped, worked and enjoyed by people living in and around it: 80,000 people live within the Chilterns National Landscape and a further 1.6 million live within 8km. Communities and businesses within and beyond the Chilterns National Landscape enjoy many benefits from the landscape. From resources provided by its natural capital to cultural and recreational activities. There are tangible benefits from its natural resources such as clean water, fresh air, wood for fuel and opportunities for carbon storage to help tackle climate change. And it is a place for relaxation, exploration and inspiration, offering a rich cultural heritage, contact with nature, a sense of place and numerous opportunities for leisure, recreation and learning. However there is great inequality of access to these benefits, with some sectors of the population facing substantial barriers to enjoying or engaging with the Chilterns landscape and all it offers. Those from areas of high deprivation, disabled people, the elderly and those from ethnic minority groups face particular barriers. A priority should be to facilitate and develop opportunities, initiatives and partnerships to make these benefits more accessible to underserved audiences.

There is also low awareness of the Chilterns National Landscape and its value to society is not fully realised especially its essential contribution to peoples' health and wellbeing. In addition, communities and businesses do not always recognise and value the importance of being in the Chilterns or the part they can play as custodians of this heritage.

This can be changed by measuring and demonstrating the value of the Chilterns, building the brand and profile of the area, and securing support and investment for the Chilterns National Landscape including the potential for green finance programmes. By doing this, we can bring even greater benefits to the communities and businesses in and around the Chilterns, and more resources to help protect the Chilterns for the future.

The Chilterns has huge potential as a sustainable tourism destination given its accessibility and excellent transport links, proximity to London and Oxford, and the quality and specialness of its tourism assets. However there is no Destination Management Organisation for the Chilterns and very limited sector support. Destination promotion across the region is patchy and the closure of Visit Buckinghamshire leaves a significant gap. This is greatly limiting the potential of the sustainable tourism sector in the Chilterns, which could be contributing more to the local economy. Opportunities should be sought to collaborate, support and invest in Chilterns destination development and promotion.

Key Issues

- **Farming and forestry are in decline:** While the economy of the Chilterns is above the national average, forestry and farming activities such as planting and managing woodlands to produce timber and grazing livestock on the hills are in decline. Work is needed to ensure the Chilterns remain a functional, working landscape with a viable rural economy, because sustainable food and farming activities are vital in helping to maintain the Chilterns landscape and ensuring it is a working landscape. The sector should be supported to develop and promote new markets, e.g. for Chilterns food and drink, and for timber products.
- **Skills shortage:** There is a shortage in the skills required to manage the Chilterns landscape, such as forestry and flint work.
- **Price of housing:** House prices in the Chilterns are well above the national average, making it inaccessible to many that live in the local area. (See section 10, Development.)
- **Social, welfare and transport issues:** Closures of village shops, pubs and community facilities is contributing to isolation and mental health issues experienced by a growing number of people. The volunteering and activities within the Chilterns National Landscape provide a way of addressing many of these issues. Better access links between rural and urban areas are also needed, as are improved public and community transport options, allowing local people access to facilities and services.

Strategic Objectives

SO1 Increase the economic and social wellbeing of local communities and businesses by supporting the development of the visitor economy and improving community facilities.

SO2 Ensure that the Chilterns National Landscape is recognised and valued by residents, visitors and the health sector for the contribution it makes to peoples' physical and mental health, offering connection with nature and a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

SO3 Ensure that the natural capital of the Chilterns and its contribution to society is understood and valued by all decision makers and used to lever funding.

SO4 Ensure that businesses and communities in and around the National Landscape value its special qualities, support initiatives and help raise the profile of the area.

Policies

To achieve these objectives, we must work together to:

SO1

SP1 Develop the visitor economy and increase its economic impact.

The Chilterns is a popular destination for local leisure, but awareness of it outside the area is low. There is great potential to attract more visitors, expand the short break market and raise the profile of the Chilterns. The Chilterns has some incredible tourism assets. More could be done to connect them, celebrate them and position them at the heart of the visitor offer.

SP2 Seek the coordination of visitor development and promotion across the Chilterns and secure dedicated resources.

There is no Destination Management Organisation for the Chilterns. Tourism promotion is based on local authority boundaries and there is subsequently very little Chilterns-wide tourism promotion or support. Additional resources are needed to develop and promote sustainable visiting.

SP3 Promote historic market towns as gateways to the countryside.

Many of our market towns are appealing visitor destinations. In addition, they have a special role as gateways to the Chilterns. They are easy to get to by public transport, provide visitor facilities such as car parking, pubs, shops and cafes, and allow easy access to the countryside by foot or on bike.

SP4 Support rural diversification that adds value to the local economy.

Only through diversification can many small to medium size farms in the Chilterns remain viable. It can provide important visitor facilities, such as farm accommodation. This is in short supply in the Chilterns. What is approved needs to be sympathetic to its setting and the wider landscape.

SP5 Retain and promote community facilities, including shops, pubs, public and community transport, and encourage them where there are gaps in provision.

Many villages in the Chilterns have lost shops and/or pubs over the years, as well as a decline in community facilities and services. Others are under threat. These amenities are the life-blood of the community and affect both local people and visitors. We must support and promote such facilities to help them survive. For example, some villages have been able to step in and buy the pub/shop threatened with closure and run it as a community business.

SP6 Promote local food, drink and craft products.

Recent years have seen many new, high quality, artisan food and drink producers starting up. These range from Chilterns beer and wine to cheese and charcuterie producers. People are increasingly interested in knowing where their food comes from, but awareness of Chilterns produce is low. There is huge potential in promoting the Chilterns' rich diversity of food, drink and craft products. This can be through supporting farm shops, farmers markets, festivals and events, promotional activity and

business engagement. By promoting the Chilterns food, drink and crafts heritage, it is also a way of keeping cultural traditional alive (for example Chilterns Apple Days or Cherry Pie Festivals).

SO2

SP7 Encourage greater use of the National Landscape to improve levels of physical and mental health and wellbeing, in particular underserved audiences who are not currently benefiting.

The continued decline in physical activity is a key factor in the deepening health crisis. Yet there is recognition of the significant benefits to physical and mental wellbeing of spending time in a natural environment and taking exercise. There has been a growth in health and wellbeing programmes based on outdoor activity such as health walks and green gym. The challenge is engaging with the underserved audiences who are likely to benefit most but face the most barriers and are harder to reach. Further opportunities to link with the health sector for social prescribing programmes should be developed, as well as developing more collaborative targeted outreach programmes.

SP8 Expand opportunities for volunteering and lifelong learning. Make it more accessible to diverse audiences and ensure it is better coordinated across the Chilterns.

Provide opportunities for local people and visitors to learn about the Chilterns and to help care for its environment, access networks and heritage. Volunteering can bring multiple health benefits; it can increase people's skills and confidence, and it can decrease health inequalities and isolation. Volunteering in the Chilterns still has a narrow demographic. There is great potential to attract a wider range of volunteers to reflect the diversity of communities within and close to the Chilterns. This will require a partnership approach, to design, and coordinate relevant and accessible volunteer opportunities. There need to be pathways to engagement including entry level and youth volunteering, with opportunities for training and skills development so that people can progress.

SO3

SP9 Ensure that the value of the natural capital assets of the National Landscape is better understood and promoted, used to underpin investment and growth strategies and used to secure net gain for the Chilterns.

The Chilterns provides multiple benefits to people in addition to the productive capacity of the land. It can support biodiversity, lock up carbon, help ensure clean supplies of water, as well as providing places for leisure, recreation, health and wellbeing. There is a poor appreciation of the benefits people derive from the National Landscape. In particular, the benefit for populations living outside the National Landscape is often over-looked. As more land is built on, the need to understand, value and promote the benefits becomes more important.

SO4

SP10 Ensure businesses and communities both in and around the National Landscape, recognise the value of being located in the Chilterns and endorse the Chilterns brand.

A Chilterns location can benefit businesses and communities. This is especially so for businesses with a connection to the visitor economy. However, the Chilterns does not have a strong brand. There is low awareness of the National Landscape and its value as a protected landscape. Businesses and communities can play an important role in creating a stronger identity and sense of place for the Chilterns.

SP11 Investigate income generation opportunities including visitor-giving schemes.

Visitor giving is a way of offering visitors and residents the opportunity to give a little something back and help look after the places they love. It is a way of providing a mechanism for collecting those small contributions that can add up to a significant amount.

SP12 Promote the Chilterns at key visitor entry points.

There are some major visitor gateways in or near the Chilterns, including railway stations and termini such as London Marylebone. There are many smaller gateways too, such as the market towns of the Chilterns. Yet people visiting or passing through are often unaware that they are in a special protected landscape and of the wealth of recreational opportunities they can enjoy. High quality information, interpretation and appropriate signage would help people access and enjoy this National Landscape.

10. Planning and Development

Special planning controls apply in the National Landscape to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty.

Whilst nationally and locally there is a need for development, there is also a need to protect the most special places, the finest and most beautiful parts of the countryside. This is particularly true for the Chilterns, an irreplaceable asset in its own right and as a green lung for London and the south east.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF: the government's planning policies for England) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, which, alongside National Parks and the Broads, have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The NPPF goes on to state that the scale and extent of development within the National Landscape should be limited, while development within its setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated area.

The Chilterns National Landscape extends across nine local planning authorities (LPAs) which have the responsibility both for preparing development plans, which identify where development should be located and the criteria against which proposals will be considered, and for making decisions on most planning proposals. In doing so, LPAs must comply with the duty under section 85 of the CROW Act to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area. LPAs also have the specific power under section 84 of the same Act to take all such action as appears to them expedient to accomplish this.

As noted in Chapter 1 Introduction, under 'What is natural beauty?', land is not prevented from being treated as having outstanding natural beauty by the fact that its features are the product of human intervention in the landscape. Agricultural, industrial and architectural features, including whole settlements, may be integral parts of the landscape and may embody the natural beauty that the National Landscape seeks to conserve and enhance.

The CCB was set up at the request of the area's local authorities in part to provide expert advice on planning and development issues and advocate specific policies and actions to ensure that planning decisions deliver the purposes of the designation and the objectives of the Management Plan consistently across the whole area. CCB's planning advice includes understanding of local landscape character, sensitivities and capacity for accommodating change. We act by:

- offering observations on emerging plans and on significant planning applications; preparing guidance for householders, architects and developers; and
- encouraging cross-boundary thinking and cooperation over the National Landscape.

This Management Plan is not part of the statutory development plan, but it is a material consideration in planning decisions meaning that planning weight can be appropriately attached. The Management Plan should be also considered when developing development plans, including neighbourhood plans, within or affecting the Chilterns National Landscape. It provides evidence on the characteristics of the landscape and objectives for appropriate development in the Chilterns.

It is the only plan for the whole National Landscape and should be read along with government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework, and policies in local authority development plans and communities' neighbourhood plans.

Protocol for consulting the Chilterns Conservation Board

The CCB has a Planning Committee and employs chartered town planners to provide specialist planning advice on both development plans and planning applications. A protocol has been agreed with LPAs setting out when to consult the Board, including on all applications for:

- Major housing development (for example 10 dwellings or more or 0.5 hectare or more) or employment and similar development (1,000 square metres or 1 hectare or more)
- Telecommunications masts
- Extraction of brickearth and development related to the local brick making industry
- Waste activities
- Floodlighting or other intrusive lighting
- Equestrian development, particularly larger in scale and in prominent locations
- Large scale agricultural or employment development
- Single, large isolated dwellings (new or replacement)

- Land operations that involve significant cut or fill or alterations to landform
- Noisy or intrusive recreation proposals
- Gypsy and traveller accommodation
- New visitor facilities
- Airport development likely to lead to overflying of the National Landscape
- Renewable energy developments, particularly for major energy generation

Other smaller proposals including those in prominent locations or likely to set a precedent, or involving the loss of a community facility, should also be referred to the Board for comment.

It is anticipated that this protocol will be reviewed with the LPAs during this Plan's lifetime. This review will include resolving repeated references to employment development in the list, and incorporating references to, for example, transport and water infrastructure. The protocol will also be revised to include guidance on understanding the setting of the National Landscape and applying the s.85 duty in the consideration of proposals.

Key Issues

Pressure for development: The Chilterns is a highly desirable area in which to live and work, within easy commuting distance of London, and levels of development within the National Landscape and its setting continue to be high. Local authorities face pressures when preparing their development plans and some, with a shortage of alternatives, are proposing significant housing allocations here, despite the clear direction of policies of the NPPF in this regard. The NPPF's key 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' policy (para 11, Dec 2024) clearly states that the requirements for development plans, and for planning decisions in the absence of a development plan, are not required to meet and exceed identified need where National Landscape policies apply, and this includes in their setting.

Small-scale changes: Piecemeal changes to land and buildings can progressively harm the natural beauty of the Chilterns National Landscape. Examples include pony paddocks, garden extensions, newly landscaped grounds, the spread of fencing, replacement windows, new external lighting, private leisure buildings and children's play equipment. Electric gates, high fencing and CCTV over public rights of way make the area feel more exclusive, and people feel excluded. Collectively, they can change the distinctiveness, heritage and character of the landscape, and leave less space for nature. The Board has prepared advice in the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and supplementary technical notes to help householders and landowners to make well-informed choices so that changes are appropriate to the special qualities of the Chilterns National Landscape. The advice covers all aspects of building renovation, extensions, appropriate materials, outbuildings, boundary treatments etc.

Permitted Development: Previously, National Landscapes have been excluded from many types of permitted development, but in recent years these rights have been widened, reducing councils' ability to manage some forms of development. However, where permitted development rights threaten harm to the landscape, LPAs can invoke powers to remove them using Article 4 Directions, but this option is difficult and can be costly to implement.

Cumulative impact of development: A single planning proposal may affect only a small area of the National Landscape. However, a number of similar developments in the area, incremental changes over time, or a series of new developments in sequential views along an important trail, can have a significant cumulative impact. The character of the National Landscape, its wildlife and people's enjoyment could slowly diminish over time. We have further advice in our Position Statement on the Cumulative Impacts of Development on the Chilterns National Landscape.

Strategic Objectives

DO1 Ensure planning decisions put the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape first.

DO2 Ensure that where development happens, it leaves the National Landscape better than it was before – richer in wildlife, quieter, darker at night, designed to have a low impact on the environment, and beautiful to look at and enjoy.

DO3 Embrace opportunities to restore natural beauty on sites currently degraded by unsympathetic development, infrastructure or dereliction.

Policies

To achieve these objectives, we must work together to:

DO1

DP1 Ensure planning decisions take full account of the importance of conserving and enhancing the AONB and the great weight given to its protection in the NPPF.

The purpose of designating an area of countryside as a National Landscape is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. That is the single and only purpose in law. A National Landscape must be treated differently from the wider countryside; it has the highest status of protection for its landscape and scenic beauty, equal to National Parks. Government policy is that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important in here. This requirement applies to all sizes of planning proposal, large and small.

The term ‘natural beauty’ covers a wide range of elements, including landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features, and the rich history of human settlement over the ages. Put together these elements make the area distinctive. How the landscape looks is therefore only part of what must be considered in order to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Planners must assess impacts on natural beauty which are both direct, like loss of habitat for construction or a proposed new building of unsympathetic design, and indirect, like a new development affecting traffic levels, air quality, chalk streams and tranquillity in the National Landscape.

DP2 Reject development in the National Landscape unless it meets the following criteria:

- it is a use appropriate to its location,
- it is appropriate to local landscape character,
- it supports local distinctiveness,
- it respects heritage and historic landscapes,
- it enhances natural beauty,
- ecological and environmental impacts are acceptable,
- there are no detrimental impacts on chalk streams,
- there is no harm to tranquillity through the generation of noise, motion and light that spoil quiet enjoyment or disturb wildlife, and
- there are no negative cumulative effects, including when considered with other plans and proposals.

Policy DP2 sets out what to consider in order to give great weight to conserving and enhancing the National Landscape. It applies to all development in the National Landscape, both minor and major.

DP3 Refuse planning permission for major development in the National Landscape unless there are exceptional circumstances and where there is a clear demonstration it is in the public interest.

Government policy requires that planning applications for major developments in AONBs should be refused “other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest”.

The definition of ‘major development’ in this context is different from other aspects of the planning system. Deciding whether a proposal is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area. Developments below the size of the usual thresholds for major development could constitute major development here, for example a single large house in a prominent location on the Chilterns escarpment. The protocol for when to consult to Board (see box on page 72) may be a useful indication of types of development more likely to be considered major.

If a proposal is major, the decision maker will need to assess against the considerations in the NPPF para 183 (Dec 2024). The identified need for many kinds of major development can be met in alternative locations outside the Chilterns National Landscape. If it is considered that exceptional circumstances exist and development would be in the public interest, all opportunities to conserve and

enhance the special qualities should be sought, in line with the duty under section 85 of the CROW Act, by following policies DP1 to DP15.

DP4 In the setting of the National Landscape, take full account of whether proposals harm the natural beauty of the area. .

A development outside the National Landscape's boundary can cause harm to its natural beauty, even if it is some distance away; for example, development of land visible in panoramic views from the Chilterns escarpment, or which generates traffic in or travelling across the National Landscape (including overflying), or which increases water abstraction from the chalk aquifer, thereby reducing flow in chalk streams.

Since July 2021, the NPPF has formally recognised this in its statement that development in the setting of National Landscapes "should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts" on these areas. Since this is a policy relating to National Landscapes, it also means that development in the setting of a National Landscape can be considered as an exception to the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development under paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

The local planning authority's duty towards the National Landscape under section 85 of the CROW Act applies when a proposal affects land in the National Landscape, regardless of where that effect originates (inside or outside the designated area). . The setting of the AONB is not a static area that can be mapped, nor does it cover a set distance from the AONB boundary. Rather, the extent of the setting will depend on the nature of the development proposed, and the impacts it may have on the National Landscape, whether those relate to visual impact (including light pollution), sound, emissions, or knock-on effects such as the generation of traffic. Hence, the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape is the area within which development and land management proposals (by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design) may have an impact, either positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the area.

The Chilterns National Landscape is surrounded by large settlements, many of which are planned to expand. Growth is being planned for Aylesbury, Luton, Princes Risborough, High Wycombe, Hemel Hempstead, Tring, and Chinnor, to name just a few. Many of these expansion plans include land in the setting of the National Landscape, and there is significant pressure for LPAs to propose development within the designated area: all growth will lead to additional pressure for infrastructure to cross the Chilterns. All of this makes it even more important that the Chilterns is protected to play its role in the health and wellbeing of that future population.

DP5 Require a professionally-produced landscape assessment that meets the Landscape Institute's published standards for all development proposals where there are any concerns about impacts on the natural beauty of the area or more broadly on landscape and visual amenity.

Many development proposals, including relatively minor projects, can have impacts both positive and negative on the character of the surrounding landscape. Landscape assessments help to ensure that these impacts are assessed and understood. The Landscape Institute publishes guidance on methodologies for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), which must be used for any proposal requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or for one likely to have a significant character or visual effect on an existing landscape or townscape setting, and for Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) which is recommended for less significant or complex proposals. Such assessments will also help clarify whether a proposal is a 'major development' in terms of para 190 of the NPPF (Dec 2024) - see also policy DP3 – and can help applicants and decision makers with evaluating measures necessary to demonstrate compliance with the s.85 duty.

To be effective, a landscape assessment must address effects on both the National Landscape as a resource in its own right (whether visible or not), and assess the significance of effects on views and visual amenity (as experienced by people). The assessment should be prepared early enough to inform the evolution of a project, so that it is genuinely landscape-led, demonstrably contributes to conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape, and fully integrates landscape character and qualities into the planning, design, construction and management of the development, from the very beginning of the project's inception. Visualisations and photomontages can help developers, decision makers and communities understand the effects of proposals. Assessments should include night time effects as well as day time, to identify any risk of light pollution.

DP6 Support sustainable farming and forestry, nature conservation and facilities for visitors appropriate to the special qualities of the National Landscape.

Planning policies and decisions should encourage the Chilterns' role as a haven for wildlife, a place to experience history and enjoy the outdoors. Types of developments most likely to benefit from and bring benefits to the National Landscape are those that are most compatible with conserving and enhancing its character and supporting its enjoyment and understanding by the public. These include sustainable farming and forestry, tourism businesses (e.g. accommodation, food and drink, visitor attractions, health and adventure challenges), tourism related businesses (e.g. retail, arts and crafts, diversified farm businesses), industry reliant on resources unique to the Chilterns (e.g. Chilterns brickworks), countryside trades and rural skills (e.g. woodcrafts, flint working), businesses which directly benefit the environment (e.g. nature conservation and vernacular building repair) or that showcase its beauty and history (e.g. the Chilterns as a film location).

Conversely, developments most likely to be disadvantaged from National Landscape location include those with no particular reason to be in the area, especially those offering little or no benefit to conserving and enhancing the area's character. These tend to detract from public appreciation and blur the distinction between the National Landscape and outside. These include large new greenfield housing estates, large industrial activities, distribution and haulage, waste processing, and businesses with extensive built footprints that develop and grow rapidly.

DO2

DP7 Only support development that is of the highest standards of design that respects the natural beauty of the Chilterns, the traditional character of Chilterns vernacular buildings, and reinforces a sense of place and local distinctiveness. Require a Design and Access Statement to accompany every application, explaining how it complies with the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide.

The Chilterns has a distinctive vernacular architecture based on the consistent use of local materials: Chilterns brick, clay roof tiles and flint. Attractive villages like Ewelme, Turville, Hambleden and Aldbury are among our most popular visitor destinations. New development of all types needs to respect vernacular architecture, historic settlement character and the local landscape. This will require developers to do more than use standard designs.

New design must also exhibit the highest environmental standards in terms of energy and water conservation whilst complementing the character the National Landscape. Local natural resources should be used in new construction (local timber, locally made bricks and tiles, clunch and flint) to continue the vernacular materials tradition and support the last remaining local producers, recognising their vital importance for historic buildings repair.

The Board has published the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide which is recognised as a supplementary planning document by many of our LPAs, where it holds significant weight in the decision-making process; elsewhere the Guide still carries weight as a 'material consideration' that is based on detailed research and was subject to extensive engagement with stakeholders and the public. It covers topics such as the setting of buildings, the design of vernacular features and the use of traditional local materials. Conserving and enhancing natural beauty does not simply mean screening development behind vegetation or using designs which clad a standard house type with local materials.

DP8 Keep skies dark at night by only using light where and when needed. All new lighting should be the minimum required and demonstrate that it complies with published guidance for intrinsically dark zones. Avoid architectural designs that spill light out of large areas of glazing.

The Chilterns National Landscape has relatively dark skies for the south east, making it a place people can still experience the wonder of starry skies and which is good for wildlife. National Landscapes are recognised as intrinsically dark environments (Zone E1 in the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance) and planning conditions should be applied to restrict and control lighting. Light pollution of all types should be first prevented, by avoiding light where it is not needed, and where it is, by designing lighting to mitigate harm, through shading, height of fixings, beam orientation,

LUX, colour temperature and the proposed hours of use. For example, downward pointing, shielded, operated on timer, and with a 'warm white' colour temperature of 2700-Kelvin maximum.

Traditional Chilterns vernacular buildings have small windows. Modern designs with large areas of glazing should be avoided so that buildings do not appear as boxes of light in the countryside at night, and glinting glazing in the daytime.

The CCB has published Lighting Planning Guidance which includes a model policy recommended for inclusion in development plans. While the Guidance includes much by way of technical advice, those installing lighting equipment or designing buildings are strongly recommended to seek the advice of a professional lighting consultant.

DP9 Ensure that the design and implementation of High Speed 2 complies with the Detailed Design Principles prepared by the HS2 AONB Review Group.

This document sets out design principles that could reasonably be applied to HS2 works in the Chilterns National Landscape and its setting, and which aim to achieve an exemplar landscape design for the project.

DP10 Make sure that all development that is permitted in the National Landscape or its setting delivers a net gain for the Chilterns by

a. on-site improvements for biodiversity, landscape, the rights of way network, visitor facilities, etc., and/or

b. financial or in-kind contributions, secured through planning agreements including biodiversity net gain, towards wider green infrastructure projects that enhance the National Landscape by meeting the aims of this Management Plan.

The duty under section 85 of the CROW Act for public bodies, including planning decision makers, to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of a National Landscape means that where development is appropriate or necessary in the designated area, or its setting, then there is an imperative to ensure not only that harms are avoided or reduced, but that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the outcome is a positive one for the National Landscape.

Planning agreements, including biodiversity net gain (BNG) can provide a way for developments to fund green infrastructure and biodiversity projects. Using these mechanisms, individual developments can contribute to conservation and restoration projects, and help offset the incremental increases each bring like traffic, recreation pressure, path erosion, and habitat reduction and severance. Avoiding harm, reducing harm and compensating for it is likely to play an increasing role. Delivering on-site enhancements should come first before off-site contributions are considered. The government is moving to an environmental net gain principle for development, with mandatory biodiversity net gain in the short term, and longer-term plans for environmental net gain. The CCB recommends environmental net gain in nationally protected landscapes should include funding projects that connect people to the natural environment, maintain and expand the rights of way network, and restore and enhance natural beauty of the AONB.

All development in and affecting the AONB should contribute through on-site conservation and enhancement of the AONB, and/or (depending on its scale and impacts) contribute to projects which assist with delivering Management Plan aims. Such projects should be informed by the Chilterns Nature Recovery Plan and/or by the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy, as well as the content of this Management Plan. For example, investment could repair and connect habitats, or create new active travel green infrastructure links. It is especially important to strengthen the area's capacity for accommodating additional visitors without damage, such as providing suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANGs) in relation to the Chilterns' Special Areas of Conservation (see also Chapter 8, policy EP12).

DP11 Where a local community need is shown, support the development of well-designed, small-scale homes within villages which are affordable for people who work within or have long-standing family connections to the Chilterns National Landscape.

The Chilterns is becoming increasingly expensive as a place to live. Although many homes have been permitted in the AONB in recent years, very little of it has been affordable housing and the stock of affordable homes has dwindled through the right to buy and loss of tied accommodation that goes with a job. Outdoor work in farming, forestry, conservation land management, tourism and public services is typically low paid, making it hard for people with the skills the National Landscape needs to

stay, and the area's cultural heritage is lost when families with long local connections move away. Rural pubs, village shops and barns are being lost to residential conversion, while smaller homes and bungalows seem attractive propositions for redevelopment into luxury large replacement dwellings.

We need new approaches to make sure the right kind of housing is being built. This does not mean proposing major housing development in the Chilterns: the challenge is changing who they are for, so that homes are available and affordable for local people. What is required are sensitively-designed conversions, infill, rural exceptions sites and community-led housing schemes in the villages of the National Landscape. They are best when of a small-scale and meeting local needs.

DP12 Support sympathetic proposals that enhance the Chilterns as a place to visit, live, explore and enjoy. Protect existing visitor and community facilities, such as rural pubs, public transport, B&Bs, youth hostels, village shops and cafes. Support sensitively designed new visitor facilities.

Small-scale, carefully-sited and well-designed proposals that provide or enhance community facilities are likely to be welcome. Proposals that involve active travel into and across the Chilterns by walking, cycling, horse riding, bus and train, rather than private car are the most compatible with National Landscape designation purposes.

Existing facilities, such as rural pubs, shops, public transport and community buildings, should be protected from loss or change of use. They are important assets and once lost are hard to replace.

DO3

DP13 Support opportunities for enhancing the National Landscape by removing derelict or detracting developments and infrastructure.

There are some places in the National Landscape where buildings and structures like pylons, rail gantries, telecoms masts, television masts, waste sites, minerals sites, and farm infrastructure have scarred the beauty of the Chilterns. The removal of unsightly structures can help restore beauty and rural character. Infrastructure providers should remove all redundant masts and equipment. We welcome continued investment in undergrounding overhead electricity lines in the National Landscape and recommend that all new supplies should be undergrounded unless there are ecological or archaeological constraints to this.

DP14 Avoid new or upgraded infrastructure (roads, railways, airports, pylons, masts etc.) which harm the natural beauty of the Chilterns National Landscape or the visitor experience. Fully assess impacts on the National Landscape, including increased recreation pressure, traffic, overflying and severance of ecological connectivity. Avoid or mitigate harm where possible and compensate for harm if necessary, but always seek to achieve a net gain for the National Landscape.

In recent years, growing traffic volumes, speeding and rat running through the Chilterns have brought more noise, motion, air pollution into the area. Wildlife-rich verges and ancient sunken lanes are being eroded and damaged by vehicles passing one another. Our most highly protected natural habitats in the Chilterns, the three Special Areas of Conservation, are all sensitive to air pollution and are all exceeding critical loads, which may lead to a loss of rare species. There are also safety risks for those enjoying the Chilterns through walking, wheeling, cycling or horse riding.

Unsympathetic, over-engineered road schemes and excessive street lighting can further harm the National Landscape. We have produced design advice on sympathetic management of Chilterns Highways in guidance produced with our local highways authorities.

Railways offer sustainable travel options to the Chilterns but also involve noise and, in the case of rail electrification, visual intrusion to beautiful landscapes. A whole new railway, HS2, is being constructed through the Chilterns AONB at its widest point, bringing severance and major permanent impacts on the landscape. On its own, this is enough change for the Chilterns to accommodate for a century. However, other pressures continue, like airport expansion at Heathrow and Luton which will result in more aircraft over-flying the National Landscape and harm its tranquillity. The effects on the Chilterns National Landscape must be assessed in full and cumulatively with other projects early in the decision-making process.

Harm to nationally designated landscapes is not something that can be offset, it is not possible to create a landscape of this unique natural beauty elsewhere as a substitute. The mitigation hierarchy in environmental policy and best practice prioritises 1) the avoidance of harm; before 2) identifying all possible mitigation; and only then deals with 3) compensatory measures in relation to residual impacts. Compensation is a last resort. The duty to “seek to further” the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area under section 85 of the CROW Act requires decision-makers to take all reasonable steps to identify how that purpose can be furthered, i.e. to result in a net positive impact for the National Landscape.

DP15 Seek opportunities to remove or replace existing inappropriate external lighting to restore dark skies at night.

Householders, farms, community facilities, recreational facilities and businesses in the National Landscape can take simple steps to reduce light pollution by:

- Angling existing lights downwards
- Fitting timers
- Replacing existing lighting with designs appropriate for intrinsically dark zones

More detailed information is provided in CCB’s Lighting Position Statement.

11. Implementation and Monitoring

The creation of a Management Plan for the Chilterns National Landscape is led by the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) on behalf of those who have a responsibility or duty for the Chilterns; and for those who have an interest in and commitment to caring for the Chilterns.

The CCB has gathered feedback and input from the public, partners and stakeholders to create and review this plan. The plan describes what is needed to continue to conserve and enhance the National Landscape, to engage and benefit people, and sets out key areas for partnership action.

In 2023 a new section 90A was inserted into the CROW Act 2000 empowering the Secretary of State to issue regulations requiring public bodies to contribute to the preparation, implementation and review of management plans for National Landscapes and setting out how they must do so. These regulations are anticipated to be issued during the lifetime of this plan, and CCB will support its stakeholders in adjusting to the new requirements as they come into force. In the meantime, to implement the plan, the CCB will continue to work with partners to agree and take forward detailed action plans.

Implementation

Implementation requires three key components to be secured:

- Partnership working
- Capacity and expertise
- Appropriate resourcing

Many organisations have a remit to deliver elements of this Management Plan and all potential partners will be invited to work with the CCB to plan implementation.

To ensure this Management Plan is delivered, it is necessary for the following to be in place:

1. Secure funding from central government for the CCB to allow it to lead and facilitate the implementation and carry out core functions such as planning advice.
2. Commitment and funding from local authority partners who have a duty to care for the National Landscape and contribute to the CCB to ensure the duty is co-ordinated effectively across authorities.
3. Support from farmers, landowners, land agents and land managers for policies and actions to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape, for example, working to shared conservation objectives through farmland clusters.
4. Commitment from partner organisations to deliver the critical actions which fall within their remit. For example, the maintenance of Rights of Way by local authorities, low flow alleviation work by water companies and undergrounding of power lines by utility companies.
5. Strengthened relationships with parish councils, community organisations and non-governmental organisations within and near the National Landscape.
6. A new Environmental Land Management system, replacing Common Agricultural Policy agri-environment schemes, which provides support for land and woodland management, targeting natural capital protection, nature's recovery and access, providing public funding for public benefit.
7. Joint working to develop a menu of green infrastructure enhancement projects that can be funded by development through Section 106 contributions, Community Infrastructure Levy and funding packages to offset the impacts of growth, recreation pressure and infrastructure projects in and around the Chilterns.
8. Expertise and support from statutory agencies including Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and Historic England.
9. Commitment from partner organisations to pool resources and expertise on priority project work (e.g. Thames Water and Affinity Water providing support to the Chilterns National Landscape and Chilterns Chalk Streams Project).
10. Design and development of initiatives that attract additional sources of funding such as National Lottery Heritage Fund, green finance and corporate philanthropy.
11. An effective partnership forum that allows partners to collaborate effectively, agree key actions and share best practice from one another.

12. Contributions from many people who give their time freely, volunteering for conservation charities, maintaining footpaths and nature reserves, acting as walking festival walk guides, and so on.
13. Datasets for monitoring outcomes which are accurate, accessible, repeatable, up to date, and relevant to the geographic area of the Chilterns National Landscape .

How will the delivery of the Management Plan be monitored?

This Management Plan sets out a vision for the Chilterns National Landscape, supported by a series of objectives and policies, whose implementation through coordinated collaborative action are intended to:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns
 - Enhance public understanding and enjoyment of the special quality of the National Landscape
- For its own part the Chilterns Conservation Board will produce and publish annually a rolling three-year delivery plan.

Effective long-term planning and decision-making requires evidence of the condition of the National Landscape together with an understanding of long-term changes and drivers for change.

Gathering evidence against headline indicators is an ongoing challenge requiring increased resource. Many of the indicators proposed in the Management Plan 2019-2024 cannot be assessed as datasets are no longer collected, or costs of doing so have become prohibitive. There have also been changes in the frequency of collection, making long term trend monitoring difficult.

Taking account of these challenges, our proposal for monitoring and evaluation over the period of the current plan is to work within the constraints of the Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework presented in Chapter 3 and to update with baseline indicator and supporting statistics as they become available.

We will also draw on a combination of innovative Citizen Science activities (e.g. [Chess Smarter Water Catchments](#) and [Tracking the Impact](#)), national monitoring schemes and cutting-edge scientific techniques to measure trends in nature recovery and chalk stream health across the National Landscape. Lessons learnt from these activities will guide development of future monitoring.

Most of the PLTOFs focus on capturing progress with achieving the primary statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape. The exception is target 9 which relates directly to accessibility and engagement. In addition, CCB has subsidiary duties with regard to the enjoyment and understanding of the National Landscape and the social and economic wellbeing of its communities, which are reflected in the Plan's local indicators 7 and 8 in chapter 3 relating to health walks and visitor numbers. In relation to these issues, we will explore options to measure factors such as the following:

- Number of young people engaged
- Number of community groups engaged
- Quality of rights of way and accessibility – survey of walk leaders and footpath monitors
- Website hits/leaflet downloads
- Leisure use of the Chilterns – new visitor survey, including survey of 'non-users'
- Number of members of conservation groups in the Chilterns (BBOWT, Chiltern Society, National Trust, Woodland Trust etc.)
- Perceptions of the value of the National Landscape
- Increased number of rights of way, perhaps as permissive or equivalent
- Additional Access Land and Local Green Space designation
- Participation in health walks
- Growth of population within the National Landscape and within 5km of its boundaries
- Number/value of visitors/tourists
- Numbers employed in tourism
- Number of rural exceptions sites and community-led housing schemes to meet local needs

[insert Glossary and Abbreviations, and any other relevant appendices at design stage]

[Acknowledgements, Photography Credits, Chilterns Conservation Board]