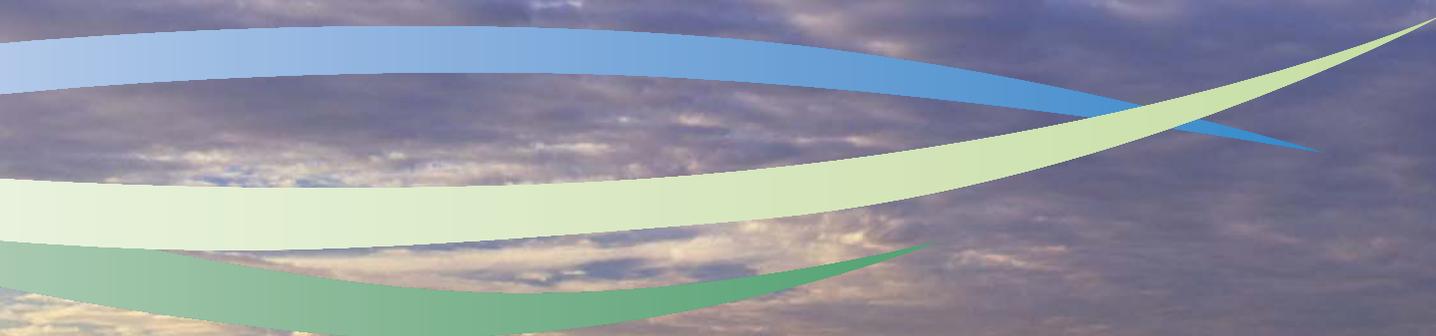


THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS

AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

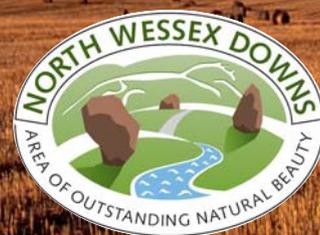
ANNUAL REVIEW 2008-2009



October 2009

Prepared on behalf of the Council of Partners

www.northwessexdowns.org.uk



Chairman's Foreword

The role of the North Wessex Downs AONB in protecting and enhancing our beautiful landscape becomes ever more important as problems such as climate change and development pressures increase. Partnership is the key to success and we continue to seek ways to coordinate and encourage the work of our many partners in achieving our and their objectives.

We have continued to make good progress in a number of important areas during the year under review, as is described in the following pages. In particular, we carried out a wide-ranging consultation process as the basis of a revised Management Plan, due to be published in the Autumn; we played a leading role in winning LEADER funding of £2.5 million for capital projects within the AONB during the period 2009-13; and the Sustainable Development Fund enjoyed another successful year, distributing £61,666 to 16 different projects. Our annual Forum took place in June 2008 on the theme of Partnership Working and was attended by over 100 stakeholders. The 2009 Forum has been postponed until October to coincide with the launch of the new Management Plan.

The background remained difficult. Funding continued to be tight and nothing was available from Natural England for major projects, while the hoped for three year rolling funding has still not been confirmed. The move to a unitary Council for Wiltshire was understandably distracting for

those involved, although our initial experience of the new regime has been very encouraging. Our previous Director Fiona Newcombe left at the end of July 2009. In September a new Assistant Director (Henry Oliver) arrived and is currently acting as Director. By the end of October we will have a new Planning Adviser in place. Our Management Plan Coordinator (Oliver Cripps), who joined us in March, has been acting as Assistant Director and will continue to do so for the time being. We are very pleased to have been able to attract such a promising group of reinforcements.

My thanks as always go to the members of the Council of Partners and the Management Working Group (formerly the Executive Committee), who have been most helpful and supportive throughout, and to our team in the AONB office, who have again worked extremely hard with limited resources.

Sir Charles Nunneley
Chairman of the Council of Partners



The Leader Launch: Sir Charles Nunneley with Ian Ritchie, Chair of the Leader Action Group and Newbury MP Richard Benyon

Report from the Chairman of the Management Working Group

Many of you will be aware that one of the prime areas of activity over the last 18 months has been the development of a replacement Management Plan to cover the five year period 2009-2014. The Management Working Group has been focused on supporting the large amount of work that has gone into this process.

It is easy to underestimate the value of the Management Plan, and the temptation to view the preparation and production of the Plan as a purely bureaucratic exercise is only too real. However, a good Management Plan gives vital direction to the AONB team and our partners, setting out the shared vision for the North Wessex Downs, explaining the issues and challenges that we face, and putting in place a clear set of agreed objectives that we aim to achieve. It will ensure that the work undertaken in the coming years is both necessary and targeted.

Of course such a Plan can only succeed if it has the broad support of not only the North Wessex Downs AONB Partnership, but also the community that calls the area home. We very much hope that this has been achieved through a wide range of engagement and consultation events that has sought the views of all those who have an interest in the landscape of the North Wessex Downs.

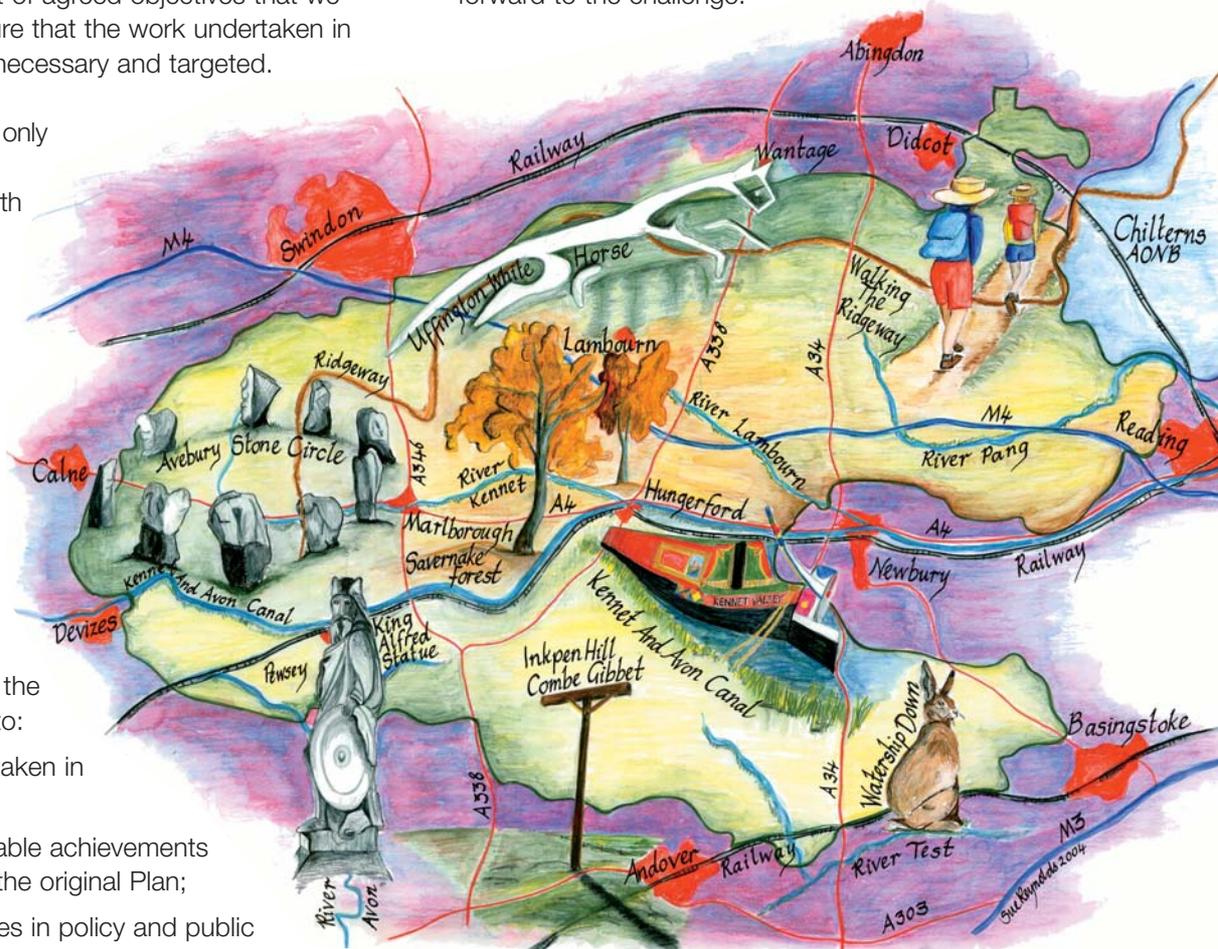
The process of producing the new Plan has allowed us to:

- review the work undertaken in the last five years;
- celebrate the considerable achievements that have flowed from the original Plan;
- take account of changes in policy and public opinion;
- consider the new information that has been made available (most notably from projects undertaken as part of the original action plan);

and

- consider what the new priorities should be for the next five years.

The new Management Plan is on course to be adopted by our Local Authority Partners by the end of September and to be formally launched at the next North Wessex Downs AONB Forum, which will be held in October. The adoption of the new Management Plan and its associated action plan will give the Management Working Group much to do in the coming years, and I look forward to the challenge.



Duncan Coe
Chairman
Management Working Group

The Sustainable Development Fund

is a grant scheme administered by the North Wessex Downs AONB and funded by DEFRA through Natural England. Almost anyone can apply but successful applicants will have been able to demonstrate a principle of sustainability and a central aim to help conserve and enhance the North Wessex Downs AONB.

*In 2008-09 £61,666 was awarded to 16 projects.
The projects were:*

Avebury Community Shop

Establishment of a village shop which opened in March 2009.

Kennet District Council

A field walking exercise by Wessex Archaeology on farmland within the Avebury World Heritage Site.

Berkshire RIGS Group

Soil type study to inform landowners and residents.

Bradfield Parish Plan Group

Publication of the Parish Plan.

a case study

Avebury Field Walking

Kennet District Council received £3,200 towards the cost of professional archaeologists from Wessex Archaeology to carry out a field walking exercise on farmland within the Avebury World Heritage Site. As part of the wider arable reversion project within the WHS, the field walking element aims to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from arable reversion for both the world-class cultural heritage of the North Wessex Downs and the local and wider communities.

Field walking entails the collection of cultural debris from field surfaces. It makes an important contribution to our understanding of past activities and settlement in the WHS wider landscape. This understanding feeds into improved interpretation for local people and visitors and the development of strategies for sustainable management. Reversion to grassland, although good for the long-term preservation of archaeological monuments and public access, does mean an end to cultivation and the opportunity for collection. It is therefore probably the last opportunity for field walking for a long time.



Little Hidden Farm

Training in coppice management techniques to create habitat for the Duke of Burgundy butterfly.

Oxfordshire Geology Trust and Berkshire RIGS Group

Joint working with other organisations to carry out presentations on geoconservation.

East Garston Community Shop

Establishment of a village shop.

Goring and Streatley Hydro-Electricity Power Scheme

Research into installing a hydro-electric scheme.

Hampstead Norreys Village Design Statement

Production of the Village Design Statement.

Kennet and Avon Canal Trust

Creation of a conservation plan and an interpretation and heritage plan.

Kingsclere Heritage Association

Archaeological research on the site of Bovry Walls, an Iron Age fort.

Marlborough Climate Pledge

Raising awareness of climate change issues in Marlborough.

Royal Berkshire Anaerobic Digester

Feasibility study for a digester based on a pig farm.

Stanford Dingley Parish Plan

Production of the Parish Plan.

Friends of Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Valley

Production of a leaflet to promote ancient trees and trees of special value on Bucklebury Common.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Voluntary work within the Swindon Borough Council Area for disadvantaged volunteers.

a case study

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust: Fringe Benefits

The funding went towards paying for voluntary work in Wiltshire Wildlife Trust reserves and other sites of wildlife importance within the Swindon Borough Council area of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

The aim is to involve volunteers who come from the area's population and who are long-term unemployed, disadvantaged in some way or have health problems.

The volunteering involves training, which means that after the specific task is completed the volunteers have learnt a particular country skill. It has also enabled them to meet and work with other people and spend time in the country, which should benefit them in later life.

A further aim is to raise awareness of the special interest and character of this part of the North Wessex Downs AONB by encouraging local people from Swindon, Wroughton, Liddington and Chiseldon to explore, appreciate and learn about its local history, archaeology and natural history through a programme of talks and walks using local experts.

This helps local people and their communities to understand how ecology has shaped the landscape of their areas and why there is a need for conservation management. Short walks will introduce people to the interest of a particular site or area whilst longer walks will link together a number of different sites and areas of interest.



Finance

Income	£
Natural England	253,756
Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council	5,247
Hampshire County Council	12,837
Kennet District Council	11,411
North Wiltshire District Council	6,846
Oxfordshire County Council	8,744
South Oxfordshire District Council	5,247
Swindon Borough Council	5,247
Test Valley Borough Council	5,247
Vale of White Horse District Council	4,599
West Berkshire Council	9,164
Wiltshire County Council	12,837
Balance brought forward	1,383
Total income	342,564

Expenditure	£
Salary and Associated Costs	254,601
Accommodation	37,633
Office Equipment & IT	14,988
PR and Events	2,253
Up on the North Wessex Downs Production, Design and Print	8,576
Management Plan Review	7,650
Forum	1,714
Joint Projects: South West Farmland Bird Project	10,000
Administrative and other costs	3,731
Governance Review	600
Subscriptions to regional and national work	1,330
Total expenditure	343,076

Net overspend to be carried forward to 2009-2010 **£512**

The office is located at Denford Manor, Lower Denford, Hungerford, Berkshire.
Its telephone number is 01488 685440.

The Management Team

and their direct telephone lines and e-mails are:

Henry Oliver

Assistant Director and acting Director

01488 680454

email: henryoliver@northwessexdowns.org.uk

Oliver Cripps

Management Plan Coordinator and acting Assistant Director

01488 680457

email: olivercripps@northwessexdowns.org.uk

Caroline Kaneen

Information Officer

01488 680451

email: carolinekaneen@northwessexdowns.org.uk

Liz Duquenoy

Office Manager

01488 685440

email: elizabethduquenoy@northwessexdowns.org.uk

A Planning Advisor is expected to be in post from the end of October 2009.

The management team supports and works with the Council of Partners and the Management Working Group to:

Provide a focus and central information base for the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Raise awareness of and promote the unique identity of the AONB.

Provide the strategic approach to delivering the AONB Management Plan.

Be a catalyst for and project-manage activities to deliver the AONB Management Plan.

Provide planning advice to add value to local authorities' planning function.

The Council of Partners

includes representatives of the nine local authorities that have administrative responsibilities for the area covered by the North Wessex Downs AONB. It also includes representatives of Natural England, community and parish councils, farming and rural business, historic environment, nature conservation, rural recreation and tourism. The complete list is on the back cover of this document and on www.northwessexdowns.org.uk

The Council of Partners has a responsibility to:

Advise on and co-ordinate the work of the constituent local authorities.

Prepare, produce and implement the AONB Management Plan.

Promote the unique identity of the AONB.

Secure sufficient funding for AONB activities.

Raise the profile and increase the understanding of the AONB.

The Council of Partners met on 17 July 2008, 6 November 2008 and 26 February 2009.

The Management Working Group

(formerly the Executive Committee) consists of individuals with a variety of skills appointed by the Council of Partners. They have a responsibility to:

Provide guidance and advice for the work of the AONB team.

Promote liaison and co-ordinate action between organisations implementing the AONB Management Plan.

Advise the Council of Partners on the resources required to implement the AONB Management Plan.

Develop links with key external organisations and influential local bodies.

Develop policy recommendations and identify management issues.

The Management Working Group met on 28 April, 12 June, 21 August, 2 October, 2 December 2008 and 22 January 2009. A list of the Management Working Group members is given on the back cover of this document.

The North Wessex Downs AONB Forum meets annually to discuss issues to be addressed through the work of the Council of Partners and AONB team. The Forum met in June 2008 at Fieldgate Centre, Kingsclere to discuss 'Working together for the North Wessex Downs'.

The Forum comprises representatives from organisations and groups within the North Wessex Downs including farmers, landowners, ramblers, horse-riders, parish councillors, and members of local wildlife groups, history societies, and community action and special interest groups. Forum members nominate candidates from the interest groups to serve as Advisory Members on the Council of Partners.

Council of Partners

from 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009

Chairman

Sir Charles Nunneley

Funding Partners

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Hampshire County Council
Kennet District Council*
North Wiltshire District Council*
Oxfordshire County Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Swindon Borough Council
Test Valley Borough Council
Vale of White Horse District Council
West Berkshire Council
Wiltshire County Council*
Natural England

**absorbed into the unitary Wiltshire Council on 1st April 2009*

Representing the interests of Community and Parish

Committee for Rural Hampshire
Community Council for Berkshire
Friends of Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Valleys
Hungerford Town Council



cover photograph: Broad Town – David Hall, Blue Sky Images

Representing the interests of Farming and Rural Business

Axis Farming
Country Land and Business Association
Forestry Commission
Government Office for the South East
National Farmers' Union

Representing the interests of the Historic Environment

Council for British Archaeology
English Heritage

Representing the interests of Nature Conservation

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Action for the River Kennet

Representing the interests of Recreation and Rural Tourism

Friends of the Ridgeway
Ramblers' Association

Management Working Group (formerly Executive Committee)

David Carman (*Chairman, retired 31st January 2009*)
Duncan Coe (*Chairman from 1st February 2009*)
Garry King (*Vice-Chairman, retired 31st March 2009*)
Andrew Bennett
Sir Charles Nunneley (*ex officio*)
Fiona Newcombe
Christopher Boreham
Jeremy Sandell (*retired 31st January 2009*)
Deborah Tann (*retired 30th June 2008*)
Alison Cross (*from 1st July 2008*)
Alistair Helliwell
Rupert Ashby

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