

# OUR SHARED OBJECTIVES

The Council of Partners for the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Forestry Commission will work together to deliver their shared priorities. We will do this by:

## Ensuring effective liaison

- We will hold an annual meeting between Forestry Commission and AONB staff, and the Forestry Commission will provide officer representation on any relevant technical panels or steering groups.
- The Forestry Commission will fully consult on the management of its own estate during the preparation of long-term Forest Design Plans.

## Assistance in the review of the AONB Management Plan

- The Forestry Commission will provide guidance on the review of the AONB Management Plan to ensure positive policies in support of woodlands that reflect the particular characteristics of the North Wessex Downs and the objectives of the England Forestry Strategy and Regional Forestry Frameworks.

## Improving understanding:

- of the condition and management of our key woodland habitats. Priority will be given to statutory sites, ancient woodlands (including those under two hectares) and woodland which provides important habitat for priority species;
- of the role and importance of woodlands in the AONB to landscape character, biodiversity and archaeology but also the benefits to communities and the rural economy.

## Development planning

- Promoting the role of woodlands and trees in the development of sustainable communities, e.g. AONB support of a Green Infrastructure Plan for Swindon.

## Targeting incentives for sustainable woodland management:

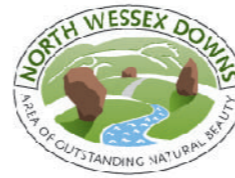
- at sustainable woodland management, particularly of ancient and semi-natural woodlands, and promoting the use of long-term management plans and co-operative approaches to management.
- Grant-decisions on woodland management and planting will take account of the AONB's Woodland Strategy.

## Implementing sustainable woodland management through:

- demonstrating best practice on the Forestry Commission's own estate;
- working with Deer Management Groups;
- supporting research and development of best practice examples of woodland management, harvesting, processing and marketing in line with AONB objectives, including those which add value to or diversify the markets for woodland products, e.g. wood fuel.

## Improving sustainable recreation and access through:

- working with Local Access Forums to identify opportunities to promote and enhance sustainable access to woodland, informed by the Forestry Commission/ Countryside Agency-funded research on accessible greenspace.



### The North Wessex Downs AONB

The North Wessex Downs is a countryside of vast rolling chalk downlands contrasting with well-wooded plateaux, arable lands and intimate secluded valleys, all rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage.

The North Wessex Downs was designated in 1972 to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. It extends into 11 local authority areas including parts of Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Hampshire and West Berkshire, and straddles the boundary between the South East and South West regions. It is one of 36 AONBs in England, which together account for about 15% of the country, and is the third largest AONB nationally, covering 1,730 sq km.



### The Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission is the government department responsible for forestry in Great Britain. It works to ensure the protection and sustainable management of our woodlands.

The South East and South West Regional Forestry Frameworks are regional expressions of the England Forestry Strategy. Produced in partnership with a range of stakeholders, they aim to provide the direction and context for the future development of woodlands and forestry in these regions.

For further information, contact:

**North Wessex Downs AONB**  
Denford Manor  
Lower Denford  
Hungerford  
Berkshire  
RG17 0UN

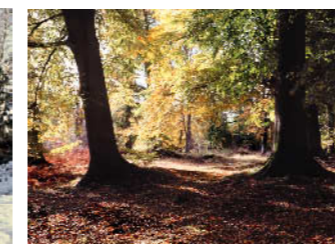
Tel: 01488 685440  
info@northwessexdowns.org.uk  
www.northwessexdowns.org.uk

**Forestry Commission**  
South East England Conservancy  
Alice Holt  
Wrecclesham  
Surrey  
GU10 4LF

Tel: 01420 23337  
fc.seeng.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk  
www.forestry.gov.uk

**Forestry Commission**  
South West Conservancy  
Mamhead Castle  
Exeter  
EX6 8HD

Tel: 01626 890666  
fc.sweng.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk  
www.forestry.gov.uk



# A LOCAL ACCORD

## Between the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership and the Forestry Commission



## A JOINT ACCORD

Following the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) an accord was established between the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Forestry Commission in England.

The shared priorities were identified as:

- Securing an attractive and sustainable landscape
- Protection of existing woodlands
- Reversing the fragmentation of ancient and semi-natural woodlands
- Promoting appropriate management practices
- Gaining public confidence and support



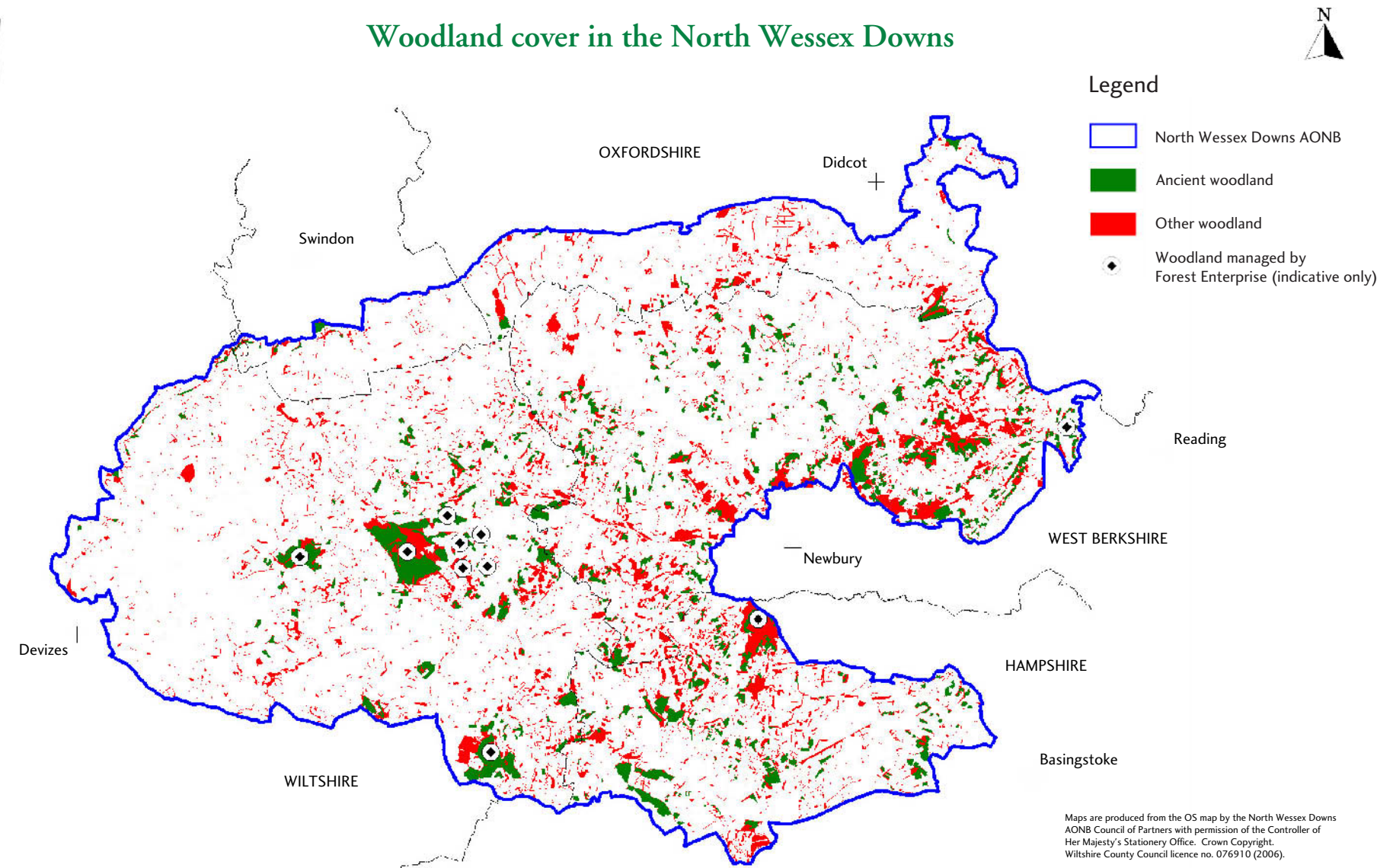
## A LOCAL ACCORD

The Joint Accord encouraged the establishment of local accords between individual Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the Forestry Commission where both parties agree that woodland issues are highly significant. These local accords seek to reflect the distinctive nature of each AONB, highlighting new opportunities for working together.

Following a number of woodland projects within the South East family of AONBs (supported jointly by the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Agency), it is now possible to identify the key issues included in this accord.

**The purpose of this accord is to describe how the Council of Partners for the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Forestry Commission will work together to meet their shared objectives**

### Woodland cover in the North Wessex Downs



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Some 23,300 hectares, or just over 13% of the North Wessex Downs AONB is wooded and around 11% of this is owned or managed by Forest Enterprise. Woodland in the North Wessex Downs is predominantly broadleaved of which 65% comprises oak, beech, ash and birch.

Over 45% of all woodland in the area has either a national or local designation for its particular wildlife value. Key species which have been recorded in the AONB's woodlands include dormouse, the pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly, rare bats such as Bechstein's, Barbastelle, greater horseshoe and noctule, and scarce flora such as spiked star-of-Bethlehem.

Over a third of North Wessex Downs woodland is identified as ancient in origin, with excellent examples of former royal hunting forests, parkland and wood pasture.

**Well over a third of all woodlands in the North Wessex Downs are ancient woodland**

The North Wessex Downs AONB Woodlands Programme arose out of the Joint Accord between the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Beauty and the Forestry Commission. Since 2004, this programme has enabled us to define key woodland issues and to shape our management priorities for woodlands through our woodland strategy.

The priority issues for the North Wessex Downs are outlined below:

**Landscape character and diversity**  
Woodland management and new planting should respect and enhance the diversity in the landscape character of the North Wessex Downs. The AONB woodland strategy indicates where new planting could best meet our multiple objectives for woodland, and will inform advice and support.



**Increasing understanding and management of ancient woodland**  
We need to improve our understanding of ancient and semi-natural woodlands in the area, helping us to target work to maximise biodiversity and reduce the fragmentation of these priority habitats. We will support the restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS), and ensure that veteran trees and wood pasture are priorities for protection and positive management.



**The protection and management of archaeological and historic features**  
With Forestry Commission support, the AONB is undertaking a woodland archaeology audit giving us a better understanding of the heritage significance of AONB woodlands and leading to enhanced protection and management.



**New markets for woodland management**  
We need to support owners to maximise the benefits from woodlands, ensuring high quality timber production in suitable locations, adaptation and partnership working to take advantage of new markets, and the development of added-value and non-timber products.



**Responding to, and mitigating the impacts of, environmental change**  
We will promote the role that trees and woodlands can make in mitigating environmental impacts and as a tool in resource management. Habitat fragmentation may increase the risk of species being unable to respond to climate change. We will promote linkage of woodland and other habitat to create more sustainable landscape-scale habitat mosaics.



**Promoting sustainable recreation**  
We will promote opportunities for sustainable use of woodland for access and recreation and seek the highest standards of management and presentation of such sites, in character with the rural nature of the area. We will promote the responsible use of such areas, by increasing understanding of their value and management needs.

