

Annual Forum 2026

The year in review

Henry Oliver



Belted Galloway cattle on Bucklebury Common, Alex Cruickshank

North Wessex Downs NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan
2025 – 2030



Produced on behalf of the Council of Partners



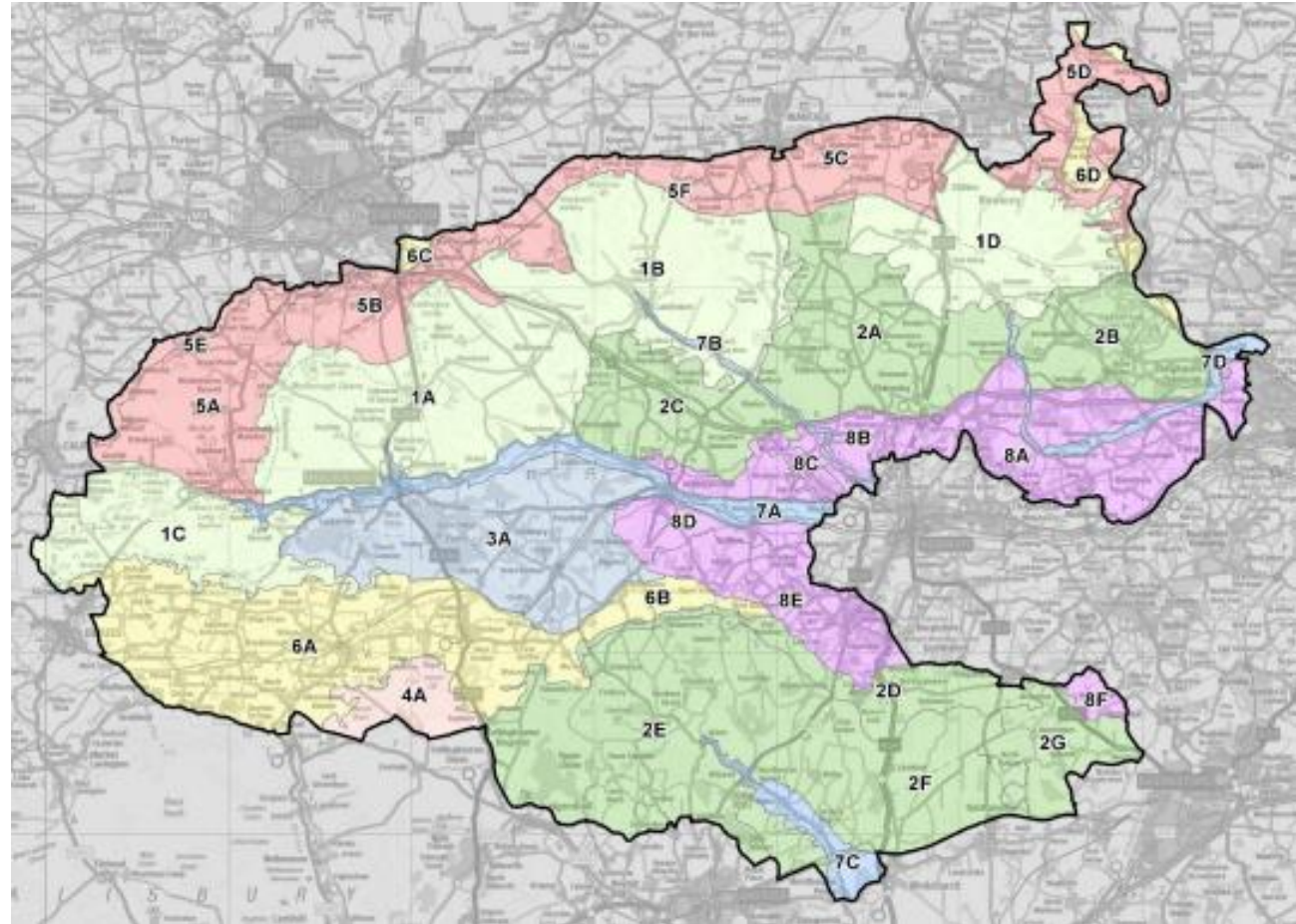
North Wessex
Downs
National
Landscape



Landscape Character Assessment

- First review since 2002
- 8 Landscape Character Types
- 33 Landscape Character Areas

See
northwessexdowns.org.uk





Value of benefits

2025-26

LA funding

£1.00

=

Value

£26.51



IUCN Green List

- **Good Governance**
 - **Sound Design and Planning**
 - **Effective Management**
 - **Successful Conservation Outcomes**
- Applicant stage submission Jan 2026
 - Expanded working group, now inc. National Landscapes Association
 - Dedicated staff lead
 - Assembling evidence against 50 indicators
 - Continuing IUCN support



Partnerships for Nature

May 2024-February 2026:

- £1.7m programme completed
- 9 partners, 7 sites
- Exceeded habitat creation targets and community engagement expectations
- 2.7 kilometres of chalk stream restored
- 130 hectares of habitat restored or created, inc. chalk grassland, woodland and wildflower margins
- Conservation grazing reintroduced to support management of 257 hectares of wood pasture and heathland habitat
- Positive signs already of species recovery



North Wessex Downs signs

- Project completed
- Volunteer-led
- 29 signs installed
- Major impact on public awareness

Huge thanks to Richard Broadhead, local authority highway engineers, sign suppliers and the



Access

National DEFRA programme In 2025-26:

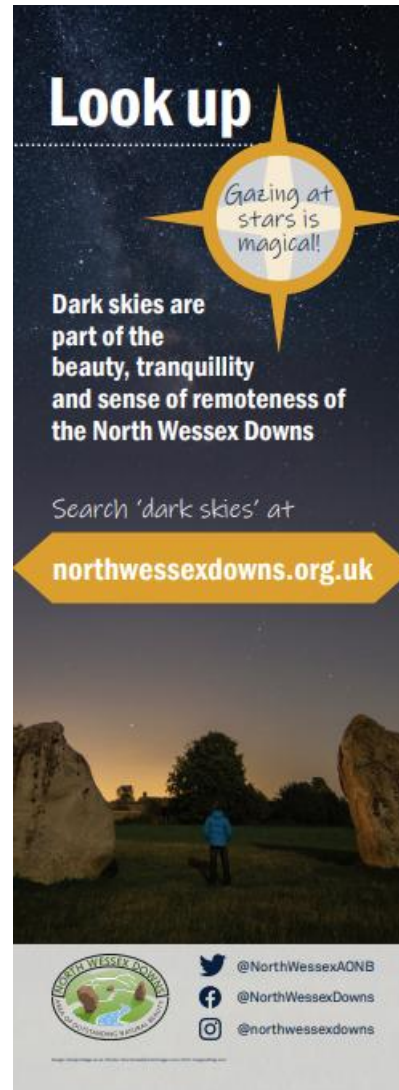
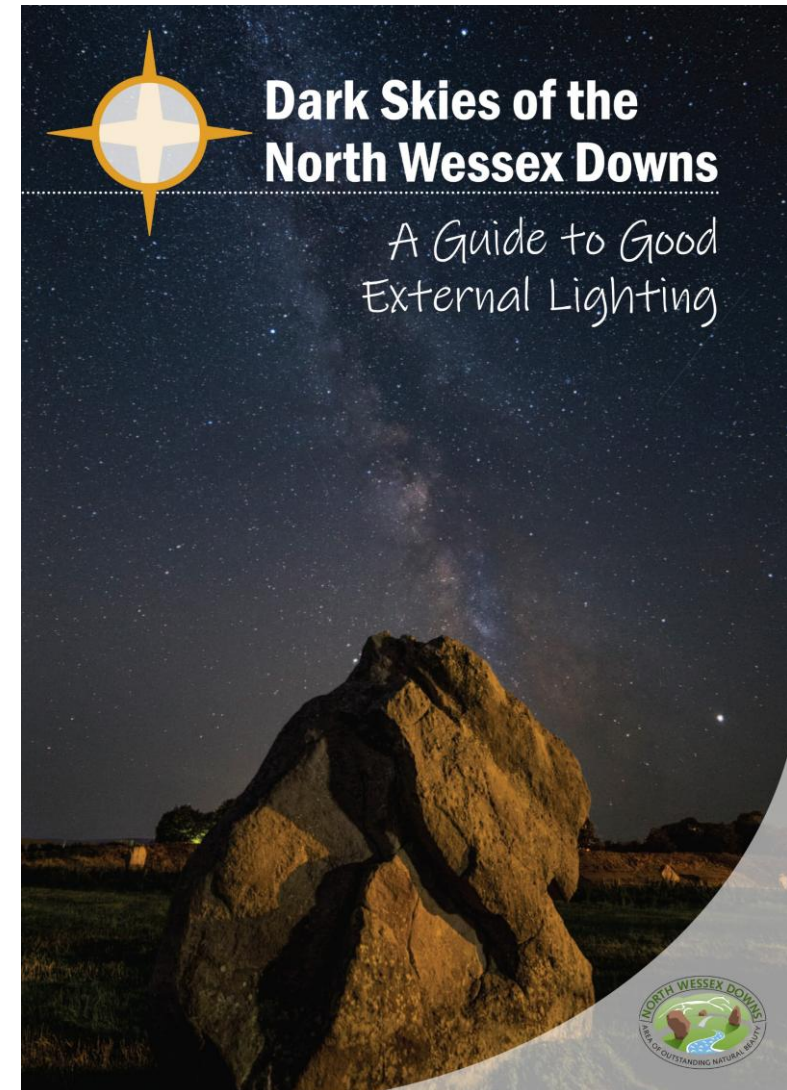
- Capital grants
- 2025-26: £369,580.74 total
- Delivering 13 projects
- Across Berks, Hants, Oxon and Wilts



Dark skies

SQM citizen science programme:

- 4 sky quality meters for community use in dark sky data collection
- 3 main astronomy groups in NWDNL engaged to participate in SQM dark sky monitoring project - providing training and equipment
- Collaboration with CfDS to establish new network and programme to collect and publicly share dark sky data across the UK



Planning

In 2025-26:

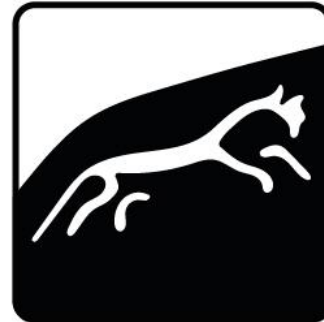
- Screened c.600 applications
- Responded to over 200 applications
- Commented on 4 Local Plans and 4 Neighbourhood Plans
- Made 5 appeal representations to the Planning Inspectorate
- Revised and updated the NWDNL Landscape Character Assessment
- Revised Management Plan policies to make them easier for LPAs to use
- Updated the Setting Position Statement to reflect strengthened s.85 Duty
- Stakeholder working group on the proposed White Horse Reservoir



North Wessex Downs Farming in Protected Landscapes programme



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



**North Wessex
Downs**
National
Landscape

FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

North Wessex Downs FiPL

2025-26:

- 55 projects supported
- 5 farmer-led groups working together on lapwing protection, bird monitoring, wetland studies and deer management
- Support for Wiltshire's White Horses
- Improving Scheduled Monuments, e.g. Wayland's Smithy
- Deer management
- Protecting rivers

Confirmation of FiPL funding until March 2029 will enable us to support longer-term projects



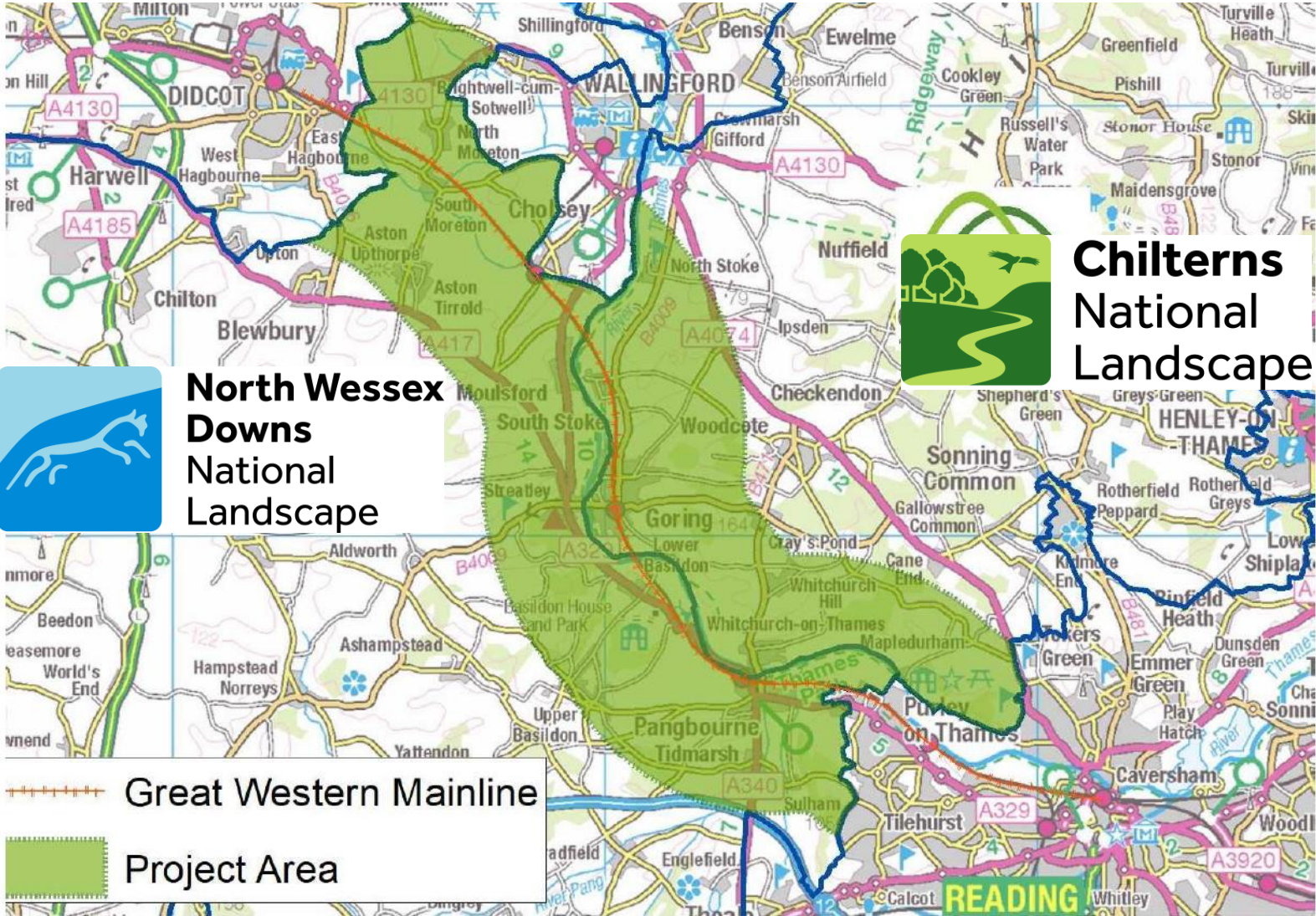
Historic Ridgeway Project



North Wessex
Downs
National
Landscape



Mend the Gap



Mend the Gap

£3.75m programme to date:

- 1,111 trees planted
- 130 ha wildlife-rich habitat created or restored
- 206 ha habitat condition and management improved
- 2,141 people attended events
- 390 volunteers 7,753 hours, worth £155k
- 175 landowners engaged
- 6,186 young people engaged
- 109 partnerships supported
- £1.7m match funding to date



Wider engagement

- North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust
- Ridgeway National Trail Partnership
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- Supporting and convening farmer-led groups
- Mend the Gap school and community projects, e.g. Springlines
- Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site
- Great West Way Designated Ambassador
- National Landscapes Association
- Links to the Landscape Observatory



Little Heath School unveils student-designed outdoor space set to support students



North Wessex
Downs
National
Landscape



Landscape Enhancement Initiative

- £882k National Grid LEI grant +565k match
- 20 farms in Southern Streams Farmer Group
- 1.3 km hedge planting or restoration
- Identify new hedge trees & disease-resistant Elm
- 13.04 ha grassland restoration inc. lowland and floodplain meadow and chalk grassland
- Restore or create 10 ponds
- 3.15 ha new broadleaf woodland
- 7.75 ha woodland management for Willow tit, Dormouse etc.
- Fencing and scrub management for chalk grassland
- 3,680m of agroforestry
- 1,255m hedgerow coppicing
- New permissive paths, accessible gates and interpretation



North Wessex
Downs
National
Landscape

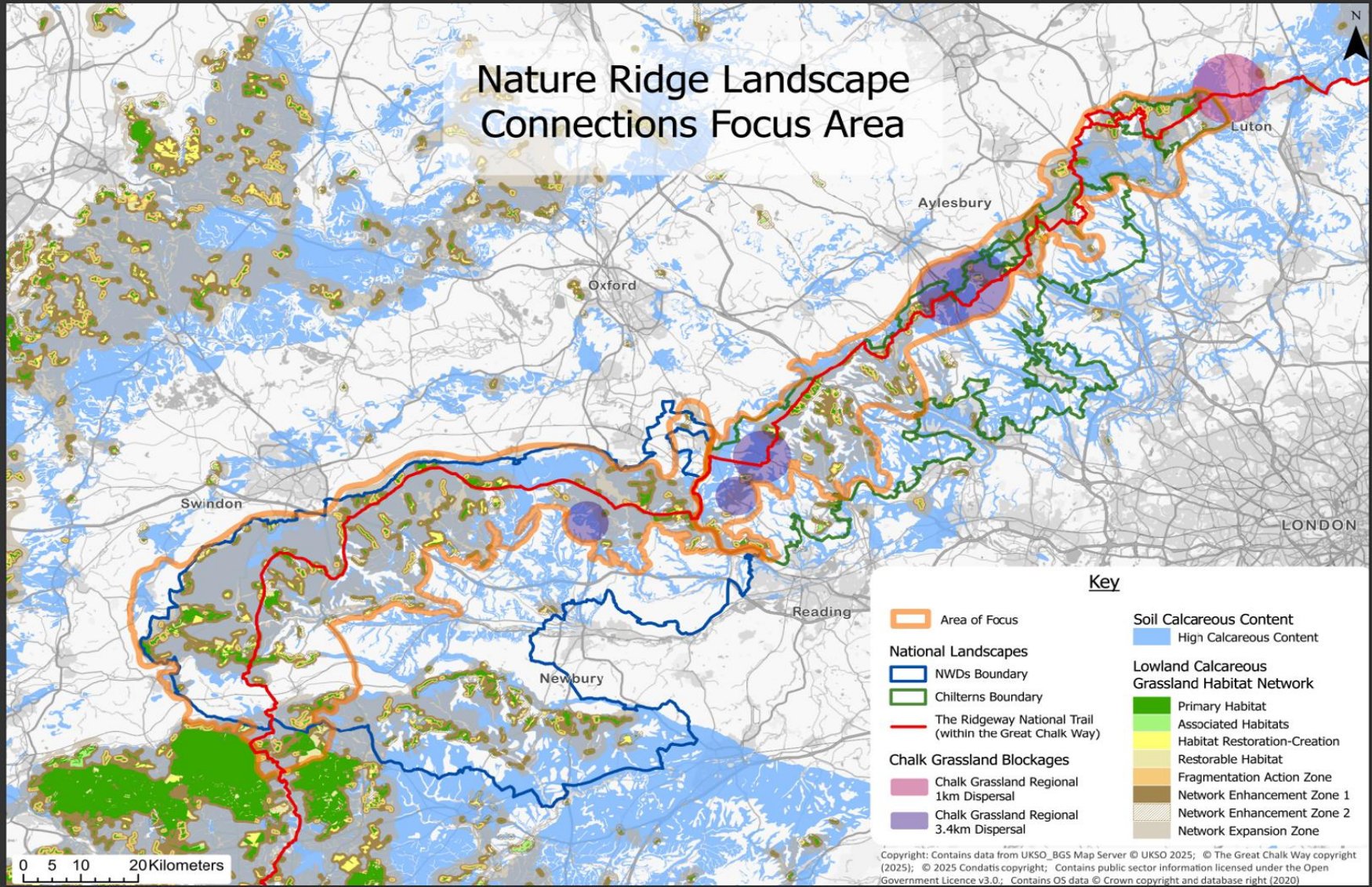


Nature Ridge Landscape Connections

- Aim: secure £10m NLHF Landscape Connections funding
- NWDNL lead
- In partnership with Chilterns NL, The Ridgeway Partnership and National Trails UK
- £250k NLHF grant secured
- Project staff in post
- Pre-project development under way



Nature Ridge Landscape Connections





North Wessex Downs National Landscape

**Sign up to receive our newsletter at
www.northwessexdowns.org.uk**



North Wessex
Downs
National
Landscape

