

Headlines:

Over 85 attend Access Conference



Over 85 people from 27 organisations attended the Chilterns Access Conference on March 5th in Totternhoe. Speakers covered the topics of the future of National Trails, upgrading local bridleways and providing more information on them and there were reports on projects at Dunstable Downs and Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve to reach new audiences. After lunch delegates went for a walk at nearby Totternhoe Knolls to see a new multi-use trail and discuss issues affecting the site such as vandalism and the predicted increase of visitors as nearby growth areas develop.

Pests and diseases tackled at Woodland Conference



Horse chestnut leaf-miner damage

Over 80 people attended this year's Chilterns Woodland Conference on March 20th near Aylesbury. The theme of the event was tree pests and diseases. Speakers from the Forestry Commission highlighted the current diseases and insects which are attacking trees and new ones which are starting to spread into the UK. The threats from deer and grey squirrels were also covered. New funding available from the Forestry Commission and via the Chilterns LEADER programme to tackle pests and diseases was discussed.

Consultation on revised Buildings Design Guide



The Chilterns Buildings Design Guide has been undergoing a review and there will be a public consultation on the revised version from March 30th - May 11th. The Guide was first published in 1999, and the revised version takes into account the impact of climate change and reflects the latest Government policies and guidance on planning. It also contains a new section on agricultural buildings. It can be downloaded at

www.chilternsaonb.org/caring/planning_development_buildings.html

All comments are welcome.

NATS announce second consultation on flight paths

The National Air Traffic Service (NATS) will be making revisions to its original proposals to change flight paths in the south east of England and will make them available for public consultation, no earlier than July. The first consultation elicited strong opposition from the Conservation Board, other local groups and thousands of individuals because the changes would mean more aircraft flying over the Chilterns at lower levels than is currently the case. More details on the consultation are at www.consultation.nats.co.uk

New team managing LEADER programme



Mike Furness

The £2.5 million Chilterns LEADER programme, designed to support local farmers, foresters and communities, is being run by a new team. Nick Phillips, formerly of the National Trust, is the Programme Manager for the Chilterns and Aylesbury Vale LEADER areas. Mike Furness is assisting him as Rural Projects Officer for the Chilterns. Nick and Mike are seeking applications for funding for farming and forestry projects and projects in sustainable tourism, conserving heritage and rural development. Find out more at www.ngagesolutions.co.uk/leaderprogramme or call Mike or Nick on 01844 210442.

News from work areas:

Farming and Land Use

- Nearly 50 farmers and landowners from across the Chilterns attended the Farmers' Forum on February 26th in Princes Risborough. Poul Christensen, Acting Chair of Natural England, gave the first of several presentations on collaboration. There was general agreement that farmers will have to work together more in the future to reduce costs.
- 45 people attended an event in Totternhoe on March 11th to learn about managing pasture for the benefit of horses, landscape and wildlife. Dr Elizabeth Ranelagh from Cambridgeshire FWAG and Christopher Day from the Alternative Veterinary Health Centre spoke.
- A new programme of farm walks for the public will begin in May, see www.chilternsaonb.org/events.asp for more details

Activities and learning

- The new publication Learning Outside the Classroom in the Chilterns which contains details of 25 organisations providing curriculum-linked outdoor education will be available to download from the AONB website in April. A small number of printed copies will also be available.
- The Conservation Board is providing staff time to support Natural England's Natural Connections project which is enabling children from two schools in High Wycombe to visit local farms and nature reserves and to do work in their school grounds.
- A new 'Walk Back in Time' programme of guided walks on local history has been produced for the summer and also a new programme of 'Wildlife on the Move' events. All can be found at www.chilternsaonb.org/events.asp
- Two new red kite postcards have been produced to be sold by local shops and Tourist Information Centres or purchased direct from the Conservation Board. They will retail at 30p each.

News from work areas:

Access and recreation

- 20,000 of the Chilterns Country Seer Green and Beaconsfield Walk leaflet are being re-printed, 50% funded by Chiltern Railways.
- 10,000 each of the Chilterns Country Chinnor Circular, Views of the Thames and Little Marlow walk leaflets will be re-printed by 31st March.

Planning and Development

- The Conservation Board has responded to the consultation on the proposed northern bypass for Luton by highlighting all the measures that could be undertaken to improve public transport and reduce car use in the Luton area, which would negate the need for a bypass. All of the options for routes for the new bypass cut through part of the Chilterns AONB.
- 19 entries have been received for the 2009 Chilterns Buildings Design Awards. Judging will take place on May 6th and the Awards ceremony is on June 10th.

Commons

- The Commons Network is trialling a scheme in which Network members visit parishes in the AONB with common land to offer advice and support on management and get them involved in the Network. For more information contact Kath Daly.
- The Network had a site visit to West Wycombe Hill on March 2nd to look at proposals by the National Trust to restore historic parkland and common land.

Chalk streams



- The Trout in the Classroom project is going well with children at Waterside School in Chesham and Rickmansworth Park School looking after brown trout fry. The fry will be released into the River Chess by Easter.
- More signs of water vole activity have been found along the Misbourne between Chalfont St Peter and Higher Denham. A full survey will be carried out by BBOWT this summer.
- The Chilterns Country Gade Valley Discovery Walk leaflet is being re-printed by the end of March, following a modification to the route to avoid a busy road.
- A boardwalk has been installed in the restored Meades Water Gardens in Chesham.

News from work areas:

Sustainable Development Fund

- The 2008-09 Fund is now fully allocated with a total of £58,940 awarded via 28 grants. This includes £2,000 contributed by Natural England as a result of a regional underspend. The SDF will be operating again in 2009-10 and the first grants panel meeting is on April 28th with a deadline for applications of April 17th.

Website

- There are 2 new pages in the Farming and Land Use section: one on the Land Use and Hedgerow Surveys with downloadable pdfs of the latest results and one on the Chilterns SheepKeep database which matches up land needing grazing with animals available to graze. Visit www.chilternsaonb.org/caring/farming.html

Sustainability Plan

- The solar panels at the Board's office reached a milestone on 26th January - they had saved 1,000kg of CO2 emissions since being installed on 5th September 2007. The panels are providing about 15% of the Board's electricity use.

Forthcoming events:

28th April

Planning Forum - Princes Risborough
Royal British Legion Hall, 10am - 1pm. Current local issues in planning.

8th June

State of the Chilterns Environment seminar - venue tbc
A meeting to help develop the first State of the Chilterns Environment report which will publish data on the monitoring of the new Chilterns AONB Management Plan.

10th July

Chalk Grassland Managers Training Day - Bradenham
A look at restoration work carried out by the National Trust.

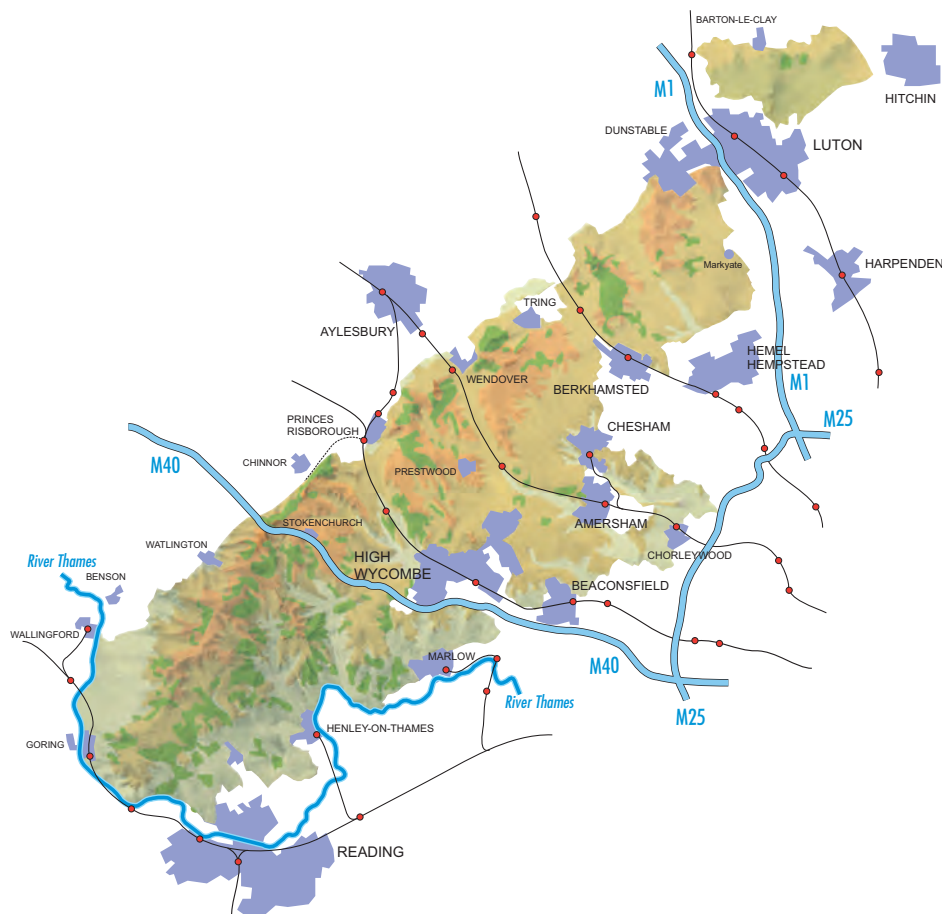
Publications: Recently Published

- Chilternsaetna - newsletter of Chilterns Historic Environment Group
- Directory of Outdoor Learning Providers
- People and Places of the Chiltern Hills leaflet
- Re-print of Seer Green & Beaconsfield Walk leaflet

In Production

- Chalk and Trees and What's On Spring/Summer 2009
- Chilterns Country Gade Valley Discovery Walk
- Commons newsletter
- Chalk Grassland newsletter
- Planning Policy Guidelines
- Revised Chilterns Buildings Design Guide

Chilterns Conservation Board - an introduction



The Chilterns Conservation Board is the public body with the responsibility for protecting and enhancing the Chilterns AONB

The Conservation Board's primary duties are

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB
- To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities.

In addition the Conservation Board has a secondary duty to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities where that is compatible with its primary duties.

Who to Contact

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Board Members - For contact details and biographies of Conservation Board members visit www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation/board_members.asp

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