

Headlines:

Farm near Hitchin wins Chilterns Environment Award



Longhorn cattle grazing chalk grassland at Offley Hoo Farm (photo: Victoria Walton)

Offley Hoo Farm near Hitchin, managed by Jon Birchall and owned by Pilkington Farms, has won the 2009 Chilterns Environment Award for the extensive work being carried out to conserve habitats and wildlife. The farm has one of the country's biggest Higher Level Stewardship agreements. Its acres of chalk grassland are being restored and extended and a new regime of leaving winter stubbles has resulted in greater numbers of farmland birds. At the same time the farm is producing high quality beef, pork and lamb from native breeds.

The runner up was the Withymead Nature Reserve near Goring-on-Thames, owned by the Anne Carpmael Trust. A great deal of volunteer effort has opened up the reserve to the public through the installation of boardwalks and bird hides.

The awards will be presented at the Annual Forum on November 6th.

Over 4,500 people attend Countryside Festival



A record attendance of over 4,500 people, 2,000 up on last year, made the third Chilterns Countryside Festival on September 20th a huge success. There were over 90 exhibitors at the event held at the Ashridge Estate near Berkhamsted, jointly organised by the Chilterns Conservation Board and the National Trust. Visitors enjoyed forestry equipment demonstrations, morris dancers, local produce stalls, crafts, butterfly walks and have-a-go at archery.

Applications for Board member vacancy sought

To find out more and download an application form visit

www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/jobs/appointments/ccb/index.htm

There is a vacancy for a Board Member on the Chilterns Conservation Board and the closing date for applications is 6th October 2009. The position is voluntary with a commitment of 2-3 days per month. An allowance is paid to cover expenses. Anyone can apply and applications are particularly encouraged from those who are passionate about the Chilterns countryside and want to be actively involved in caring for it.

Board seeking new Farming and Land Use Officer

For full details and an application form visit

www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation/vacancies.html

The Conservation Board is looking for a new Farming and Land Use Officer to work with landowners, promote the importance of farming to the public and provide strategic advice to the Board. The post is a full time, permanent paid position based at the Board's office in Chinnor. The closing date for applications is October 9th 2009.

Book your place at the Annual Chilterns Forum

To book a place please contact Donna Hunter at dhunter@chilternsaonb.org or call 01844 355504.

Bookings are being taken for this year's Annual Forum on November 6th at the Green Park Conference Centre near Aylesbury. This free event runs from 9.45am - 1pm and is a great chance to find out what is currently going on to protect and promote the Chilterns AONB. In the afternoon the Chilterns LEADER Programme is holding its annual stakeholders meeting, from 2.15 - 3.30, and all are welcome.

News from work areas:

Farming and Land Use

- Tracy Adams, Farming and Land Use Officer, left the Board on 24th July to take up the post of South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Project Adviser at the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

Activities and learning



Sounds Like Summer

- 900 people attended the music and nature event Sounds Like Summer at the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve on 25th July, jointly organised by the Chilterns Conservation Board and Natural England.
- Nearly 200 people attended the Archaeology and Local History Family Day in Totternhoe on 18th July, organised by the Board in partnership with local authorities and voluntary groups.
- A new autumn and winter events programme including 'Walk Back in Time' history events will be out at the beginning of October.

Access and recreation

- 40 people including 18 using mobility scooters took part in a walk from the Chilterns Gateway Centre on 3rd August, organised by the Conservation Board and the Disabled Ramblers.
- Since its launch in June the new Walks and Rides interactive map has been the most popular section of the AONB website, with 7331 pageviews in August (10% of all pageviews).

www.chilternsaonb.org/activities.asp

Planning and Development

- The Conservation Board has objected to the proposed bypass between the A6 and the A505 to the NE of Luton which would pass through the AONB, as part of its response to the Luton and Central Beds Core Strategy. The Board also objected to proposed development south of the A505 which would have a detrimental impact on the AONB.
- The developing proposals for a high speed rail line which would pass through the Chilterns have generated a lot of media interest which the Board has responded to including a contribution to a big article in the Guardian in August.

News from work areas:

Commons



Commons Day

- Over 60 people attended the 2009 Commons Day at the National Trust Ashridge Estate on 24th September
- There were 43 entries for the 2009 Chilterns Commons Photo competition. A picture of a cricket match on Downley Common was chosen as the overall winner. The winning entries were on display at the Commons Day event and will soon be available to view on the AONB website.
- 20 people attended a Commons Forum visit to Whipsnade Heath and Green on July 6th
- An Autumn Commons Network Newsletter has been distributed - download it at www.chilternsaonb.org/publications.asp

Chalk Grassland

- 65 people attended a very successful Chalk Grassland Managers Day on 10th July at the National Trust Bradenham Estate, taking part in a series of site visits to see examples of chalk grassland management, restoration and reversion from arable. Written summaries of some of the case studies discussed are available - contact Kath Daly at the Board.

Chalk streams

- Many signs of water voles are being found during the current survey along the River Chess, more than were found during the last survey in 2007. In addition signs of voles have been found at sites where they were absent in 2007.
- The Chiltern Society will be preparing an Environmental Impact Assessment of its scheme to line parts of the riverbed of the Misbourne between Amersham and Chalfont St Peter, to try and solve the problem of the waterflow disappearing in this section. This follows a meeting in June with Cheryl Gillan MP, Environment Agency, water companies and the Conservation Board.

The Chilterns Awards

- 28 entries were received in total for The Chilterns Awards, launched this year. The winners and runners up will be announced at the Annual Chilterns Forum in November.

Forthcoming events:

6th November

Annual Chilterns Forum - Green Park, Aston Clinton
9.45am - 1pm plus lunch. Free event - to book contact
dhunter@chilternsaonb.org

6th November

Chilterns LEADER annual stakeholders meeting - Green Park,
Aston Clinton, 2.15 - 3.30pm
This follows on from the Annual Chilterns Forum. It's a chance to
find out about the grants available to farming and forestry
businesses. To book a place contact dhunter@chilternsaonb.org

Publications:

Recently Published

- Chilterns Conservation Board Annual Review 2008-09
- Commons newsletter Autumn 09
- Chalk and Trees Autumn/Winter 2009
- What's On in the Chilterns October 2009 - April 2010
- Walk Back in Time events leaflet

In Production

- Chilterns Country Gade Valley Discovery Walk - reprint
- Planning Policy Guidelines
- Revised Chilterns Buildings Design Guide

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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