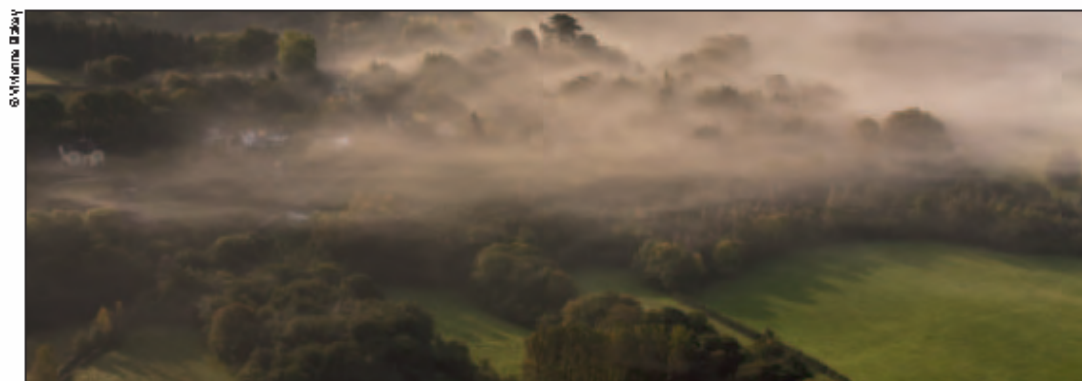


The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019



The Vision for 2024

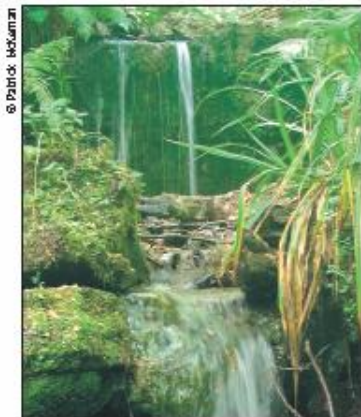
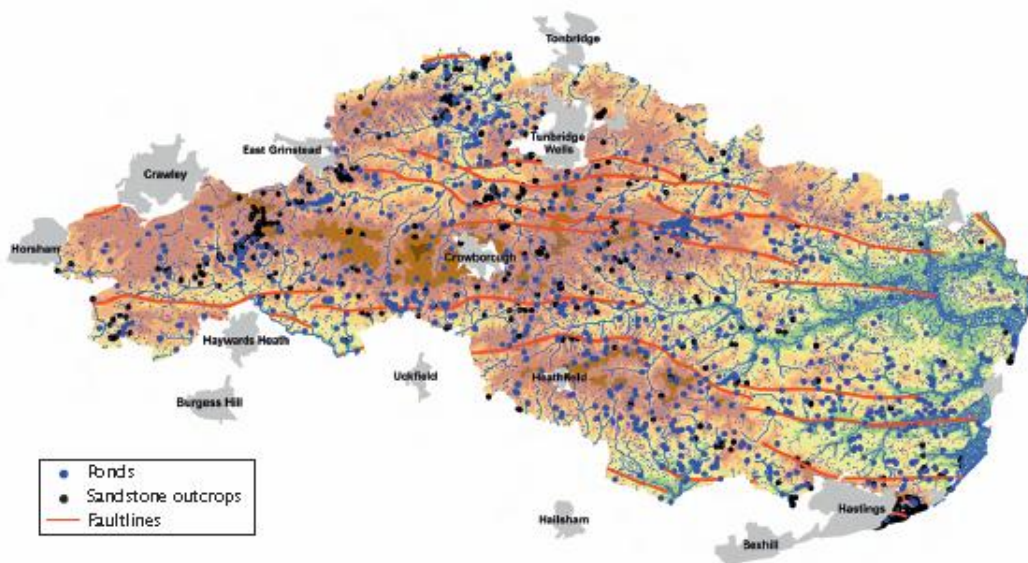


Role of the AONB vision

- The vision for the AONB describes how the High Weald could look in the future.
- It takes a realistic and practical view that faces up to the likely demographic changes that increase demand for housing, lifestyle and technological changes, increase in traffic, climate change, and the decline of traditional farm businesses.
- It envisages environmental, social, and economic developments in the High Weald that support the primary purpose of designation: the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.
- Environmental sustainability is at the heart of this vision. This means maintaining the capacity of natural systems; minimising resource consumption; protecting biodiversity and improving the quality of the natural and historic environment.

Our vision for the High Weald AONB in 20 years is a landscape which:

- Retains its remarkable character and scenic beauty, and is functioning successfully as an attractive place to live and work.
- Is adapting well to changing economic and climatic conditions.
- Is recognised and valued by those living, working and visiting the area as a nationally important protected landscape championed by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.
- Is maintained under 'traditional' land management practices, carried out by people connected to the land through work, lifestyle and leisure.
- Displays the benefits of appropriate management in its highly interconnected and biodiverse ancient woodlands, meadows and heathland; and the improving condition of its routeways, sandrock and more naturally functioning river systems.
- Is embracing a low-carbon future with green technologies underpinning a strong rural economy and thriving communities.
- Accommodates an increasing number of households without compromising the characteristic historic settlement pattern as a result of strong planning policies and a sound understanding of the dynamics of sustainable communities.
- Celebrates its woodland history and nurtures a woodland economy whose timber products are highly valued.
- Sees land managed by a myriad of different people through diverse activities that are supported and nurtured where they deliver public benefits.
- Encourages active participation by people, their communities and businesses, in conserving the area and managing change.
- Provides a warm welcome and high quality experience for residents and visitors seeking inspiration and enjoyment of its landscape and rich, well understood and celebrated cultural heritage.



The High Weald has an unusually high density of ponds at nine ponds per sq km many of which originated as small scale extraction sites for clay, stone and marl.

Character defined

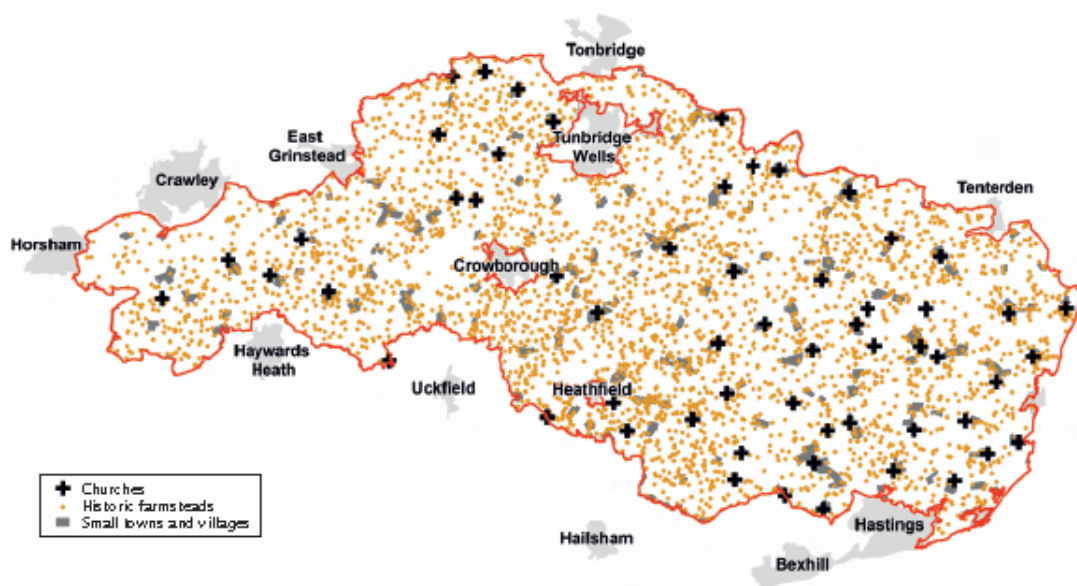
The High Weald AONB is characterized by a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone. The ridges tend east-west, and from them spring numerous gill streams that form the headwaters of rivers. Wide river valleys dominate the eastern part of the AONB. The landform and water systems are subject to, and influence, a local variant of the British sub-oceanic climate.

Vision

A landscape in which sustainable land management takes care of the natural resources of geology, soil, landform, and water systems, whilst delivering a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits. The approach to land management will take account of, indeed will be partly stimulated by, climate change and rising sea levels.

Since the entire AONB is an important water catchment, much of the vision can be realised through the adoption of river restoration policies that seek to maximise opportunities for natural processes to reduce flooding; improve water quality; reduce soil erosion; increase biodiversity and amenity value; and encourage environmentally responsible land management and agriculture.

Settlement



The High Weald has over 3,500 historic farmsteads with a third incorporating at least one building dating from the seventeenth century or earlier.

Character defined

The High Weald AONB is characterized by dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets, and late medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.

Vision

A landscape in which the distinctive and historic pattern of settlement of the High Weald is protected in a way that positively contributes to the natural environment and improves the connections between settlements and the countryside. Appropriately worded land use planning policies within relevant development plans ensure that settlements retain their distinctiveness and individual historic buildings, and conservation areas and buried archaeological remains are conserved and enhanced as appropriate.

This vision can be realised through new resources, and the application of planning policies and guidance that seek to control development on the basis of an understanding of rural sustainability; promote the traditional pattern of High Weald villages; maximise environmental design and construction quality including, where appropriate, by the use of traditional and local construction materials; minimise resource consumption and promote alternative forms of energy; support appropriate businesses (especially those based on and supporting productive use of land, and community objectives); and the enhancement of the historic environment.



Utilising local logwood helps achieve woodland conservation objectives

11.7 Parish Councils, amenity organisations and community groups

These will be important partners driving projects on the ground, particularly those related to increasing public understanding and enjoyment, but also community initiatives to identify and protect locally distinctive features. The Localism Act and changes to the planning system may herald increasing involvement of parishes and community groups in determining the future shape of built development in the High Weald. Securing conservation of the AONB through these changes will be helped by engaging communities in developing understanding of the historic character of High Weald settlement and buildings. Communities developing neighbourhood plans have an opportunity to embed consideration of AONB character in decisions shaping the future of their communities.