

Kent Downs Bulletin

Issue 1

January 2003

News and Updates from the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Interreg Grant success!

The AONB Unit is happy to confirm a successful application for European Union funding for the AONB. We led an application in partnership with the White Cliffs and Kentish Stour Countryside Projects and have just received confirmation of funding which will bring the total project spend to around £750,000 over two years. This new money will be spent on projects which will conserve, enhance and improve access to the wonderful landscapes of the Kent Downs.

Communication

This is the first Bulletin to keep you up to date with activity in the Kent Downs AONB. If you would like further quantities to distribute in the future please let us know. Issue 4 of The Orchid has been received with great enthusiasm and we are delighted with the response to the Management Plan Review questionnaire that is contained within it. The questionnaire has also been added to the Kent Downs website. Work is also beginning to add an interactive map of the area to the site which will include site information. Visit the site at www.kentdowns.org.uk

HLF Project Planning Grant submitted

The AONB Unit recently submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a 'Project Planning Grant'. This grant will supply funding for a new officer who will be dedicated to preparing a 'Landscape Partnership Scheme' application to HLF. Landscape Partnerships are complex projects but could provide significant new funding for the Kent Downs.



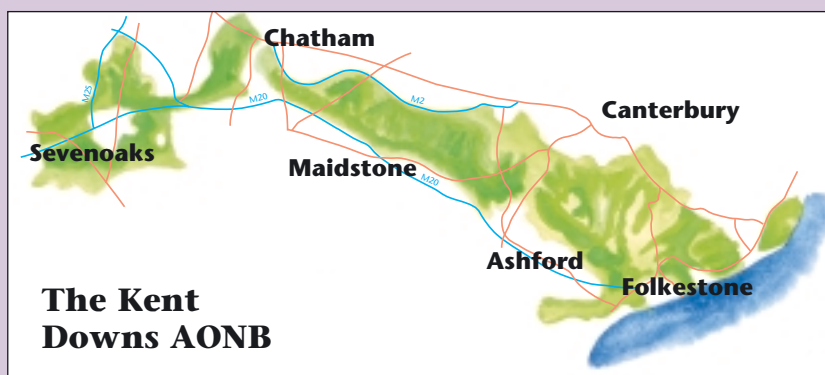
Kent Downs website homepage

Mid Kent Downs Project

The Mid Kent Downs Project is in its second year and a lot of effort is being put into securing a future for the project. The aim is to allow for development of longer-term sustainable projects to conserve and enhance this important central area of the AONB. Work this year has seen a further development of the already considerable level of community contact, with specific projects including Boxley Warren, development of a landscape enhancement grant scheme, partnership working with Swale Borough Council to enhance Perry Wood, and the initial stages of an 'Orchards Heritage Project'.

What is an AONB?

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are designated by the Government to conserve and enhance irreplaceable areas of precious countryside. There are 41 AONBs in England and Wales. The Kent Downs was designated an AONB in 1968 and covers about a quarter of Kent from the White Cliffs of Dover to the London and Surrey border.



www.kentdowns.org.uk

Management Plan Review – participation stage in full swing!

It is a statutory requirement for all local authorities who have AONBs in their area to prepare a Management Plan by April 2004. The new AONB Management Plan will be an important document and will 'formulate local authority policies for the management of their Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and for carrying out their functions in relation to it'.

The Kent Downs AONB Unit has been busy seeking the participation of all local authorities, local communities, individuals and organisations to set the agenda for the new plan. 70,000 Orchid



newspapers, including a questionnaire, have been distributed throughout the AONB. We have been holding consultation meetings with all local authorities and there are workshops planned early in the New Year for farmers, parish councils, local people and public bodies (see opposite). If you would like to get involved please contact the AONB Unit.



Landscape enhancement grants get going

This year we have agreed funding from the Countryside Agency to support landscape enhancement work. These small grants will be managed by the Countryside Management Projects which will deliver landscape gain across the AONB. These grants will help to achieve a significant contribution to the quality of the Kent Downs landscape. A total of £31,000 has been allocated to these schemes throughout the AONB this year. For further information contact the AONB Unit or the Countryside Project that works in your patch of the AONB.

Woodland Officer post secured for the Kent Downs

The Kent Downs AONB will soon have a Woodland Officer working on a part time basis. The Woodland Officer post is entirely funded by the Countryside Agency and The Forestry Commission. Woodland is the second most important land use in the Kent Downs, about 20% of the AONB is wooded. The new Officer will be working to prioritise funding for woodland work, they will be seeking new recreational opportunities in our woodlands where appropriate and will seek to support the woodland industries which are vital for a sustainable future for Kent Downs Woodlands.

Management Plan Review consultation meetings

Parish Council Meetings

7pm-10pm
21st January
Wye Methodist Hall

30th January
Oxford Village Hall

Farmers Meetings

7pm-10pm
6th February
Plough and Harrow, Bridge

12th February
George and Dragon, Ightham

Stakeholders

– two half day sessions
22nd January
Cobtree Museum of Kent Life,
Aylesford



Kent Downs AONB Unit Invicta House, Sessions Square, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XX

Tel: 01622 221522 Fax: 01622 221636 Email: kentdowns@kent.gov.uk

The Kent Downs Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) is an alliance of 21 national and local organisations which co-ordinates policy and action to conserve the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Members – County and Unitary Councils Kent, Medway and London Borough of Bromley. **District and Borough Councils** Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Gravesham, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Shepway, Swale and Tonbridge & Malling. **Countryside Agency, Country Land and Business Association, Environment Agency, English Nature, Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs, National Farmers Union, Kent Rural Community Council, Kent Association of Parish Councils.**

