

So what will all this achieve?

The Chilterns Landscape FDP will have several objectives. Together they can be summarized as the protection and enhancement of the key individual attributes which make this such a unique Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. More specifically, the plan's main objectives can be grouped under the following headings.

The Chilterns Heritage

- To protect our historic parks: Shardloes and Halton House and their historic gardens.
- To ensure that the Scheduled Ancient Monuments at Rook Wood Castle, Grims Ditch and Boddington Hill Fort are protected and conserved by active management plans agreed with English Heritage.
- To protect historic features such as wood banks, boundary trees and ancient sawpits that give our woodlands so much of their character.

Ancient Woodland Conservation

Much of the Chilterns forests are Ancient Semi Natural Woodlands or Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites.

- It is the Forestry Commission's policy to protect existing ANSWs and to restore a proportion of PAWS to their ancient character.
- The removal of most of the conifers from appropriate sites will help locally native broadleaves such as Oak, Ash and Cherry to become established in their place.
- Sustainable management of the woodlands will help to secure their future for the landscape, local economies, for people and wildlife.
- The care and encouragement of veteran trees will add to the character of the woods and provide habitats for a wide range of fauna.
- Trees are the woodlands' prime resource. Irrespective of other proposals, total tree coverage will be maintained at least at its current level.

Landscape Features and Types

A key theme of the CLFDP will be to conserve the ancient features of the landscape and to promote sensitive and sustainable management of its primary habitats.

- The CLFDP will support the expansion of traditional methods of woodland management. This will help to ensure that the landscape achieves, in time, its traditional appearance. In some cases this will mean simple non-intervention, allowing natural regeneration of typical broadleaf species such as Beech, Yew, Oak and Box.
- Access and education will be encouraged wherever this is practicable, promoting recreational opportunities for all and a greater understanding of the nature of ancient woodlands.

Biodiversity

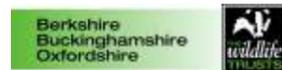
The Chilterns woodlands offer plenty of opportunities to enhance the biodiversity of the region.

- By protecting ancient woodland, veteran trees and other priority habitats.
- By keeping glades and clearings open and maintaining ride-side scrub.
- By creating wildlife corridors in the form of hedgerows and arboreal connections between woods.
- By taking every opportunity to enhance the conservation value of the woods.

Recreation

Now is the most appropriate time to assess the opportunities presented by the CLFDP to increase the recreational value of the woodlands for local residents and valued visitors. Facilities for recreation will be provided with discrimination and where there is greatest demand. The CLFDP will aim to encourage more community involvement in the management of the woods and an increase in the number and diversity of visitors to the region. The ultimate objective is to provide a more stimulating environment, one where everyone can find recreation, relaxation and enjoyment in a truly unique landscape.

The following organisations are acting as partners with the Forestry Commission on the development of the Chilterns Landscape Forest Design Plan and are represented on the Steering Group



Chilterns Woodlands at the Dawn of a New Era



The Chilterns is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the management of its landscape is undertaken with considerable care. So, as the Forestry Commission develops proposals for the medium to long-term management of its Chilterns woodlands, they will be subject to lengthy scrutiny and wide-ranging consultation. These proposals will be published in the form of a Forest Design Plan, the first draft of which should be ready by next Spring. The changes proposed for such an ancient landscape will be sensitive and ultimately beneficial for all, so this really is the dawn of a new era in the Chilterns.

'The Chilterns Landscape Forest Design Plan (CLFDP) is in the first stages of development and will apply to all the woodlands owned or leased to the Forestry Commission in the Chilterns AONB.'

The Chilterns Landscape Forest Design Plan will set out the Commission's management proposals for the next ten years in some detail. They'll also outline the plans for the following twenty, aiming to show how all of these woods will look in thirty years time.

The plans will describe how these woodlands are today: their geography, history, wildlife and forest cover. They'll aim to show the benefits they can offer in terms of landscape and recreation, conservation, biodiversity and local economies. They'll complement specifically the 'Framework for Action 2002-2007' -

the Management Plan for the Chilterns AONB. They'll also adhere closely to 'best practice' guidelines laid down by the England Biodiversity Strategy, English Heritage, English Nature and other similar organisations.

Consultation periods will give everyone an opportunity to examine the Plans and to have their views considered. The Steering Group will meet to consider representations early next year. After five years the CLFDP will be reviewed and such reviews will continue to be held at regular five-year intervals.

Environment benefits, a stronger economy and a better quality of life

Enhanced environment and biodiversity

Woodlands are a primary feature of the Chilterns AONB. The CLFDP will propose replacing many of the conifers in plantations with locally native broadleaf species such as Oak, Hazel coppice and Ash. This will help to encourage greater biodiversity through the creation of a variety of habitats for fauna and flora.

A stronger contribution to the economy

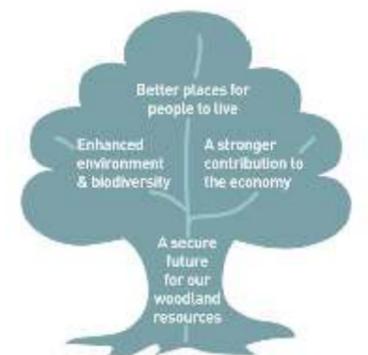
The Chilterns woodlands already contribute strongly to the region's economy. With carefully regulated opportunities for more recreation, for tourism and local employment, that contribution can be stronger still.

Better places for people to live

Forests have a substantial role to play in the quality of life enjoyed by local residents. Green spaces for healthy exercise; woodlands for teaching children about natural history; the sheer pleasure of panoramic views, grassy rides and running water; these and more are prime objectives of the Forest Design Plan.

A secure and sustainable future for our natural and built environment

While seeking the environmental, economic and social goals outlined above, the CLFDP will not lose sight of the fact that all of them spring from foundations provided by the sustainable management of resources.



The illustration above, taken from 'A Forestry and Woodlands Framework for South East England' (HMSO), encapsulates how the environmental, social and economic benefits that woodlands can provide depend, like the branches on a tree, on the roots of sustainable management.

Thirty years on?

The illustration shows how some of the woodlands owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in the Chilterns may look in thirty years from now. It does not, of course, relate to any specific woodland within the AONB, however it does capture the profile and characteristics of a typical Chilterns wood. Particular proposals will, if accepted, be applied with discrimination and care only to the woodlands where the Steering Group deems they would be most appropriate.

The proposals outlined by the captions will, in some cases, mean a considerable amount of forestry operations to bring about the desired results. Such work will, however, be carried out with the minimum of disruption to the woodlands' normal quiet routine - and then we'll let nature take its course.

How the woods might look in 2035

Most of the conifers will have been removed from the areas where mixed conifers and broadleaves currently grow. In their place will be small open areas letting in more sunlight and encouraging the growth of wild flowers.

Clearings will have been created among the Beech trees and round large individual veterans. Some standing and fallen deadwood will be left to provide food and shelter for fungi, insects and other wildlife.

Heathland, where appropriate, will be encouraged to regenerate by the removal of trees and control of bracken.

Tree cover cleared from Scheduled Ancient Monuments protects ancient buried archaeological sites and provides panoramic views.

Open grassy rides skirted on one side by hedgerows provide spaces rich in wildlife for picnics and walking.

Tree clearance in some of the valley bottoms has allowed streams to flow and ponds to form.

A forest road, following the contour, has been widened to enhance its recreational appeal.



Would you like to know more?

If you'd like to find out more about the Chilterns woodlands, and stay abreast of the management proposals that will shape their future as they evolve, why not register your interest now? Find out how by emailing the Forestry Commission at chilternsfdp@forestry.gsi.gov.uk or by writing to the local office at; Chilterns Landscape FDP, Forestry Commission, Aston Clinton, Aylesbury Bucks HP22 5NF

Please don't forget, too, that the CLFDP Steering Group will be meeting to consider all initial representations early in 2006.

Your views and comments should reach the local Forestry Commission office by no later than December 31st 2005.