

# Kent Downs Bulletin

December 2004

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

## Christmas wishes from the AONB Team



The past year has been a good one for the AONB – the publication of the Management Plan has given us a clear and agreed way forward.

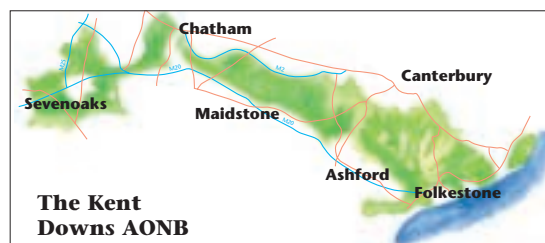
We need resources to take the Action Plan forward and once again have been grateful to Local Authority partners and the Countryside Agency. We're also delighted that we've been successful again at bringing in new and substantial amounts of money from Interreg and elsewhere to help conserve and enhance this wonderful landscape.

Best wishes for Christmas and what we hope will be an exciting and productive new year.

### AONB Projects Update

This year a total of twenty projects are being funded; giving a wide coverage of on the ground action being supported by the Unit. The total value of these projects is in the region of £200 000.

Landscape enhancement grants are being run by each of the countryside management partnerships, funding a range of hedging, woodland and grassland management projects. Additional projects include a mural interpreting Kent's landscape at Bough Beech Nature Reserve and access improvement work at Charing Beech Hangers.



### 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](http://www.kentdowns.org.uk)

# Around the AONB

- The North Downs and White Cliffs were voted two of the '7 Wonders' of the South East in a recent BBC television programme. Frances Clayton was featured talking about the Kent Downs AONB.
- Two more leaflets have been produced through the Kent Downs AONB/Defra partnership – one on exploring three parklands in the AONB and the other on horse riding routes near Canterbury. This makes a series of five leaflets all of which are available from the Kent Downs AONB Unit office.
- The AONB Unit has led a landscape partnership to submit a major bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund – a bid for £1.8m to support landscape management in the Medway Gap.
- Another successful year of farm walks with over 150 participants. Walks took place across the whole AONB and some incorporated local produce. Popular as ever!
- Orchards Project study – we've just completed a study which will seek Leader+ funding to conserve orchards in the Mid Kent area of the AONB.
- Joint working with Defra to support chalk grassland management – an exciting partnership to target the management of these wonderful wild flower grasslands has started work in the AONB.



## Horse Pasture Management

In partnership with the Kent Wildlife Trust and KCC (Kent Lifescapes), the Kent Downs AONB Unit ran a Horse Pasture Management workshop in November. 26 people took part in the workshop and feedback has been excellent. Participants included horse owners, land owners, a vet and the High Weald AONB Unit. The workshop covered grassland management, horse management advice, planning and grants. Ideas to follow up the workshop include guidance notes, 2006 calendar, web based information, further workshops/site visits, demonstration sites and a 'best practice' award.

## Sustainable Rural Tourism in the Mid Kent Downs



The Leader + funded Sustainable Rural Tourism Project commenced in October, with the appointment of Sarah Loftus. Over the course of the next two years, Sarah will be working on a series of initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the Mid Kent Downs AONB, particularly to enjoy and appreciate the protected landscape and communities through activities such as walking, cycling and horse-riding. Local businesses will benefit from an emphasis on business support and training, including improving marketing and ICT skills.

## £400,000 from Europe

The Kent Downs Living Landscape Project has been awarded a grant of £400,000 from the European Regional Development Fund (Interreg). The grant brings in a further £590,000 to address priority issues from the Management and Action Plan including landscape conservation schemes, combating fly-tipping and built heritage protection. Project partners are the Kent Downs AONB Unit, the White Cliffs and Kentish Stour Countryside Projects, and the Regional Nature Park of the Caps and Marais d'Opale in northern France.



## Kent Downs AONB Unit

West Barn, Penstock Hall Farm, Canterbury Road, East Brabourne, Ashford, Kent TN25 5LL  
Tel: 01303 815170 Fax: 01303 815179 Email: mail@kentdowns.org.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, Food and Rural Affairs, National Farmers Union, Kent Rural Community Council, Kent Association of Parish Councils.



This project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

