

Introduction

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is exactly what it says it is: a precious landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them.

AONBs represent only 18% of the land area of England and Wales. In this small proportion of the country it is the landscape that must come first. The Kent Downs is home to some of the most enchanting landscapes of southern Britain. Put simply, the purpose of this Management Plan is to set out the strategy to conserve and enhance the landscape and to bring forward the wider benefits to society that this work brings including supporting the sustainable development goals and enhancing health, well-being and creating the simple joy that beautiful landscapes can provide.

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty partnership has worked closely with many individuals and organisation to prepare and produce this revision of the Management Plan for this special place. We are grateful to the many people who have been involved in developing this Plan.

The Management Plan provides the strategic framework energy, direction and commitment for the future of the landscape and through the previous versions of the Plan, much has been achieved. Indeed the Kent Downs AONB partnership is recognised nationally as one of the most effective at securing resources to support the management of this fine landscape.

At the same time the pressures on this particular landscape have grown once again, Kent is facing unprecedented levels of development and change including the challenges of the climate and biodiversity crises.

Our response to this greater pressure and to the difficult financial environment is not to retreat to seeking merely to protect the Kent Downs; instead, this Plan is more ambitious for the landscape and seeks wider, stronger and more collaborative and inclusive partnerships to meet its positive objectives. The ultimate goal of the Management Plan remains to ensure that the natural beauty of the landscape and vitality of the communities in and around the Kent Downs AONB are recognised, valued and strengthened well into the future. We seek to do this in a way which enhances health and well-being, is inclusive and engaging and supports much needed sustainable growth and development especially in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We encourage you to take part, to work with us to conserve and enhance this most beautiful and most threatened landscape.

Chris Reynolds
Chairman

Nick Johannsen
Director