

Appendix 3

MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A3.1 This Appendix describes the audiences to whom the Assessment will be addressed and the role they will play. It sets out details of the actions to conserve landscape character which the District Council and its principal partners are taking or intend to take, and lists the activities of other agencies closely involved with wildlife and landscape conservation in Mid Sussex.

FOUR MAIN AUDIENCES

A3.2 The Assessment is addressed to four main audiences:

- Landowners, their agents and land managers.
- Planners, developers and statutory agencies.
- Communities.
- The public and educationalists.

Land use planning

A3.3 The statutory land use planning (development plan) system has a potentially major impact on landscape character and biodiversity as a consequence of decisions about the scale and location of development including transport and communications; about the quality of design of new development; and about the integration of development into the landscape. Such plans are therefore able to influence the character of town and country for the better. The Assessment can therefore be used as a positive tool to inform strategic land use planning and development control in the District. Principal mechanisms include:

- Adopting strong landscape character-based Development Plan policies.
- Assessing the sensitivity of landscapes and townscapes and their ability to accommodate new development.
- Guiding the location and design of new development and the adaptation for new uses of existing buildings in the countryside.
- Providing a landscape framework for development briefs related to specific development proposals.
- Providing the basis for Supplementary Planning Documents relating to the protection and enhancement of landscape and townscape character.

Land management

A3.4 Land management decisions by landowners, farmers, statutory bodies and the local authorities themselves have a fundamental impact on the landscape. It is therefore vitally important to influence the multiplicity of landowners involved in managing land in ways that benefit landscape character.

A3.5 The *Land Management Guidelines* included in the Assessment will be used to:

- Inform decision-making on land management issues and the targeting of resources.
- Assist in targeting significant increases in the areas of semi-natural habitats.

- Contribute to setting priorities for Environmental Stewardship Agri-Environmental Schemes.
- Assist in setting strategic environmental improvement priorities.
- Form the basis for the development of urban fringe strategies.
- Assist with strategies for woodland management and creation including priorities for woodland grant schemes.
- Assist with the development of indicators to monitor landscape change.
- Encourage the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity, supporting the objectives and actions of biodiversity action plans.
- Provide a basis for influencing land management on major estates and land holdings.

Community-led planning

A3.6 Communities in the District have close ties to their localities, and can provide a genuine local perspective on what the character means to them. Under the *Local Government Act 2000* the Government conferred on local authorities a duty to prepare *community strategies*. As both community strategies and Local Development Frameworks are concerned with the achievement of sustainable development objectives, the Government made Frameworks the land-use and development delivery mechanism for the community strategy itself. In the planning sphere, *PPS12* makes it clear that local authorities should involve the community at an early stage in the process of preparing Local Development documents.

A3.7 The Government Rural White Paper *Our Countryside: the Future* (2000) proposed that all rural communities should develop town, village and parish plans to identify key facilities and services, to set out the problems that needed to be tackled, and to demonstrate how local distinctiveness should be preserved. To help deliver the White Paper proposal, the Countryside Agency launched its *Vital Villages* programme in 2001, one of its major objectives to promote parish planning. In 2003 the Countryside Agency published *Parish Plans and the Planning System* setting out guidance and advice for local planning authorities and parish and town councils.

A3.8 The District Local Development Framework has brought increased opportunities for local land use and parish planning, through the ability to include additional advice in Supplementary Planning Documents and Area Action Plans. Local studies can influence broader technical and policy work, just as such work can provide a context for local action.

A3.9 Particularly strong in Mid Sussex is the parish mapping initiative, started in earnest at the Millennium. Parish maps represent a form of healthy community assertiveness and celebration. It is a vital part of the character agenda to help communities define and value local character whilst appreciating the constancy of change. Finally, information on character will provide a vital input to work on Other projects, for instance, the Small Market Towns Initiative, as part of the health checklists for individual towns, and to other work aimed at the conservation and enhancement of historic urban areas.

A3.10 The Assessment will therefore contribute to community planning by providing:

- A broad context for preparation by local communities of Village Design Statements and Parish Plans.
- A framework for development of local environmental enhancement initiatives.

- Information to help with initiatives concerned with small market towns and other urban areas.

Awareness-raising and education

A3.11 When it comes to public priorities, character appears to be well down the list compared with economic, health and social needs. Nevertheless the protection and enhancement of character is a key consideration for many when development is being proposed, not to mention the immense contribution the countryside and the historic environment make to recreation and to spiritual well-being. A vital part of character work will be to raise awareness of the local distinctiveness of healthy landscapes as a prime environmental asset in the District and to help communities to understand how these can be protected and enhanced.

A3.12 The Assessment will contribute to awareness-raising and education by:

- Providing a basis for raising public awareness, understanding and appreciation of landscape conservation and enhancement, for instance, via websites, other publicity, talks and walks.
- Providing a teaching aid for schools and colleges.
- Assisting community-led appraisal and parish planning work and harnessing commitment from – and action by – local communities.

PARTNERSHIPS AND ACTION

A3.13 As noted above, many organisations, agencies and individuals from national to local levels are involved in conserving and shaping the landscape of Mid Sussex. There are great advantages in working in partnership, agreeing policies and priorities, and sharing resources. Everyone living and working in Mid Sussex is a potential contributor. The main partnerships active in landscape and wildlife conservation in Mid Sussex are briefly outlined below.

National and regional agencies

A3.14 As noted in **Appendix 1**, principal national and regional agencies concerned with landscape restoration and habitat management include DEFRA, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, English Nature and English Heritage. They operate mainly by commissioning targeted research, giving grants and advice and, in the case of DEFRA, disbursing grants to landowners signed up to Agri-Environmental (Environmental Stewardship) Schemes.

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform and Environmental Stewardship

A3.15 The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has potentially considerable landscape and wildlife benefits. Introduced in 2005, CAP reform breaks the link between support payments and production volumes. A Single Farm Payment (SFP) will be made to farmers in return for cross-compliance with environmentally beneficial land management practices. The SFP will initially comprise a 90% historic element relating to production-based payments in the 3 reference years 2000-02, and a 10% regional average element. Over the eight years from January 2005, this ratio will reverse, ending with 100% regional average payment.

A3.16 The break from production is expected to result in a more market-led industry. A market-led industry may influence producers to change sectors rapidly, with a consequent need to change farm infrastructures accordingly. The future influence

on markets of multiple retailers and EU accession states remains an unknown quantity at this stage. At the other extreme, farmers in unprofitable livestock markets on more marginal land could move towards greater extensification of stocking densities (fewer animals per acre). They would still be eligible for SFP in return for environmental cross-compliance.

A3.17 The introduction of a SFP, based ultimately on regional averaging, will undoubtedly be beneficial environmentally, as the available funds will be spread more evenly over a greater number of land managers, all of whom will be tied in to environmental cross-compliance measures. The adequate funding of the Entry Level and Higher Tier Agri-Environmental Schemes (Environmental Stewardship) will be equally important.

A3.18 The new system promises clear environmental benefits within the context of the market and commercial viability. Since the Government sees partnership working in all of this, it will be part of the job in drafting regional and local plans to assess these benefits and to frame appropriate policies. This will include how regional and local government can use tools such as characterisation, biodiversity action planning and recreational strategies to secure the right benefits in the right places.

Delivery plan for the DEFRA Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy (2003)

advice and training: giving farmers the help they need and encouraging new entrants.

countryside access: promoting and seizing the benefits of increased public access.

environmental stewardship: promoting sustainability through whole-farm planning, soil and water management.

farming mainstream: improving returns through collaboration and adding value.

non-food diversification: overcoming barriers to non-food diversification market-based action on industrial and biomass crops, wood fuel and tourism.

food chain re-connection: securing better integration and understanding between farmers and customers.

health: driving forward action on food and nutrition for healthy eating and living.

local food: building the market and empowering South East suppliers to exploit it.

London: developing food strategy to benefit the people and economy of London.

public procurement: identifying the opportunities and linking in South East suppliers.

Environmental Stewardship

A3.19 Administered through DEFRA, the Environmental Stewardship scheme provides a positive opportunity for landowners and managers to conserve and enhance the landscape. The new scheme replaces Countryside Stewardship and the Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme and represents a significant step towards comprehensive landscape and wildlife conservation, addressing five main scheme objectives:

- Maintenance and enhancement of landscape character and quality.
- Protection of the historic environment.
- Wildlife conservation.
- Natural resource protection.
- Promotion of public access and understanding.

Environmental Stewardship has two tiers: a basic level aimed at maintenance, comprising *Entry Level Stewardship* and *Organic Entry Level Stewardship*, and the more advanced *Higher Level Stewardship (HLC)* which is aimed at conservation and enhancement. HLS is appropriate for those who are able to deliver significant environmental benefits in high priority situations and areas.

A3.20 Landowners and others wishing to apply for HLS will need to produce a Farm Environment Plan (FEP) or survey of the farm. The FEP needs to cover 'farm-scale environmental features and potential for creation of new features' and includes sections on landscape, the historic environment, field boundaries, biodiversity, access, natural resource protection, flood and coastal management, genetic conservation, and woodland and orchards. The section on landscape is compulsory and to complete it, the applicants need to assess the landscape character of the farm and the surrounding countryside, make decisions about the condition of key characteristics, and develop a landscape management strategy for the farm.

A3.21 The Countryside Agency believes that landscape aspects now form a greater part of Environmental Stewardship than any previous scheme. However, landscape character assessment may be new to those advising landowners about submissions under the scheme. The Agency is therefore sponsoring training programmes nationally to develop advisors' skills and knowledge about landscape and its restoration.

A3.22 Should such schemes flourish in the District, the benefits to the landscape and wildlife are potentially enormous. For the purposes of monitoring landscape change and restoration, it will be vitally important to have access to information on the number and type of schemes on land in the District, supplied through the Sussex Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

The local authorities

Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme

A3.23 The local authorities and AONB agencies in West Sussex are carrying out a five-year programme of landscape characterisation studies and guidance work known as *The Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme*. Much of this work is of direct benefit to Mid Sussex. The Programme aims to:

Delineate the diverse character of West Sussex and seek to protect, enhance and promote it through the preparation in partnership of guidance, advice and information tailored to specific audiences, communities and the public, working also with other agencies that are capable of benefitting character.

The main work of the Programme focuses on characterisation studies, planning policy and guidance, and land management guidelines.

A3.24 Committed *characterisation studies* include the preparation of:

- West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy.
- Landscape Character Assessments of Horsham and Mid Sussex Districts and Chichester Harbour AONB (arrangements to complete Assessments of the remaining Boroughs and Districts have yet to be made).
- Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project.
- Extensive (EUS) and Intensive (IUS) Urban Surveys of historic towns in Sussex.
- Local distinctiveness studies covering buildings, farmsteads and other built features in the landscape.

- An Integrated Landscape Character Assessment of the South Downs is also being carried out by the South Downs and East Hampshire AONB Joint Committees.

Various partners are supporting the characterisation work financially. These include English Heritage, English Nature and the Countryside Agency, the Borough and District Councils, the AONB agencies, and local organisations such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

A3.25 The Programme will generate policy advice and guidance on landscape and other aspects of character to the partners themselves. West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex and Horsham District Councils have teamed up with the Countryside Agency (2005) to produce model policy guidance on landscape character for Local Development Frameworks and advice on the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents. This work will benefit the local planning policy process as well as forming the basis for development control and enforcement checklists regarding character.

A3.26 Derived from the Landscape Character Assessment work, County-wide *Land Management Guidelines* concerning landscape conservation and restoration are being prepared for use by landowners and farmers. The Guidelines will also be useful to communities undertaking parish plans and preparing Village Design Statements. The first *Land Management Guidelines* sheets to be produced cover Mid Sussex and are included in the Assessment.

A3.27 Finally, an important part of the Programme will concern awareness-raising by publicising and making information available and highlighting the importance of character and local distinctiveness with a wide range of audiences.

West Sussex County Council

A3.28 West Sussex County Council has long been involved in a wide range of environmental and land management initiatives, many of which have benefitted Mid Sussex. Actions include landscape renewal; biodiversity action planning including habitat management and creation; environmental advice; advice on tree planting and listed building conservation; and research contributing to the conservation and enhancement of the character of the County. Other actions contributing to the enjoyment of the countryside include the management of the public rights of way system and land management carried out by the ranger service (in Mid Sussex, along the Worth Way).

Mid Sussex District Council

Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy: Our Green Heritage

A3.29 As noted in *paras A1.26-28* in **Appendix 1**, the District Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy contains a series of action plans. The *general District-wide Action Plan* focuses on actions designed to:

- Support national, international and EU Directives and legislation regarding environmental protection and enhancement.
- Safeguard and improve all existing habitats.
- Develop targets for each national Character Area concerning habitat restoration and management.
- Safeguard and preserve all existing species.
- Prepare suitable management plans for all Council-owned land.
- Increase awareness of the wildlife heritage of the District.
- Encourage public awareness about – and understanding of – wildlife and establish management groups for all Local Nature Reserves.
- Increase partnership working and co-operation between conservation groups.

A3.30 The Action Plan for *Towns and Villages* focuses on actions designed to:

- Secure the least-damaging impact on wildlife and habitats as a consequence of new development.
- Safeguard and improve existing green corridors.
- Safeguard and improve all existing open space (including sports grounds, pocket parks etc) and the wildlife areas within them.
- Safeguard and improve existing Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) and seek to increase the number of sites.

A3.31 The Action Plan for *Trees and Woodlands* focuses on actions designed to:

- Safeguard and improve all existing woodlands and hedgerows and increase the extent of the resource.
- Seek a broad-leaved element in existing coniferous plantations and the increase in commercial woodland planting where this has landscape and wildlife benefits.
- Safeguard and improve coppice woodland.
- Protect sandrock outcrops and gill woodlands.
- Safeguard trees in existing parklands.

A3.32 The Action Plan for *Historic Parks and Gardens* concerns actions designed to:

- Safeguard and enhance historic parklands, gardens and estates, protecting existing landscape features and biodiversity features within them.
- Reduce the impact of visitor pressure on popular gardens.
- Extend protection and enhancement to unregistered parks and gardens.

A3.33 The action plans for the national Character Areas focus largely on the safeguarding and enhancement as appropriate of key habitats including woodlands; grasslands including chalk grassland; pasture, farmland and meadows; heathlands including chalk heath; and wetlands. Other actions focus on the conservation of the open chalk landscape; historic parks and gardens; historic sites; and the character of urban areas. The Strategy makes clear that in respect of habitat conservation, the implementation of the action plans will stem largely from the Biodiversity Action Plans being prepared and carried out by the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership. A wide variety of other partners will also be instrumental in implementing the plans, and are listed in the Strategy.

Landscape and Biodiversity: Supplementary Planning Guidance

A3.34 In November 2003 the District Council published *Landscape and Biodiversity: Supplementary Planning Guidance*, a document considered fundamental to the implementation of the Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy. Prepared in accordance with national and regional planning guidance and the District Local Plan, the guidance contains a wealth of practical material designed to ensure that:

- Statutory requirements relating to landscape and nature conservation are being fulfilled, and
- Principles of sustainable development are adhered to which conserve and enhance both the cultural heritage and natural resources of the District including wildlife and landscape.

A3.35 The guidance covers a wide range of topics including:

- General principles relating to the avoidance and mitigation of damage to landscape and biodiversity; the recognition of the special qualities of the national

Character Areas in the District; the process of biodiversity action planning; and sites designated for their landscape and biodiversity value.

- National and regional policy background including statutory legislation, international obligations and information on protected species, and consultation procedures required for designated sites.
- A five-point approach to planning decisions based on information (checklists and survey reports including the content of ecological surveys); avoidance of damage; mitigation; compensation; and the conferring of benefit through landscape and habitat creation.
- Practical steps to enhance landscape and biodiversity based on case studies (including planting advice, drainage and water management and provision of features in development favouring wildlife).
- Information on the use of planning conditions and obligations.

The document contains a Statement of Consultation and a digest of the comments received from consultees.

Trees and Woodland Management Guidelines

A3.36 Produced in 2002, the Guidelines provide a framework for the management and maintenance of woodland and trees for which the District Council is responsible (over 12,000 amenity trees and 70 hectares of woodland, copses and shelterbelts). As well as providing guidance on the management of the tree stock, the Guidelines provide outline management prescriptions for all the main wooded sites; outline a management philosophy; identify the financial and human resources required to manage the tree and woodland stock; and provide a basis for monitoring and review.

Mid Sussex Ancient Woodland Survey

A3.37 Ancient woodland over two hectares in size are recorded in Ancient Woodland Inventories compiled in the 1980s and 1990s by the Nature Conservancy Council. These inventories have long provided an important tool for policy makers and planners and have assisted land managers to identify key areas for the restoration and planting of native woodland. However, woodlands below 2 hectares in size were not covered by the original inventories (a serious shortcoming) and much new information on the local ancient woodland resource has since come to light.

A3.38 Mid Sussex District Council, English Nature and the High Weald AONB Unit will carry out the Survey (autumn 2005 – summer 2006) as a joint project. It aims to re-examine the available information for ancient woodland in Mid Sussex District and, using methodologies piloted in Wealden District in East Sussex, compile a reviewed Ancient Woodland Inventory for the District including woodland under 2 hectares. The resultant Geographic Information System (GIS) and database will be used to inform planning policy seeking to protect ancient woodland and help to identify appropriate woodland management programmes and opportunities to re-connect ancient woodland networks.

AONB Management Plans

A3.39 Mid Sussex is partly covered by two AONB Management Plans, for the High Weald and South Downs, prepared by the AONB management agencies. The implementation of the objectives and actions contained in these plans will have potentially great benefits for landscape and biodiversity, helping to maintain and enhance the character of the varied landscapes within those parts of the District covered by them.

High Weald AONB Management Plan

A3.40 The first management plan for the area to be prepared under the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*, the *High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004* was adopted by the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee in March 2004. A review of the 1995 Plan, it is based on:

- A 20-year Vision for the High Weald to 2024 with environmental sustainability at its heart.
- An approach derived from an understanding of the fundamental and defining *character* of the whole area – those components of *natural beauty* that have made the High Weald a recognisably distinct and homogeneous area for at least the last 700 years.
- As well as features of national importance, an appreciation of the myriad local details and features that form people's everyday experience of the High Weald.
- A set of management objectives based on components of character.

A3.41 The Plan contains a vision, issues and objectives for key character-based subject areas; headline indicators derived from continuing research; indicators of success of the management approach; and targets set to 2009 (the Plan review date). The subject areas and the objectives within them include:

Geology, landform, water systems and climate

- Restoring the natural functions of river catchments and protecting sandstone outcrops.

Settlement

- Re-connecting settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside; protecting the historic pattern of settlement; and enhancing architectural quality.

Routeways

- Maintaining the historic pattern and features of routeways and enhancing their ecological function.

Woodland

- Maintaining the existing extent of woodland, particularly ancient woodland; enhancing the ecological function of woodland at a landscape scale; protecting woodland archaeology; and increasing the output of sustainably-produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets.

Field and heath

- Securing agriculturally-productive use for fields, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management; maintaining the pattern of small, irregularly-shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands; enhancing the environmental function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats; and protecting the historic features of field and heath.

Public understanding and enjoyment

- Increasing opportunities for education and celebration of the character of the AONB; increasing the contribution of individuals to conservation and enhancement including increasing community involvement; and integrated management of resources for informal open-air recreation to facilitate *green use* by residents and visitors.

A3.42 The Plan concludes with a section in Implementation referring to the action plan (including appropriate policy guidance) which will be used to meet the objectives, and to the wide range of partners which will be involved.

High Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme

A3.43 The High Weald AONB Unit has recently secured a planning grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a bid to deliver public access, conservation and economic benefits across a large part of the High Weald AONB. The forthcoming bid focuses on the surviving fragments of the Weald's medieval forests (including the Worth forests in Mid Sussex) that once covered large tracts of the sandstone Forest Ridge between Horsham and Tunbridge Wells. Landscape restoration will be an important part of the project, which also offers exciting opportunities to deliver public access, economic and conservation improvements.

The South Downs Interim Management Plan

A3.44 The Interim Plan was produced in April 2004. It notes that the South Downs has a profound part to play in the overall picture of the English landscape. The Plan proposes a fifty-year Vision in which the South Downs remains a beautiful, unspoilt landscape, enjoyed by everybody. Air, land and water are cleaner, wildlife and communities flourish, and history and culture are respected. Natural resources are used more wisely and everybody enjoys a better quality of life. The strategic objectives of the Plan are to:

- Protect, conserve and enhance natural beauty and amenity, including the physical, ecological and cultural landscape and natural resources (*Land*).
- Promote quiet informal enjoyment by the general public but only so far as is consistent with the first objective (*People*).
- Generally promote sustainable forms of economic and social development, especially working with local communities, farmers and landowners to encourage land management which supports the first two objectives (*Work*).

The Plan contains a series of more detailed objectives, policies and actions (2004-07) concerned with the conservation, protection and enhancement of:

- Landscape character and diversity.
- The historic environment (connecting with the past).
- Unspoilt and tranquil landscapes.
- Biodiversity.
- Natural resources.

The Plan also seeks to provide for the needs of local people (Living and working in the South Downs); promote suitable recreational activity whilst ensuring recreational pressures are managed (Enjoying the landscape); increase awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the South Downs (New values for a new generation); manage the land as part of a thriving rural economy; and work towards an economy which helps to sustain the environmental character of the area (Sustaining the economy).

A3.45 A new National Park is proposed for the South Downs and the proposal is currently undergoing scrutiny by way of a Public Inquiry. Should the National Park come to pass, this will have consequences for policy and for the organisation and funding of actions concerned with landscape conservation and enhancement throughout the South Downs.

Parish and town councils and local communities

A3.46 Working with parish and town councils and a wide range of community groups has long been a tradition in Mid Sussex, and will become increasingly important as community planning initiatives develop which may benefit landscape conservation and enhancement and the appreciation of local landscapes as seen

through the eyes of local people (see *paras A3.6-10* above in the section on *Community-led planning*).

Biodiversity action planning

Vision for the Wildlife of Sussex

A3.47 The Sussex Wildlife Trust was founded in 1961, its aim to save the best habitats and to promote the fundamental importance of nature conservation in the two counties. Recognising that environmental issues are now of global concern, in 1996 the Trust published a 50-year *Vision for the Wildlife of Sussex*. Rather than merely identifying specific sites that should be protected, the document proposes a vision for the sort of environment the Trust would like to see in Sussex in 2045. The targets in the document represent a view of what might reasonably be achieved to improve the quality of the environment and the quality of life for the next generation. They also represent a best guess at the nature and extent of each habitat which might be needed to conserve its biodiversity. The targets are presented both as a broadly-drawn vision for a habitat in 2045, and as more specific ten-year targets.

A Biodiversity Action Plan for Sussex

A3.48 The purpose of a *Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)* is to focus resources to conserve and enhance biodiversity by means of local partnerships, taking account of both national priorities. The functions of BAPs are to:

- Ensure that national targets for species and habitats, as specified in the UK Action Plan, are translated into effective action locally.
- Identify targets for species and habitats appropriate to the local area, reflecting the values of people locally.
- Develop effective local partnerships to ensure that programmes for biodiversity conservation are maintained in the long-term.
- Raise awareness of the need for biodiversity conservation in a local context.
- Ensure opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of the whole biodiversity resource are fully considered and, if possible, enacted.
- Provide a basis for monitoring progress in biodiversity conservation, at both local and national levels.

A3.49 The *Sussex Biodiversity Partnership* was set up in 1996 at the time the Sussex Wildlife Trust's visionary document was published. This ensured the formalising of existing working relationships and the setting of common agendas between organisations and individuals. Current partnership members include English Nature, the Environment Agency, West and East Sussex County Councils, the Sussex Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Sussex Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Mid Sussex District Council is also a member of the Partnership. Affiliated members include the Country Landowners and Business Association, the national Farmers Union and Sussex Enterprise. The partnership maintains the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (BRC) as an information gathering and monitoring system essential to the drafting and execution of local biodiversity action planning.

A3.50 The Partnership decided on a habitat-based approach that would also allow the phased production of plans. Species action plans are being produced where appropriate or necessary for species not fully covered under habitats. Each *Habitat Action Plan (HAP)* and *Species Action Plan (SAP)* will stand as separate documents within the context of the full Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan. The Biodiversity Action

Plan also contains details of many other programmes concerned with the management of biodiversity resources throughout Sussex.

Habitat Action Plans completed which are relevant to Mid Sussex District include :

Lowland Heathland (July 1998).
Reedbeds (July 1998).
Floodplain Grassland (June 1999).
Chalk Grassland (April 2000).
Unimproved Neutral and Dry Acid Grassland (July 2000).
Standing Fresh Waters (September 2001).
Urban [People and Wildlife] (October 2001).
Arable Land (including Field Margins) (April 2002).
Mineral Sites (March 2004).
Hedgerows (June 2004).
Woodland (September 2000).

Species Action Plans completed which are relevant to Mid Sussex District include :

Otter (June 2005).
Water Vole (June 2005).
Black Poplar (June 2005).

Other groups and organisations

A3.51 Many stakeholders are involved in environment activity which benefits landscape and biodiversity and the District Council works in partnership with many of them. Apart from the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the biodiversity partners mentioned above, other non-statutory partners may include the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Archaeological Trusts and town and village societies, the National Trust, the Woodland Trust, amenity and residents' associations and many more. Many of these organisations and groups are assisting in the process of landscape restoration and appreciation and nature conservation by providing information, taking action, and providing guidance on practical conservation management techniques.

A3.52 Organisations with a particular connection with landscape include the **National Trust**, the registered charity which works to protect and conserve the countryside, coastline and buildings in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Important Trust properties in Mid Sussex include *Standen* and *Wakehurst Place*, both in the High Weald.

A3.53 The **Woodland Trust** is the largest charity in the country concerned solely with the conservation of the woodland heritage of Britain. The trust acquires woods through purchase and as gifts including land upon which to create new woods. Its objectives are to provide free public access, to safeguard the place of woods in the local landscape and to manage them in the interests of wildlife and nature conservation.

Farmers and landowners

A3.54 Given the potential landscape and wildlife benefits of Environmental Stewardship, working with farmers, landowners and agents, particularly on the large country estates still common in West Sussex, continues to be of the greatest importance. The *Land Management Guidelines* sheets included in the Assessment will provide guidance for farmers and landowners. However, many farm holdings and land parcels are becoming more fragmented as new owners acquire smaller holdings. It will therefore be important to reach as many of these newer owners as

possible, to provide advice and guidance on good land management practices which benefit nature conservation and landscape character.