



High Weald AONB Management Plan Review General Comments

*These comments, received from Kent County Council Teams, relate to parts of the Plan **outside** of the Character Components Section.*

- There's a need to make it clearer to key staff within local authorities/NGOs etc. how the targets relate to their own roles and work. There's a lack of clarity for some about how exactly this plan relates to their own work.
- Targets lack ownership within organisations so how can we make them more clearly relevant to people. How can people pick out key targets and run with them in their day to day work.
- Capacity study for heritage stone extraction.
- Ancient woodland buffers – there's a need for some evidence. A Proper study on buffers to ancient woodland from developments. Natural England provides a minimum distance through their planning guidance. But given the High Weald's large amount of ancient woodland and the small size of woodlands and fragmentation might influence the results of such a study, is a national standard sufficient.

FRNE (WM)

Overall this is a good plan which needs a bit of fine tuning.

Where possible the plan needs to be SMART to be able to measure its progress. I understand that the Objectives are very qualitative but there is no reason why the targets have more quantitative measures.

There needs to be a reference to the Sussex & Kent LNPs and say how this plan will work alongside (and with) both organisations. Also there needs to be a mention/recognition of the LEP importance in terms of being the people who will hold the EU Growth Funds purse.

Heritage Conservation (LD)

1 One of England's Finest Landscapes

We were pleased to see the discussion of historic character but would suggest a couple of minor additions/amendments. It would be helpful to mention on page 4 that the surviving hedges and shaws are often remnants of ancient woodland rather than planted field boundaries. On page 6 the prehistoric use of the area is treated in a very cursory way. The sentence starting 'Woodland clearance was ...' is confusing as it seems to link Bronze Age barrows with Neolithic clearance. There is also no mention of Mesolithic activity or of Iron Age hillforts which are an important feature of the area. There is increasing evidence for Bronze Age and Iron Age use of the High Weald for resources e.g. wood, charcoal, iron ore and trade/exchange routes, and also indications

that Iron Age routeways connect into the Weald. Roman use of the High Weald is quite well known but not mentioned in this section. The apparent medieval character of the area may be of much earlier origin or may be superimposed on earlier contrasting patterns of landscape organisations. Further research would be helpful to understand the origins of the landscape character better. Mention could also be made of the numerous architect designed rural houses and the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement.

2 Statement of Significance

We would query whether the reference in paragraph one to the 'largely immutable character' is what was intended – perhaps it is more that the character has changed little rather than is unchangeable in the future?

3 The Vision for 2024

We were pleased to see the goal of accommodating population growth 'without compromising the historic settlement pattern' included in the Vision. The settlement pattern of the High Weald contributes greatly to its distinctive character and it is essential that the pattern and associated network of tracks, paths, lanes and historic features, is conserved for future generations. The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (2001) and additional projects undertaken by the AONB can play an important role in this. The existing HLC has identified the broad character of the historic landscape of the High Weald. To be fully effective in policy, local planning and development control, the broad scale Historic Landscape Characterisation should be backed up by more detailed case-by-case analysis, to add greater detail through secondary sources.

Development can often be accommodated within existing settlement patterns without damaging the character of the area. KCC has been working with English Heritage and the Kent Downs and High Weald AONBs to prepare guidance on how historic farmsteads in Kent can be assessed for their suitability for new development or change of use. It is intended that the guidance is adopted by land management authorities as part of their policies and development control functions. Where such development is permitted it is important that it is in keeping with the existing character in terms of size, layout, massing and materials and that any archaeological remains associated with former phases of use are treated appropriately in the development control process. We would suggest that reference is made to the Kent-wide guidance and we welcome the intention to produce further guidance tailored to the High Weald.

The adoption of river restoration policies needs to take into consideration the historic uses of the rivers, particularly for cloth and iron-working. Historic structures and features related to water management and use should be conserved and enhanced.

We welcome the final aim regarding a well understood cultural heritage but would suggest that the action part of the plan may need to be strengthened to achieve this by 2024. We would be happy to work with the unit as appropriate on this aim. It would be helpful to know how the historic environment is represented on the JAC.

4 Approach and principles

Box on Time Depth analysis – it is inaccurate to describe the whole High Weald as ‘unpopulated’ 10,000 years ago.

The list of locally distinctive features will always be partial but should probably include bathing sites and rock features.

In 2.8 – the term ‘pockmarked’ may give a misleading and negative impression – it’s more that the landscape has been moulded or created; periods may be a better term than eras with its geological connotations.

5 Profile of the High Weald

Historic Environment (page 26)

It should be noted that in addition to the Designated assets listed there are many thousands of non-Designated historic buildings, archaeological sites and other heritage assets. Information about these can be found in the relevant Historic Environment Records for the High Weald.

12 Monitoring and evaluation of the AONB

Objective S2 development schemes respecting and reinforcing the historic settlement pattern

For this objective to be met it must be incorporated in the various Local Plans in the AONB area. We are aware that there was originally some resistance among LPAs to accepting the guidance relating to dispersed settlement patterns that arose from the AONB Farmsteads project and wonder if this has been resolved? It would be interesting to see an assessment of the degree to which Local Plans have adopted the recommendations of the AONB Management Plan more generally.

Objective S3 improvement in condition and setting of historic environment

We note from the detailed monitoring assessment information presented on the AONB website that in part the monitoring score for this objective derives from “recognition and inclusion of historic rural buildings in the HER and heritage designations.” In Kent at least it is true to say that there is only very partial representation of historic buildings from the AONB area. All Listed Buildings are included and a number of others but the representation could not be described as in any way comprehensive. Many barns and other agricultural buildings remain to be identified and added. We would be happy to discuss this further with the HWAONB team.

As noted above there is scope for joint working here in relation to the Kent Environment Strategy themes and English Heritage’s Heritage at Risk work.

13 Charter for residents and visitors

Please add “Get involved – support local historic environment conservation and heritage organisations”.

Business Strategy & Support (AR)

The document should pay greater recognition to the value of the AONB to the local and national economy and the importance of protecting it in economic and social terms.

FRNE (SB)

While I recognise the good intentions of the majority of the targets, I do have some reservations as to whether some of them are realistic and achievable, particularly where there is an (unstated) requirement for the targets to be delivered by local authorities. While the Management Plan does effectively become part of local authority policy once adopted, I believe there is a disconnect between the strategic acceptance of the Plan and the on-the-ground contribution to delivery of the objectives and targets. Some of these will be being delivered as part of the local authorities' ongoing activities, but for others there is a need for better communication of the Plan to local authority officers, targeting specific areas e.g. planning, or community engagement.

I note the provision within the Plan for the JAC to be ambassadors promoting the plan through the three-year business plan and consider that this needs to be strengthened and for wider communication of the Plan with local authority officers to be undertaken and promoted by AONB Unit officers - perhaps a combined approach with neighbouring AONBs could be considered?

Explore Kent (SL)

Vision 2024 (p9)

I am very concerned by the complete lack of vision with regards to access and enjoyment of the AONB landscape. There is little human benefit from having an area of outstanding natural beauty just to protect it. It needs to be enjoyed and understood by locals as well as the wider community.

The last bullet point touches on this but goes nowhere near encouraging the active enjoyment of this amazing natural resource.

Most residents and visitors enjoy informal and sensitive open-air use of the AONB and benefit from a rich, protected, well understood and celebrated cultural heritage.

Geology, Landform, Water Systems & Climate

		Objectives		
Team	Top 5 issues	G1	G2	G3
FRNE (RC)	2) Managing multiple interests at sandstone outcrops; 'the sandstone is used for climbing, it supports rare cryptogams and many are also heritage assets. This makes managing sites in the face of, damage from climbing, their humid microclimate, invasive species and climate change all the more challenging.' This issue just needs to be re-worked (perhaps something like this), just to make it clearer.	g) Land use measures – should this be land management? Not sure what land use measures are?	To protect important geological features in the AONB, particularly sandstone outcrops. d) Stick to sandstone or sandrock. Needs a target about improving management at these sites and communicating their complexities/sensitivities to land owners and/or managers. More integration with English Heritage.	
FRNE (RC)	1) <i>A lack of</i> understanding.... (this is the issue – just needs to be more explicit).		Suggest inclusion of something about the coastline – exposed sandstone in its own right.....	
FRNE (WM)				Target g), should also extend to informing land management.
FRNE (MT – RC pers comm.).		SUDS will become a requirement so this should be pre-empted in the next 5 years of this Plan period. Integrated SUDS in the High Weald, which deliver multiple benefits for landscape character and wildlife as well as delivering high quality drainage. We strongly recommend a target about SUDS be included here. (FRNE happy to help with wording.)		

Heritage Conservation (LD)	Top five issues, second issue – please add need for conservation of calligraphs.		Add recording and interpreting of calligraphs and ‘iconic’ rock forms to G2 targets for 2019.	Please add ‘at least’ in front of 2852 in the last bullet point on page 27.
FRNE (LM)		Objective G1 target d) - should probably also include Surface Water Management Plans.		As before concern that rates of change cannot be controlled – and a reworking of the rationale here to create the objective may make it stronger. f) Should the guidance be more proactive and identify ‘suitable mitigation measures’?
Minerals & Waste (JP)	The issue identified in the top five issues for geology, landform, water systems and climate on page 28 about small scale mineral extraction which is just left hanging as there are no objectives which develop the issue or a solution any further.			
Minerals & Waste (KB)				

General Comments:

Planning Strategy (BG)

The Geology section does indeed make reference to the need to 'understand' small scale mineral extraction for conservation purposes and how it can be managed, though again I would have thought this needs to be more developed. Please see The Strategic Stone Study, A Building Stone Atlas of KENT 2011 (English Heritage).

Minerals & Waste (JP)

The continuation of quarrying building stone of the correct character for the AONB would support objectives for settlement of S2 and S3 on page 32 but no solution is offered for matching the building stone. Over all the objectives for the AONB will do a good job of safeguarding this mineral resource for future

generations. However, in detail the geological map shows that there are five different types of sandstone in the Kent part of the AONB and it is therefore likely that different areas might need to be quarried to ensure that the matching type of building stone can be provided to restore existing buildings or to blend in any new development.

The High Weald has resources of building stone, and some sand and gravel deposits.

Settlement

		Objectives		
Team	Top 5 issues	S1	S2	S3
FRNE (RC)	Vision: suggest remove 'land use' just call them planning policies. Second para needs to have shorter sentences. These read in an apologetic way – need to be more precise and have the threat identified first. e.g. <i>Reduction in (lack of) the amount of affordable housing and workspace provision for rural workers....</i>			Rationale needs amending. <i>The use of local materials as a means....</i>
Highways & Transportation (BW)				Objectives, and respective supporting text, all include aspects relevant to Highways and Transportation. They are consistent with the approaches adopted in the Kent Downs AONB, and reflect our desire to work with relevant agencies to avoid the harmful effects of insensitive highway works.
FRNE (WM)		- It would be useful to include something around SUDs- in the ideal world this section would make some reference to the now defunct Kent Design Guide. - I don't really understand point a)		

		<p>Surely a needs analysis would make sense if there was a massive, funded, drive for establishing land base & traditional craft business which isn't the case nowadays. Also if target is included, it'll be useful to say how is the analysis is going to be used.</p>		
Heritage & Conservation	<p>The final bullet point is a particularly difficult issue to address as although there are established mechanisms available for the assessment of development proposals in terms of impacts on buildings and archaeological sites, less work has been done on establishing impacts on landscapes. As noted above, this is an area where a detailed (as opposed to the existing broad-brush) historic landscape character characterisation can play an important role and we would urge the AONB team to consider developing such a data-set. We would be happy to discuss this further.</p>	<p>The rationale for this objective does not at present mention the historic aspect of the landscape. Just as there will be a symbiosis with 'the surrounding countryside and wild species' so there is, perhaps an even closer symbiosis with the historic environment. The modern pattern of settlement and many aspects of the local economy and society derive from the historic development of the AONB area and if the Plan is to succeed in its goal of reconnecting settlements with the landscape then it will be essential to work with the grain of existing development. This will help ensure that new development complements rather than conflicts with what is already there. As mentioned above, the Kent Farmsteads Guidance will be helpful. It could be useful to mention connections with the major</p>	<p>We very much welcome Objective S2. This will be essential to preserving the character of the AONB which will contribute significantly to preserving and enhancing the beauty of the area.</p> <p><u>Indicators of Success</u> We would be happy to work with the AONB team on the development of schemes that respect and reinforce the historic settlement pattern.</p> <p>As mentioned above one of the keys to this would be an enhanced historic landscape characterisation of the High Weald area. This would help to identify where key features remain and suggest ways in which elements in the landscape can be linked more effectively to complement existing landscape character.</p> <p><u>Targets for 2019</u> We support the stated targets. Target b) could make reference to the Kent Farmsteads Guidance which was initially</p>	<p><u>Targets for 2019</u> Target a) commits the AONB team to "a review of listed buildings in the Weald; all historic rural and farm buildings included on the Historic Environment Register(HER)". Please note that the HER is a historic environment <u>record</u>, not register. Although it is not clear what is meant by 'a review' this target will clearly involve the relevant HERs and we would request that the AONB team discuss the work with us at an early stage. It will be important that the HERs are involved in discussions about any recording programmes so that the information can be most easily incorporated and we would be happy to advise further. We have produced guidance for local authorities and others preparing recording programmes which can be obtained from the KCC website. (http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/heritage/heritage_publications/guidance_documents.aspx)</p> <p>This area could contribute usefully to the Kent Environment Strategy Theme of protecting</p>

		<p>population centres which are not actually in the AONB but whose residents use the area for leisure and or exercise.</p>	<p>based on research in the High Weald and can be used as the base for the AONB guidance. We were particularly interested in target “c) The preparation of local settlement form and building design studies facilitated for villages and small settlements without an Extensive Urban Survey”. The original EUS studies were produced (in Kent) by KCC and we would be keen to work with the AONB in the studies that are envisaged to see how similar principles can be extended into the small settlement context and given a design dimension. The post-medieval aspects of the settlements in the Kent EUS could also be usefully enhanced. Similarly, the target “d) incorporation of character as a dimension within assessments of sustainable development” would be an important contribution to the conservation of the AONB character and as an approach may have wider ramifications. We would be keen to work with the AONB on this. Potential for buried archaeological remains should also be mentioned in this section.</p>	<p>heritage assets at risk and it would be useful to discuss this further with the unit. We would also encourage the AONB team to consider the role of Local Listing in addressing this target. Tunbridge Wells BC have recently issued a Local Heritage Assets SPD that would help this.</p> <p>Targets should also include i) use of and access to traditional building materials and ii) encouraging small scale extraction of local stone for repair to historic buildings.</p>
PRoW (GR)				<p>Target’s b) and d) closely aligned with Kent’s Countryside and Coasts Access Improvement Plan – “Well maintained countryside access”.</p>

General Comments:

PRow (GR)

Firstly and perhaps most importantly there is a strong correlation between the broad aims of the AONB as expressed in the Management Plan Consultation Draft and the Countryside and Coast Access Improvement Plan (CCAIP) Draft 2013-17, for which the consultation period has only recently closed. The CCAIP is the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Kent. Please see link below:

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/environment-and-planning/public-rights-of-way/countryside-access-improvement-plan.pdf>

Page 33 of the Draft CCAIP identifies areas where the PRow and Access Service may contribute to the delivery of the AONB Management Plan through joint working. The Draft CCAIP reflects policies in the 2nd Edition of the AONB Management Plan and if anything I think there are increased opportunities for partnership working if the policies in the current draft are retained.

Heritage Conservation (LD)

We welcome the Vision for the Settlement theme as currently presented. It should be noted, however, that although the settlement pattern in the AONB today probably derives largely from the later medieval period there are numerous sites from earlier periods in the AONB, and as noted earlier there are many research questions still to be answered. Other aspects of the historic environment also have had a role in establishing the character of the region that we see today. In the post-medieval period leisure farming and major houses have played a role. Sites from later periods, eg Second World War structures, also tell the story of the High Weald and are equally important.

Business Strategy & Support (AR)

Businesses relocate to Kent because of its attractive countryside e.g. based in Country Houses or converted redundant farm buildings which offer kudos for clients/investors. Quote a few successful examples of Successful/International Companies based in AONB. The AONB (and villages within it) also offer a high quality living environment which is important for companies wishing to recruit, retain or relocate staff.

Through careful planning and sensitive design the AONB should be capable to accommodating the modest changes necessary in order to fulfil its economic role for example farm diversification, bringing buildings into economic use or offering visitors a better experience.

Routeways

		Objectives	
Team	Top 5 issues	R1	R2
Transport (BW)		Objectives, and respective supporting text, all include aspects relevant to Highways and Transportation. They are consistent with the approaches adopted in the Kent Downs AONB, and reflect our desire to work with relevant agencies to avoid the harmful effects of insensitive highway works.	Objectives, and respective supporting text, all include aspects relevant to Highways and Transportation. They are consistent with the approaches adopted in the Kent Downs AONB, and reflect our desire to work with relevant agencies to avoid the harmful effects of insensitive highway works.
FRNE (WM)	Good that species road verges are mentioned here and their management mentioned as a concern. I would add as an indicator of success something around routeways managed sympathetically to important ecological features such as overstood coppices. OR all ecologically important routeways designated as RNRs		
Heritage Conservation (LD)		We strongly support this objective. The High Weald AONB team have carried out considerable research into historic routeways and we would encourage them to deposit any reports or GIS data with the Kent HER so that it can be used for development control purposes. All of the targets associated with this objective will involve recording or mapping projects. In general we would urge that any mapping or data gathering work be carried out as far as possible in conjunction with the HERs so that we can advise on recording structures or systems and contribute such information as we hold. This	

		will also make sure that information is easily transferrable back into the HERs and avoid creating parallel recording systems.	
PROW (GR)		I welcome the recognition of “routeways” as an integral part of the character and landscape of the High Weald. Many of the routeways are now recorded as public rights of way and as such are maintainable public highways. I recognise that intervention in respect of maintenance while often necessary can actually be detrimental to the character of these routes. Work to establish standards in respect of maintenance with the aim of preserving the character of the routes would be welcome.	
PROW (GR)		Although processing approximately 25 Public Rights of Way diversions a year I am not aware the Kent have diverted any ancient routeways. It would be helpful to have a tighter definition of ancient routeway or the baseline mapping for the network to assist in decisions relating to diversions.	
PROW (GR)		Target’s a), e), g) and h) closely aligned with Kent’s Countryside and Coasts Access Improvement Plan “knowing what’s out there”, “a more sensible network” and “delivering the customer service strategy”.	

General Comments:

Heritage Conservation (LD)

We would support the assertion that the origin, function and archaeology of ancient routeways remain under-researched. Routeways are key elements in the historic landscape and road improvements or other works have the potential to impact significantly on archaeological remains. The cab-cards and guidance produced recently by the Weald Forest Ridge project may help land managers avoid such damage.

Explore Kent (SL)

The last paragraph of the vision mentions the promotion of selected walking, cycling and horse riding routes to better manage the effects of users on trackways. However where these routes are or will be is not mentioned and their development is not within the targets for 2019.

Woodland

		Objectives			
Team	Top 5 issues	W1	W2	W3	W4
FRNE (SB)			W2 target k - is there evidence (beyond the example of good practice given in the NE Standing Advice) that this amount of minimum buffer is sufficient? Could the Unit support, or carry out research into the impacts on ancient woodland from existing and/or new developments?		Target f) is completely unrealistic and unachievable, and would be a waste of time and money.
FRNE (WM)	How about including not having a sustainable coppice labour force with appropriate skills as an issue?		I would have a separate target for managing pests, diseases & disorders. Perhaps adhere to county (Kent resilience forum-ash dieback strategy) or national action plans. Implement (or translate) national/county guidance at AONB level.	e) Shouldn't this be under W2? h) I would add 'subsidise' training/ apprenticeships here.	f) The campaign to eradicate grey squirrel may prove difficult to achieve.
Heritage Conservation (LD)				The targets identified for this objective will be significantly helped by the work that the Weald Forest Ridge project carried out and the products (cab-cards and guidance) they generated. The Woodland Archaeology Forum will also play a significant role and we would	

				<p>encourage the AONB team to continue the excellent work that the WFR project began.</p> <p>HERs will have a key role in this theme, as confirmed by the indicator “i) increase in HER records for woodlands.” We would request that the Kent HER be consulted at an early stage on any projects that are likely to generate HER information so that appropriate methodologies can be worked out and resource issues fully considered.</p>	
PRoW (GR)					Target c), closely aligned with Kent’s Countryside and Coasts Access Improvement Strategy “Well maintained countryside access.”
FRNE (LM)			Objective W2 - not sure if Kent Downs AONB have put the ash tree recording work in their plan but should there be something like this in High Weald? Would be good to have a consistent picture across Kent.		Target f) - is this achievable and despite conservation benefits would it be publicly acceptable?

Field & Heath

		Objectives			
Team	Top 5 issues	FH1	FH2	FH3	FH4
FRNE (WM)	I would include here working with the Kent & Sussex LNPs to ensure that Growth Funds (to be managed by the LEP) help to support a working countryside or at least pay attention to the issues/challenges in the AONB			i. The Kent Habitat Survey has data on unimproved grassland for the Kent side and in the next few months, we will have change analysis data for this habitat. Need to ensure that if any further surveys are done the same methodology is followed at the same standard.	
Heritage Conservation (LD)			We strongly support this objective but there is a need to improve the understanding of historic landscapes within agri-environment schemes and boost communication between heritage professionals and landowners.		The High Weald AONB team have recently participated in a review of the parks and gardens of Tunbridge Wells Borough that may act as a model for how thematic research can be carried out in a way that uses both professionals and community groups and which produces high quality information suitable for HERs and land management purposes. If supported by local authorities and integrated into HERs and local planning policies, including local lists,

					<p>this can be an effective and flexible way to understand and conserve the heritage of the AONB. We would be happy to work with the AONB team on initiatives of this kind.</p> <p>Note that extraction sites are just as likely if not more so to be in woodlands.</p>
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General Comments:

Heritage Conservation (LD)

As discussed previously, the successful management of field and heath can be significantly helped by an enhanced historic landscape characterisation. This would help to chart the development of the landscape, identify areas of particular significance and sensitivity and suggest places where landscape restoration can most profitably be employed. We would be happy to discuss this further.

Business Strategy & Support (AR)

Agriculture is a key economic land use within the AONB and its adaptability/resilience to world and local markets is crucial. Initiatives to support livestock, woodland management and sensitive timber production etc should be encouraged.

Understanding & Enjoyment

		Objectives				
Team	Top 5 issues	UE1	UE2	UE3	UE4	UE5
Heritage Conservation (LD)		Targets could also include the adjacent urban areas – could also feed in to supporting the economy of the rural areas.	Targets here could include a programme of volunteer heritage/environment wardens to improve the reporting of heritage and environment crime.			<p>We support the target (to produce) ‘Information on valued locally distinctive features generated by communities’. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has recently introduced a List of Local Heritage Assets that has the potential to include landscape features as well as buildings and archaeological sites. There is potential for the AONB Unit to work with its volunteers and stakeholders to identify key heritage assets and prepare information on their history and significance that makes it possible for them to be easily included on the Local List. KCC and the HWAONB teams have recently carried out exactly such a project in partnership with the Kent Gardens Trust and we would be happy to discuss any similar project targeted at similar themes.</p> <p>We also support the objective to prepare ‘guidance on the conservation and management of special qualities and local valued features’, ‘such as historic features – abbeys, hop gardens etc’. In order to develop meaningful guidance, however it is first necessary to understand the resource and as mentioned above we would encourage the HWAONB team to develop a detailed historic landscape character assessment that goes beyond the existing</p>

						<p>2001 historic landscape character assessment. We would also be happy to help the AONB team prepare the conservation guidance mentioned and would be happy to discuss further.</p> <p>Locally valued features should also include the natural landscape features such as the rock forms.</p>
PRoW (GR)					<p>I recognise that furniture used in respect of access to public rights of way or preventing nuisance use can be visually intrusive or not maximise the use of local materials. I would happily see further guidance developed on the use of local materials, however against a backdrop of significant revenue budget pressures the adoption of such standards would only be possible if additional resource were found to meet any increase in cost.</p>	
PRoW (GR)		Targets a) and d) closely aligned with Kent's				

		Countryside and Coasts Access Improvement Plan – “Knowing what’s out there”.				
PRoW (GR)					a), b), c), d), e), f) and k) closely aligned with Kent’s Countryside and Coasts Access Improvement Plan “well maintained countryside access”, “knowing what’s out there”, “a more sensible network”, “education and respect for the countryside” and “delivering the customer service strategy”.	
Explore Kent (SL)	The second point seems a little unclear as to its meaning – These are 2 separate things enjoyment of views (which is enjoying the maintained landscape) and the management of the	This needs to be customer focused at present it seems to be focused on what the AONB want people to know and learn and not what people want to learn and how.				Love it, these targets fit in with many of Explore Kent’s aims for rural tourism in Kent and hopefully we can work together.

	landscape.					
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General Comments:

Heritage Conservation (LD)

The community participation projects discussed in my comments on FH4 also apply to this theme and particularly to objective UE2 and UE3.

Business Strategy & Support (AR)

Tourists (local and international) visit Kent because of the AONB and attractions within it e.g. Country Houses, pubs (Golf Courses?), sailing, outdoor activity centres, etc. Again useful to quote a few examples where new attractions have been accommodated.

The AONB has an important role to play in promoting health and wellbeing but access may need to be improved. Not everyone is confident in using the PRW Network and opportunities to enjoy the AONB informally should be promoted e.g. way marked routes/picnic areas in woodlands, along rivers, reservoirs etc (again mention good examples)

Visit Kent (RW) *Not strictly KCC* <http://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/index/about-us/team/>

Tourism is worth £3.4 billion to the local economy and supports 65,000 jobs.

Our research consistently shows the countryside is a key motivator for visitors. Our 2012 Visitor survey showed that 28% of our visitors were motivated by our countryside to visit Kent coming second after our heritage. This goes up to 34% when just looking at overnight visitors who by staying longer spend more. 10% were motivated by our country pubs!

Is it worth referring to the new accord signed last week - **Working Towards Sustainable Tourism in England’s AONBs** which recognises;

- that there are opportunities for the growth of sustainable tourism within AONBs;
- the contribution that tourism makes to rural economies;
- and the benefits of raising visitor and businesses awareness in ensuring the continued protection of England’s finest landscapes.

The accord is intended to complement and work with the England Strategic Framework for Tourism 2010 - 2020, and its Rural Tourism Action Plan which addresses tourism across all of England's rural areas and which Visit Kent is signed up to.

The accord recognises that there is now an opportunity for AONB partnerships and Destination Organisations such as Visit Kent to work together to consider more comprehensively how sustainable tourism can be further encouraged and supported through the delivery of AONB Management Plan objectives.

We are of course familiar with and supportive of your innovative Our Land project and feel this is the perfect mechanism to help us together deliver this and continue to look forward to working in partnership with you on this.

We are also interested in supporting the link between local food production and tourism – this helps create and support local supply chains while also giving us a competitive tourism edge. We have been working with PINK on Food Trails and more recently the Kent Breakfast scheme and feel further work on this should be encouraged.

FRNE (WM)

Understanding & Enjoyment needs to mention the benefits that the natural environment can bring/provide to the health agenda. Perhaps there should be reference to working with the Health & Wellbeing Boards to identify mutually beneficial projects/programmes.

Explore Kent (SL)

I like the vision – leans towards experiential tourism.