The Council of Partners for the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Forestry Commission will work together to deliver their shared priorities. We will do this by:

Ensuring effective liaison:
- We will hold an annual meeting between Forestry Commission and AONB staff, and the Forestry Commission will provide officer representation on any relevant technical panels or steering groups.
- The Forestry Commission will fully consult on the management of its own estate during the preparation of long-term Forest Design Plans.

Assistance in the review of the AONB Management Plan:
- The Forestry Commission will provide guidance on the review of the AONB Management Plan to ensure positive policies in support of woodlands that reflect the particular characteristics of the North Wessex Downs and the objectives of the England Forestry Strategy and Regional Forestry Frameworks.

Improving understanding:
- of the condition and management of our key woodland habitats. Priority will be given to statutory sites, ancient woodlands (including those under two hectares) and woodland which provides important habitat for priority species;
- of the role and importance of woodlands in the AONB in landscape character, biodiversity and archaeology but also the benefits to communities and the rural economy.

Development planning:
- Promoting the role of woodlands and trees in the development of sustainable communities, e.g. AONB support of a Green Infrastructure Plan for Swindon.

Targeting incentives for sustainable woodland management:
- at sustainable woodland management, particularly of ancient and semi-natural woodlands, and promoting the use of long-term management plans and co-operative approaches to management.

Grant decisions on woodland management and planting will take account of the AONB’s Woodland Strategy.

Implementing sustainable woodland management through:
- demonstrating best practice on the Forestry Commission’s own estate;
- working with Deer Management Groups;
- supporting research and development of best practice examples of woodland management, harvesting, processing and marketing in line with AONB objectives, including those which add value to or diversify the markets for woodland products, e.g. wood fuel.

Improving sustainable recreation and access through:
- working with Local Access Forums to identify opportunities to promote and enhance sustainable access to woodland, informed by the Forestry Commission’s Countryside Agency-funded research on accessible greenspace.

Our Shared Objectives

The North Wessex Downs AONB

The North Wessex Downs is a countryside of vast rolling chalk downlands contrasting with well-wooded plateaux, arable lands and extensive chalk downland with rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage. The North Wessex Downs was designated in 1972 to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. It extends into 11 local authority areas including parts of Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Hampshire and West Berkshire, and straddles the boundary between the South East and South West regions of England. It includes 36 ancient and semi-natural woodlands, which together account for about 11% of the area, and is the third largest AONB nationally, covering 1,730 sq km.

The Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission is the government department responsible for forestry in Great Britain. It works to ensure the protection and sustainable management of our woodlands.

South East and South West Regional Forestry Frameworks are regional expressions of the England Forestry Strategy. Produced in partnership with a range of stakeholders, they aim to provide the direction and context for the future development of woodlands and forestry in their regions.

For further information, contact:

North Wessex Downs AONB

Tel: 01488 685440
info@northwessexdowns.org.uk
www.northwessexdowns.org.uk

Forestry Commission

South East England Conservancy

Alice Holt
Winchcombe
Surrey

Tel: 01420 23337
fc.seeng.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
www.forestry.gov.uk

South West Conservancy

Mamhead Castle
Exeter

Tel: 01626 890666
fc.sweng.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
www.forestry.gov.uk

Local accord produced June 2006.
Front and back cover photographs (and where repeated) © Countryside Agency/ Ann Seth.
Other photographs by Patrick McKernan, Forestry Commission.
The priority issues for the North Wessex Downs are outlined below:

**Landscape, character and diversity**
Woodland management and new planting should support and enhance the diversity in the landscape character of the North Wessex Downs. The AONB woodland strategy identifies where new planting could best meet our multiple objectives for woodlands, and will inform advice and support.

**Increasing understanding and management of ancient woodland**
We need to improve our understanding of ancient and semi-natural woodlands in the area, helping us to target work to maximise biodiversity and reduce the fragmentation of these priority habitats. We will support the conservation of plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS), and ensure that veteran trees and wood pasture are priorities for protection and positive management.

**The protection and management of archaeological and historic features**
With Forestry Commission support, the AONB is undertaking a woodland archaeology audit giving us a better understanding of the heritage significance of AONB woodlands and leading to enhanced protection and management.

**New markets for woodland management**
We need to support owners to maximise the benefits from woodlands, ensuring high quality timber production in suitable locations, adaptation and partnership working to take advantage of new markets, and the development of added-value and non-timber products.

**Responding to, and mitigating the impacts of, environmental change**
We will promote the role that trees and woodlands can make in mitigating and adapting to environmental change. Habitat fragmentation may increase the risk of species being unable to respond to climate change. We will promote linkage of woodland and other habitat types to create more sustainable landscape-scale habitat mosaics.

**Promoting sustainable recreation**
We will promote opportunities for sustainable use of woodland for access and recreation and seek the highest standards of management and presentation of such sites, in character with the rural nature of the area. We will promote the responsible use of such areas, by increasing understanding of their value and management needs.