

Welcome to the second edition of the Chilterns Commons Network (CCN) Newsletter.

Do you have an interest in the management of Commons in the Chilterns?

Many Commons Groups across the Chilterns are grappling with issues such as:

- Finding the people, funding and expertise to carry out habitat management and restoration
- Getting the local community involved
- Anti-social behaviour: encroachment from neighbouring properties, dumping of garden waste etc.

The Chilterns Commons Network provides an opportunity to:

- Meet and share information, skills, experience and equipment
- Attend themed workshops and visit other Commons
- Find out about more specialist sources of support e.g. on legal matters.

6 ways to get involved:

- Send us your contact details (including e-mail if possible) if you are not yet on the mailing list
- Come along to Network events on 19th July and 22nd October (see back page)
- Send in an article, news item, letter or photo for the next edition (deadline 15th September)
- Represent your common at the CCN steering group
- Volunteer your time to help develop the network
- Enjoy the Commons Festival (see p2)

i Contact Kath Daly, Countryside Officer, Chilterns Conservation Board
01844 355524

kdaly@chilternsaonb.org for more information

Common Issues

It really is a pleasure to report on the progress the CCN Steering Group is making. We have now had 3 meetings to get to grips with the philosophy and practicalities of networking the diverse Commons across the Chilterns. We have representatives from 12 organisations Chiltern-wide, ranging from Studham Common near Whipsnade to Swyncombe in the south and Chorleywood in the east. We are now working on looking at the new Commons Act going through Parliament this year and also the current effect of the CROW act on Chiltern Commons. For example, with open access, do we continue way marking of definitive paths across Commons or encourage walkers to experience just a little of the adventure of finding their way undirected to the other side....? We are also researching possibilities of re-introducing grazing and the thorny issue of fencing Common Land.

It is going to be very useful to know who actually owns the 200+ Commons across the Chilterns, how many properties actually have Rights of Common, and who still exercise them. It is planned to hold occasional day workshops across the region, with subjects such as practical equipment and training, biodiversity education, historical and cultural studies. The Steering Group welcomes contributions from interested groups, please contact Kath Daly, Countryside Officer for further information.

John Willson, Chairman, CCN.



In this edition

- Getting started on Management Plans - an example from Moarend
- Free Guide published for Landowners
- Funding available for work on Commons
- Events
- Chilterns Woodland Award - deadline 31st July



Pond Restoration on Cadmore End Common

By Bärbel Cheesewright, Lane End Conservation Group

A map of 1900 shows the western part of Cadmore End Common to be rough pasture with gravel pits and clay pits. Some of the pits have become seasonal ponds: an ideal habitat for wildlife including a few less common marsh plants.

The largest pond is Head and Body Pond, a name which probably arose from its shape rather than some sinister history. Over the years the pond had shrunk in size and silted up. Bryan and Alison Edgley of Kensham Farms, landowners of the common, were as keen as the Lane End Conservation Group to prevent the pond from disappearing completely. The first step was to obtain a specialist ecological report. The objective of opening up the pond and its surrounding area was agreed. The necessary permissions were obtained and funding secured.

Before work started, letters to local residents described the planned work, and walkers to the proposals. Local residents were allowed to collect firewood afterwards. The extracted leaf litter and silt was deposited into a deep former claypit close-by, which was then fenced off.

After the contractors had left there was now a large open pond. The banks looked a bit raw for a few months, until new vegetation began to spread in spring. The Lane End Conservation Group replanted the uprooted bluebell bulbs and built wildlife habitat from sticks and branches collected from around the site. There was plenty of frog spawn at the water's edge in spring and dragonflies and damselflies hovering over the emerging marsh plants. Occasionally a heron explores the open water and moorhen and ducks now enjoy the natural food sources here. By opening up the pond and by allowing sunshine to reach the water we were able to create a water-based habitat for wildlife quite different from all the other seasonal ponds hidden in the undergrowth. This contrast in habitat should ensure a greater biodiversity in this area than was possible prior to the pond restoration. Local residents, all members of the Lane End Conservation Group, will continue to monitor the pond and, with the support of the landowners maintain this area of Cadmore End Common as a haven for wildlife.



Work on Head and Body pond - photo Barbel Cheesewright

Chiltern Commons Festival

Across the AONB, people are exploring and learning more about Chilterns Commons this summer. From picnics and practical conservation to bat walks and scrub management, there is an enormous variety of events still to come as part of the Chilterns Commons Festival. The Festival Programme has been produced by the Chilterns Conservation Board as a way of supporting locally organised events, and promoting greater public awareness of the natural and cultural history of Commons.

Highlights coming up include:

Conservation Work Party , Marlow Common, July 15th (Contact: 01494 421825)

Night Time Wildlife Walk Ashridge Estate, July 29th (Contact 01442 851227)

For a copy of the festival programme Kath Daly
01844 355524 kdaly@chilternsaonb.org

Commons Bill Update - Stop Press

The Report and Third Reading of the Commons Bill took place on 29th June 2006. The Bill is expected to receive Royal assent by late July.



For more information see the following websites:

Defra - www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/common/commonbill/index.htm

Open Spaces Society - <http://www.oss.org.uk/>

Once the Regulations are published the Network will arrange a workshop to look at the implications. Contact Kath Daly 01844 355524 kdaly@chilternsaonb.org to register your interest.

Musings on Moored Common

By Ross Osborn

Ever tried writing a management plan for a Common which is a SSSI? As the voluntary, ecologically uneducated warden for Moored, I recently took on this task - and what a task! Where to start - the previous management plans, the local biodiversity action plans, the advice of English Nature, Forestry Commission and others, the owners (Lane End Parish Council), local views or where?

More fundamentally, did we need a management plan in the first place as, like so many small groups, our local committee had no money, few volunteers, no equipment but bags of enthusiasm. Being a SSSI, we had to have one and anyway, I suggest, a plan is a good way of formulating both short and long term ideas for any site however large or small, guidance that others can follow later.



photo: John Morris

This article hopefully offers some help to those starting this process for the first time but have little idea (as I didn't) as to where to start.

It became clear that the Parish Council had not registered their land, had little idea of who had what rights nor the exact boundary lines. Previous management plans hadn't referred to the Common's historical layout nor its social history so, Step One became an information hunt using anecdotal evidence, old photographs and maps, aerial photos, Commons Registration details and HM Land Registry all of which created an invaluable framework upon which to build.

i Want to find out more? Come along to the Commons Day on 22nd October or get in touch with me at ross.osborn@ouvip.com.

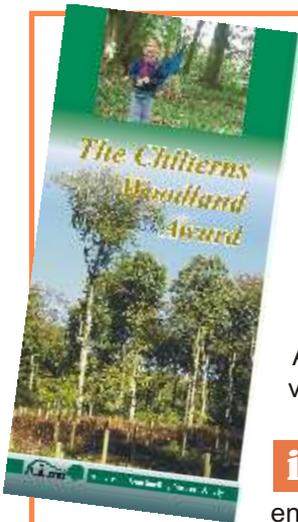
Entries invited for The Chilterns Woodland Award

Do you manage woods in the Chilterns? Have you thought about entering the Chilterns Woodland Award? This annual Award is made to recognise good practice in the management of Chilterns trees and woods.

Whatever your focus - timber production, wildlife or wider public benefit if you manage the wood in a sustainable manner, in keeping with the landscape of the AONB then we would be interested to receive an entry from you.

Applications are welcome from woodland owners and managers whether public, private or voluntary sector.

i The award is a joint initiative of the Chilterns Conservation Board and Forestry Commission. The closing date is 31st July. Contact Kath Daly on 01844 355524 for more information and an entry form.

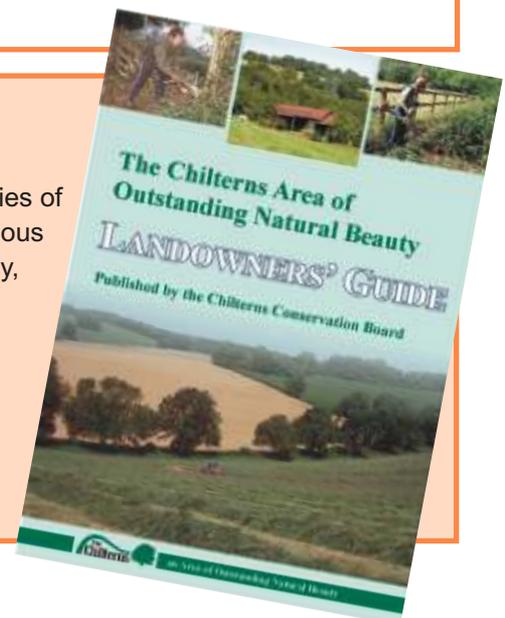


Landowners' Guide - Caring for the Chilterns

The Chilterns Conservation Board has recently published this free Guide to help landowners manage their land in a way which helps to conserve the special qualities of the Chilterns. The Guide consists of a series of non-technical advice notes on various topics including commons, woodlands, planning, hedge management, archaeology, public rights of way and land management for horse owners. Should you require further advice we may be able to carry out a free site visit or direct you to more specialist help. We can also advise on availability of grant aid.

The pack is supported by Briants of Risborough Ltd.

i For more information contact Tracy Adams, Farming and Land Use Officer 01844 355523 tadams@chilternsaonb.org



Grants available

The Chilterns AONB Sustainable Development Fund supports projects which bring environmental, social and economic benefits to the Chilterns. Some funding is still available this year for projects which will be completed by February 2007.

Successful projects will

- promote sustainable development
- have the support of local communities
- conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and/or:
- increase the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the AONB's special qualities.

 Guidelines and an application form can be downloaded from www.chilternsaonb.org/caring/sustainabledevfund.html.

Contact Kath Daly 01844 355524 kdaly@chilternsaonb.org.

Last year Chorleywood Parish Council secured an SDF grant to work with the local community to produce a new leaflet about the Common.



Network Events

July 19th 6-8 pm Visit to Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons.

This 2 mile strip of commonland contains a superb mix of habitats, including semi-natural broadleaved woodland, with pockets of acid grassland and remnant heath. There are also several ponds, rough grassland and a cricket pitch. Find out how the local Preservation Society manages this County Wildlife Site and deals with issues from bracken control to engaging the local community.

 Meet at 6pm outside the Half Moon Pub (on the left as you head from Hawridge to Cholesbury.) To book a place or for further information contact Kath Daly 01844 355524.

October 22nd Annual Chilterns Commons Day

This year's Commons Day will be hosted by the Box Moor Trust. The Trust is responsible for over 450 Acres of land around Hemel Hempstead and Bovington, providing a fascinating case study of the management of Common Land adjacent to urban communities. The Commons are grazed by Belted Galloways and Soay Sheep. The day is an opportunity to network, to hear presentations on various aspects of Commons Management and to visit the Commons.

Put the date in your diary - details to follow.

*Box Moor Trust, Hemel Hempstead
photo: Box Moor Trust*



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The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Chilterns Conservation Board



an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty