

Growing Connections

The West Weald Landscape Project Newsletter

Editorial by Mike Waite

Living Landscapes Officer, Surrey Wildlife Trust



Since taking on the new role of Living Landscapes Officer for the Surrey Wildlife Trust last year, I am now leading on work with landowners in the Surrey part of the West Weald Landscape Project (WWLP) area around Chiddingfold, Dunsfold and Alfold. We are working in challenging times: the public sector cutbacks introduced by the Comprehensive Spending Review last autumn serves to reiterate the importance of the free landowner advisory service offered by the WWLP. Without doubt the greatest single recent issue was the Government's controversial proposals to relinquish state ownership of the Forestry Commission estate, directly affecting the Chiddingfold Forest SSSI core forest area on the Surrey-Sussex border. The subsequent public outcry that led to a political u-turn and decision to establish instead an independent forestry advisory panel offers a glimmer of hope for the future of our prized national forests. We now eagerly anticipate the Government's White Paper on the Natural Environment in England and hope that this provides new momentum to landscape-scale conservation approaches that foster national biodiversity security.

Conservation Partnership working in Age of Austerity

We live in testing times for nature conservation, as outlined in the Surrey Wildlife Trust editorial above, yet remain cautiously optimistic of capitalising on diverse opportunities to increase our beneficial impacts. Of course we are concerned by the significant budget cutbacks (by a quarter to a third) to our public body partners at Natural England (NE), Forestry Commission (FC) and local authorities as well. Our principal concern going forward relates to the reductions in NE's funding for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agri-environment scheme agreements to enable landowners to achieve targeted environmental gains. In practice this means a freeze on new holdings entering HLS for the next year, although we are still keen to work with interested landowners to apply to start HLS from 2012/13.

Outside of HLS we will continue to provide free advice and support to private holdings, as well as selected practical improvements such as new hedge planting furthermore. Clearly we need to secure our own additional resources to keep this important service going, and hence have recently launched a short film as part of a project fundraising appeal. Do please have a look at our video (see 'Information' right) and consider making a charitable donation to enable our partnership work to thrive and benefit both people and wildlife in this age of austerity.

*The West Weald Landscape Project is a Sussex Wildlife Trust project,
run in partnership with other organisations and principally supported by
The Tubney Charitable Trust.*

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[West Weald Landscape Project on film](#) – please watch our new short video, produced as part of our charitable fundraising appeal.

[Launch of South Downs National Park](#) – stretching 100 miles over 1600 square kilometres, this farmed landscape is home to 100,000 people and rare wildlife.

Events

Managing Grassland for Horses - free evening workshop, **Newdigate – Thursday 12th May.** Tel. 01273 497515.

[Springwatch at Stanmer Park, Brighton](#) – popular annual family event - **Sunday 5th June, 10am – 5pm.**

[Wisborough Green Summer Fete](#) – come and see us at the WWLP stand this year on Bank Holiday **Monday 29th August.**

News in Brief

Landowner Support Update

HLS - 1 major holding assisted to enter.
ELS On-Line - 4 new holdings started.
EWGS - advice given to access 80% WIGs.
Workshops - 3 held on woodlands, hedgerows and grassland management for horses.

Please see our leaflet for our free services on [Working with Landowners and Farmers](#).

Where's the Wildlife?

We have a busy field season of surveys and monitoring planned this year to put the wildlife of our area 'on the map', for which we need your help to tell us where some of our conservation-priority species and habitats occur.



Wildflower Meadow
(Sussex Wildlife Trust)

Volunteers are sought to carry out condition surveys of selected hedgerows and traditional orchards, especially in Surrey, and we would also like to know of any wildflower-rich meadows near you.

We continue to encourage public butterfly recording under the Sussex Atlas project, as well as indeed observations of any species, which you can submit to your local [Biodiversity Recording Centre](#). Meanwhile, more specialised ecological studies of rare Wood White butterflies, deadwood beetles, dormice and bats are planned this year. If you can help with any of these surveys then do please contact the [WWLP](#) for more information.

Record Winter for Habitat Creation!

The WWLP has just completed a record-breaking winter planting season to establish new hedgerows, wet woodlands and traditional orchards across the landscape. With generous support from funders – The Tubney Charitable Trust, BBC Wildlife Fund, EDF Energy and Chichester District Council – and working with diverse volunteers and contractors, we have planted: 2000 metres of native hedges on 9 holdings, created 4 new local orchards, and established floodplain trees on 2 farms. We are now working on creating new wetland scrapes and wildflower meadows this year.



Wisborough Green Primary School hedge-planting at Fishers Farm Park (John Nicholls)

Take a Walk on the Wild Side!

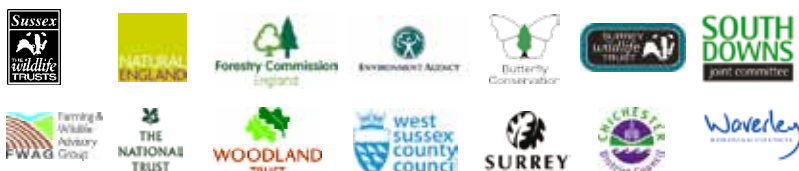
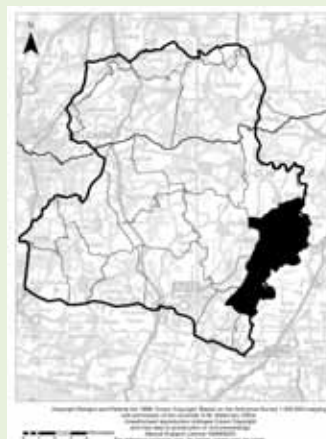
We will soon be launching a brand new attractive colour booklet of "Wild Walks", which will be available this summer free of charge through local tourist information centres, community halls, pubs and shops. Featuring a fantastic range of natural attractions, this guide aims to encourage locals and visitors alike to get outside and experience the West Weald's landscape up close and personal on your own journey of discovery. You'll be amazed at what is out there, from historic parklands with massive trees, through intimate ancient woodlands to meandering river valleys. There's something for everyone to enjoy. Go on, go wild!

Parish focus – Wisborough Green

"A Historic Quintessentially English Village" by Mike King

Wisborough Green lies on the eastern edge of the WWLP area, situated astride the A272 main road, with the River Arun floodplain to the east and the heavily wooded high ground of Bedham Hill to the south-west maintaining the essentially rural nature of this parish.

The village has medieval and earlier origins; its imposing church of St Peter ad Vincula on the hill probably started life as a fortified structure commanding the Roman road of Stane Street, where the River Kird joins the River Arun. It is a quintessential English rural settlement, complete with a village green, pubs, pond, ancient church, village shop and post office. Read the rest of this article at www.westweald.org.uk/wisborough.htm.



Supported by The Tubney Charitable Trust

