



wkps

Watch on  
the Weald

FREE

Newsletter of the Weald of Kent Protection Society

[www.wkps.org.uk](http://www.wkps.org.uk)

[secretary@wkps.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wkps.org.uk)

Spring 2022 No: 169



## Development in the AONB

The designation of landscape as an AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) does not exempt it from development. However, when determining a planning application, national planning policy states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in the AONB. AONB's are afforded the highest status of protection.

Paragraph 177 of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) states that planning permission should be refused for major development in the AONB other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. This sounds encouraging, but when this is measured and assessed against the Framework and other policies, the protection fails, particularly if the relevant planning authority does not have a 5-year supply of land for housing.

Hawkhurst parish lies entirely within the High Weald AONB and has been, and continues to be, under immense pressure to accommodate more housing. That pressure mainly stems from developers targeting Hawkhurst and using the argument that TWBC does not have a 5-year supply of land for housing.

It was, then, fantastic news when the planning inspector dismissed the appeal for the proposed relief road and the hundreds of houses that would follow it, on the Golf Club site. The Parish Council and the residents' group fought long and hard against the proposal and they won! Congratulations to them as this was no easy task.

Sadly, shortly after such a huge success, came the blow when the appeal inspector (not the same inspector as the golf club) overturned TWBC's refusal decision for 71 houses off Highgate Hill.

It was disturbing (to me) to read the inspector's decision when at paragraph 9 he states:

*'The High Weald AONB Management Plan, 2019-2024 sets out that there are five defining components of character that have made the High Weald a recognisably distinct and homogenous area for at least the last 700 years. These are: geology, landform and water systems; dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages; a dense network of historic routeways; abundance of ancient woodland; and field and heath (small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing). All of these components are located within or close to the appeal site.'*

Having identified and acknowledged that all the defining character components of the AONB exist, he goes on to grant permission as if the AONB really isn't that important, and it doesn't matter if we lose it forever.

Again, Hawkhurst Parish Council put forward a very strong opposition case, and the inspector's decision is deeply disappointing as it disregards the AONB, the Hawkhurst NDP, the residents' objections, and even the refusal decision of TWBC, which concluded that the proposal would not conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.

Admittedly, there are many, many factors to take into consideration in the determination of a planning application and appeal, but when great weight must be given to the protection policies of the AONB, is basically trumped by whether a 5-year supply of land exists (although there are cases where the reverse is true), the AONB remains under threat.

Parts of the AONB are being lost, irreparably altered and changed, impacting on the landscape of the AONB that remains as what it is: *landscape*. Will there come a time when the landscape is so diminished in quality that the designation is removed?

**Peta Grant**  
**Planning Committee Secretary**

## A Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

NDPs are created by parish and town councils. The process is lengthy, time-consuming and onerous, which may be why of the, for example, 14 parishes and 2 town councils of the Tunbridge Wells borough, only four have actually been 'made'. The four are Hawkhurst, Lamberhurst, Benenden and Goudhurst.

The term 'made' refers to a NDP that has been through all the stages of preparation, consultation, independent examination, and finally, a referendum of the parishioners which, by a simple majority brings a NDP into force, or not.

Once a NDP is made, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must use the plan to determine planning applications along with local and national planning policy.

Parishes have their own landscape, scenic views, environment, communities, architectural design, historic assets (both designated and undesignated), local businesses, and amenities, which all combine to give a sense of place.

The purpose of a NDP is to protect and enhance the identified assets and treasured places, to guide future development of all types, and to give a way forward for future generations.

The subject that is of most concern to all communities is that of housing development. A NDP can guide the places where development is considered to be acceptable, and can even allocate sites for development, rather than leave that decision to the LPA.

It is a brave parish that decides to go down the route of allocating sites.

National planning policy gives preference to the development of brownfield sites (sites that have been previously developed for a different use, that are no longer in use), over greenfield sites. It makes sense to repurpose a brownfield site to prevent green fields being swallowed up. Once a green field is built on, it can never be what it was. It is lost, gone forever, and is not recoverable.

An enormous amount of work goes into creating a neighbourhood development plan but invariably the overall meaning of a NDP is lost and the issue of where the housing will go becomes the only part of the NDP under discussion. A NDP is so much more than that.

Once a NDP is 'made' the relevant parish/town council can apply the policies when it is consulted on planning applications within its area. It exists to guide and inform applicants. Applications must comply with the policies contained within the NDP and the LPA must refer to the NDP in its decision-making.

My admiration goes out to those people who have seen their NDP through to the 'made' stage. It is not an easy task and pulling all the parts together is fraught with detail and regulation. The result though is the protection of the local environment and that is worth the effort.

**Peta Grant**  
**Planning Committee Secretary**

# The Stodmarsh Saga

## Nutrient Neutrality and Pollution in the River Stour

The Great Stour rises near the village of Lenham before meeting the East Stour in Ashford, downstream of which hydrological pressure below the chalk downs turn it into a chalk stream. Chalk streams support sensitive ecosystems. Despite this, effluent from wastewater treatment works is discharged into this wonderful river which passes through the Stodmarsh Wetland Complex on its way to Sandwich.

Sewage effluent not only contains traces of medicinal and recreational drugs, contraceptives, and various other chemical compounds, but also nutrients such as phosphates and nitrates. These nutrients enrich the water at Stodmarsh causing algal blooms which affect the balance of aquatic life in this sensitive water environment. Natural England explain that the water environment within the Stour catchment is one of the most important for water dependent wildlife in the United Kingdom. The Stodmarsh water environment is internationally important and is protected under the Water Environment regulations and the Habitat Regulations. The high levels of nitrate and phosphate are caused mostly by wastewater from existing housing and agricultural sources and planning authorities have now been directed not to approve development unless they can be certain that new development will not lead to an increased nutrient burden. Town and its environs, these three do the heavy lifting of the higher housing numbers, meaning less pressure in the remainder of the MBC area, including the Weald.

Engineered wetlands are being proposed as one means of reducing waterborne phosphate levels and Ashford Borough Council have recently refused an engineered wetland application on the basis that a proposal in isolation is considered prejudicial to the delivery of a comprehensive wetland mitigation strategy, which will be necessary to enable planned development in the Stour catchment – therefore contrary to the Council’s plan led approach to housing delivery.

Furthermore, the reasons for refusal cite provision of insufficient evidence to accurately assess the impact of proposed development on water quality within the Great Stour and the range of water dependent habitats and wildlife that relies upon it.

Well done Ashford, but there is a widening group of local authorities and landscapes across the country starting to experience nutrient neutrality issues – Stodmarsh is being used as national case study, but there is huge concern at the lack of evidence for long-term performance of wetlands. How can a chalk stream like the River Stour be exposed to even more risk than it currently faces by being subjected to engineered processes that may or may not work and may or may not get repaired over time?

If engineered wetlands are to be part of the solution, then there must be cotemporaneous schemes to increase summer flows by increasing retention of water in the natural landscape at high flows, replenishing the aquifers and groundwater, to feed the river and its tributaries. There has to be resilience in the river system by reconnection of the river with its flood plain. Nature Based Solutions are all the rage, as can be seen from the Green Paper article in this issue, but will they end up as all talk once again?

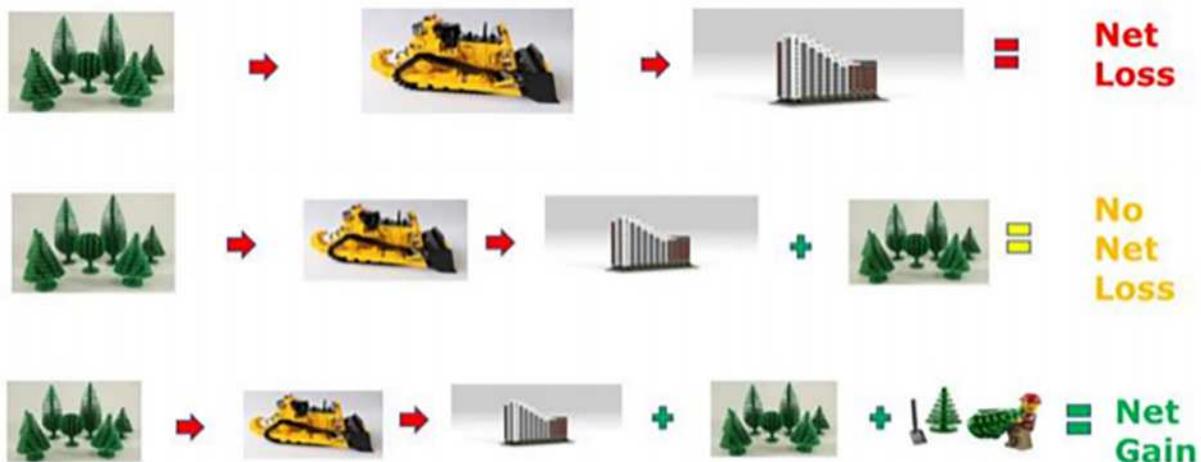


**Mike Bax**  
**WKPS Chairman**

# Biodiversity Units

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is the name given to a process of biodiversity offsetting whereby any habitat loss caused by a new development, or a change in land management, is mitigated to ensure an overall increase in biodiversity post-development. To achieve biodiversity net gain, a development must increase the biodiversity value of a site by at least 10%. If there is a loss then an offset payment must be made in compensation. The biodiversity metric is a habitat based approach used to assess an area's value to wildlife, and uses habitat features to calculate a biodiversity value, expressed as units.

Biodiversity units are calculated using the size of a parcel of habitat and its quality. The metric uses habitat area (measured in hectares) as its core measurement, except for linear habitats (hedgerows, and lines of trees and rivers and streams) where habitat length (measured in kilometres) is used.



To assess the quality of a habitat, the metric scores habitats of different types, such as woodland or grassland, according to their biodiversity value or **distinctiveness** (this includes species richness, diversity, rarity and whether it supports species rarely found in other habitats). Habitats that are scarce or declining typically score highly relative to habitats that are more common and widespread. The metric also takes into account the **condition** (quality) of a habitat, **connectivity** (how connected the habitat is to other similar habitats), and whether the habitat is sited in an area identified (typically in a relevant local strategy or plan), as being of **strategic significance** for nature.

There are three broad categories of habitats and biodiversity units for which scores are calculated differently:

- Area habitats (such as grasslands, woodlands and mudflats)
- Linear hedgerows and lines of trees
- Linear rivers and streams

An important rule of the metric is that the **three types of biodiversity units** described above are unique and **cannot be summed, traded or converted**. The types must be reported separately and not summed to give an overall biodiversity unit value. For example, a scheme would report a gain of 3 area habitat units, a loss of 1 hedgerow unit and a loss of 1 river unit rather than an overall combined gain of 1 unit. All three biodiversity units must be calculated.

Natural England's Biodiversity Metric 3.0 (JP039) is the current method of calculating biodiversity units for larger sites (user guide is 100 pages long!). There is also a test version of a Small Sites Metric (JP040), which is a simplified version for use on small development sites (residential units between one and nine inclusive on a site having an area of less than one hectare), or for all other development types where the site area is less than 0.5ha, or where there is no priority habitat present within the development area (excluding hedgerows and arable margins).

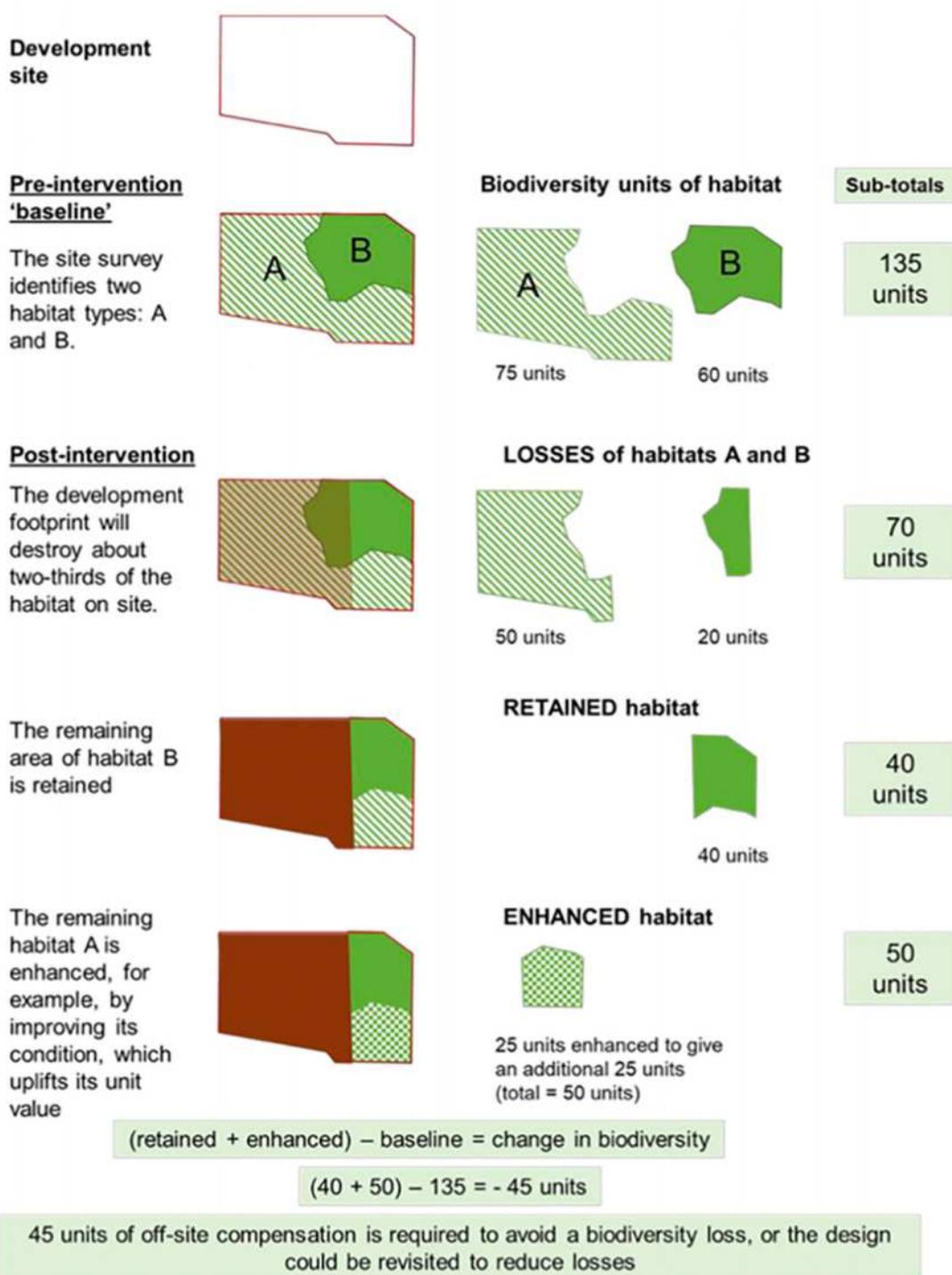
The example calculation shown below is taken from page 13 of the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 User Guide.

To calculate the change in biodiversity unit value resulting from a development (or other intervention) you first survey and then divide the site up into distinct parcels of differing habitat type and condition (i.e. the same habitat type in different condition should be recorded separately within the metric).

Using this information, you can calculate the baseline (or pre-intervention) biodiversity unit value of each habitat parcel using the free calculation tool provided for use with biodiversity metric 3.0.

Next, using your design plans for the development you calculate the biodiversity unit value for the habitats that are expected to be retained, plus the values for any enhanced or newly created habitats (post-intervention).

The change in biodiversity is worked out by subtracting the site's baseline biodiversity unit value from the sum of post-intervention values for retained, created and enhanced habitats. This is then combined with any off-site gains to give a final biodiversity unit value from which net gain or loss for the scheme can be assessed. This is illustrated in the graphic below:



In this example, the developer must provide 45 units of off-site compensation to offset the loss of biodiversity.

To achieve this, a suitable site must be identified and be capable of being improved to the extent of the 45 BNG units required. Generally, it will be necessary for the receptor site to have similar features to the land being used for development.

A planning authority's requirements will usually be set out in a Section 106 Agreement which will record what is to be delivered and there will be an agreement between the planning authority and whoever is to provide the delivery to achieve what is required. In simple terms there then has to be a 'Conservation Covenant' between the owner of the receptor site and the planning authority to deliver the BNG units via a defined project, and then to maintain the site for a minimum of 30 years and sometimes more. The deal that has to be done provides a capital sum or an annual sum to the landowner, which is the financial reward for allocating land to a conservation project, rather than continuing with freedom of cropping, and on top of that has to come a sum to cover the establishment costs and ongoing management of the new habitat.

In practice, it will very often be a body such as the Kent Wildlife Trust who enter into the Section 106 Agreement with the local authority and in turn have the Conservation Covenant with the landowner to deliver the required works.

Using the example above and the current TWBC cost per unit, the developer pays 45 units @ £18,000 per unit = £810K. Let's assume that the cost of establishing the necessary biodiversity and managing it for 30 years is £410K. That sum is retained by the body responsible for the work and the balance of £400K goes to the landowner. The payment to the landowner is a reward for providing the site and sacrificing their freedom as landowner over the next 30 years. If, for example, the site is 10 acres, the sum equates to £40K per acre nominal over the 30-year period i.e., £1,333 per acre per annum, ignoring inflation.

The relationship between the landowner and the habitat provider/manager is crucial and there are potential pitfalls. The Section 106 Agreement will enable the local authority to take the land over and employ a new manager if the initial management works are not carried out in accordance with the agreed programme.

Biodiversity units are determined from the DEFRA metric 3.0 and vary according to land use, but at the end of the day the units do relate to area. For instance, the 'improvement' of one acre of arable land to one acre of species rich grassland will see an enhancement of a specified number of BNG units and they are then set against what is being lost to development. Upgrading into different land uses produces different numbers of metrics.

## Limes Land Lost

### Land between Woodchurch Road and Appledore Road,

Tenterden – a) Outline application for the development of up to 141 residential dwellings (50% affordable) including the creation of access points from Appledore Road (1 x all modes and 1 x emergency, pedestrian and cycle only), and Woodchurch Road (pedestrian and cycle only), and creation of a network of roads, footways, and cycleways through the site. Provision of open space including children's play areas, community orchards, sustainable urban drainage systems, landscape buffers and green links all on 12.35 ha of the site. (Save for access, matters of appearance, landscaping, layout & scale reserved for consideration). b) Full planning permission for the change of land use from agricultural land to land to be used as a country park (8.66 ha), including community orchard and land to be used as formal sports pitches (3.33 ha), together with pavilion to serve the proposal and the surrounding area. Including accesses, ancillary parking, pathways, sustainable urban drainage systems and associated landscaping.

The planning application 21/00790/AS for this site, known locally as Limes Land, was refused by Ashford Borough Council, but was granted on appeal on 30 March 2022.

In its decision notice, ABC quoted the numerous planning policies that the proposal failed to satisfy. Despite the best efforts of Tenterden Town Council, the Limes Land Protection Group, other organisations, and numerous residents, the appeal inspector granted permission principally because of the lack of a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and the Government's objective to boost the supply of homes.

A sad loss to this area of Tenterden and yet another case of wrong homes in the wrong location, and another example of the disempowerment of a local planning authority.

# The Nature Recovery Green Paper for England

The Government have repeatedly affirmed its goal of environmental improvement, to leave the environment in a better state than they found it. The Secretary of State has described DEFRA's goal of halting the decline in species abundance as "our compass" and this is supported by the analysis of the Dasgupta report on the value of nature to society and the economy.

The Government has its international "30 x 30" commitment that 30% of land is to be managed for nature by 2030.

In March 2020 DEFRA had around 29 Arm's Length Bodies (ALB's) on which it was spending around £3.6Bn. These include the Rural Payments Agency, the Environment Agency and Natural England. The electoral system is seen as too short to act for nature recovery and the idea now is to use the new Environment Act as a focus for democratic pressure to meet legal targets. A theme increasingly seen in relation to improving regulation is that of cost recovery so that regulated persons should cover the cost of their regulation along the lines of the "polluter pays" principle – the costs of pollution should be borne by those causing it.

The 2021 spending review sets a new target to raise £500M in private finance to support nature recovery each year by 2027, raising more than £1Bn by 2030. The proposals envisage a framework for environmental markets, comprehensive standards for nature-based investment, a pipeline of investable nature projects, shifting global financial flows away from nature negative outcomes towards nature positive outcomes, and developing environmental land management schemes for farmers and landowners which leave room for private investment.

Under the Environment Act, the Government commits to halt species decline by 2030, introducing minimum management standards, a protected tier 2, and a highly protected tier 3 reserved for species which not only need protection, but where it is also important to protect their habitat.

The natural world needs habitat, a source of food, and a sustainable balance of predator numbers. That ought to be true across the board – why tiers 2 and 3 separately?

**Mike Bax**  
**WKPS Chairman**



## An Old and Special Oak Tree

This oak tree, *Quercus robur*, commonly known as common oak, Pedunculate oak, European oak or English oak, has a girth of 5.10m, measured at a height of 1.50m, and is approximately 500 years old. It is recorded in the Ancient Tree Inventory and has Veteran Tree Status. The lean of this tree is quite spectacular, and it remains standing despite recent storms. Located at the lower end of public right of way WC323 which runs between Iden Green and Benenden, it is well worth a visit. Perhaps give it a hug?



# Wildflower Meadow

In 1997, my husband and I were able to buy two acres of land adjacent to our garden which had previously been used to grow wheat and oilseed rape. In October 1998, the land was ploughed and sown with a seed mix comprising 80% grass species and 20% native wildflower species. Happily, our neighbours were of the same mind, so we then had a four-acre expanse of meadow with just a hedge between us. By early 1999 the whole area had been fenced and enclosed by hundreds of tiny hedge plants (50% hawthorn and five other native species). In November that year, a large pond was dug in our meadow which, full of impatience, we filled with tap water, resulting in a phone call from the water company querying our unusually large metered bill! This is not now a course of action to be recommended.

In the early years the meadow required quite a bit of attention, with frequent mowing in the first year and always, even now, all cuttings removed to ensure the survival of more delicate species and not enrich the soil, which encourages coarse species such as dock and thistle. Control of thistle and hogweed remains a constant battle. Later, the annual maintenance regime settled into a spring and autumn cut, the latter being carried out by a local farmer who bales up and removes the hay. The young hedge was hard-pruned with secateurs for several years before we resorted to the farmer's flail, itself not without problems, but we are now considering 'rewilding' some of the hedge by letting it all grow on, rather than just selected

trees. We have also planted a variety of tree species – beech, hazel, rowan, cherry, goat willow, wild service and fruit trees – as well as shrubs such as wayfaring tree, dogwood and spindle, elsewhere in the meadow.

The variety of wildflowers now varies from year to year, and has declined overall, but we have had new species appear, too, such as orchids, and the meadow continues to be a real delight. The flush of spring colour begins with a carpet of cowslips, followed by oxeye daisies, vetches, bird's-foot-trefoil, ragged-robin and self-heal. Yellow rattle has spread and being parasitic on grass, has prevented these becoming dominant. In summer, ladies' bedstraw, knapweed and wild carrot turn the field gold, purple and white.

With the flowers comes an increase in butterflies, birds and other insects generally, and abundant seeds in late summer bring in birds such as goldfinches. Badgers and foxes also frequent the meadow. Unfortunately, in the early years the alien weed *Crassula helmsii* appeared in the pond and, despite our efforts to eradicate it, including a total clear-out by the Stour Countryside Project, it has gradually taken over, together with bulrush and willow, with consequent loss of marginal plants and dragonflies. A decision now has to be made as to whether to try another clear-out or allow the pond to develop into a marsh habitat and dig another small pond for dragonflies, etc. The meadow is an ongoing project, but one well worth the effort!

*Gale King*





Those members who are under the age of 70 will have lived the entirety of their lives during the reign of HM Queen Elizabeth II. Just to state this fact is remarkable, and as the Queen reaches the extraordinary milestone of her Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years since her accession to the throne, we rightly are looking forward to celebrating her achievement and a lifetime of devoted service and duty to her country and to the many other countries and dominions of which she is also the monarch.

Many of you will already have plans to mark the Jubilee in the manner most appropriate to you. Some of our towns and villages are far advanced in their planning with beacon lighting, street parties, carnivals and other such community activities among the ideas being developed. But for those of you who are looking for a more permanent – and perhaps more personal – memento of the occasion, you may wish to consider planting a tree. The Queen's Green Canopy ([queensgreencanopy.org](http://queensgreencanopy.org)) is a tree-planting scheme which looks to map all the trees planted across the country in recognition of the Platinum Jubilee.

For those who are seeking longevity, an English oak may be the most straightforward idea. But if space is limited and all-year-round

attraction is sought, perhaps Malus Royalty may appeal. Other plants with royal connections include Rhododendron Elizabeth, Clematis Elizabeth, the Queen Elizabeth rose, and a new introduction, Rose Precious Platinum. One way or another this remarkable achievement deserves to be celebrated, and we hope that across the Weald you will toast the focus of our celebration loud and long.

***Peregrine Massey***  
***WKPS President***

## *Lake Fishing for the Modest Angler*

Today's modern angler tends to be a trophy hunter, happy to catch the same species time and again; the only consideration being how much does it weigh. Fisheries increasingly focus on marketing their 'specimen' lakes, which makes complete commercial sense, these lakes after all put bums on banks. So, if bloated carp or grotesque catfish that take an hour to land are not for you, then where can you fish for what may be just swimming by?

Happily, there are venues that still cater for the old school Jack Hargreaves type fishermen, those that have perhaps left the sport bamboozled by the overwhelming array of gadgets and gizmos that adorn the shelves of our tackle shops. The following lakes will ask little more of you than a reasonable size landing net, a landing mat, barbless hooks and of course a valid fishing licence, but it would be wise to check out their full Ts & Cs. They all sell day tickets, have helpful bailiffs and thanks to the 'specimen revenue' have greatly improved their facilities. However, be aware they do all have specimen lakes, so if I may I will guide you to the gentler, more relaxing waters where you won't get dragged in by a 60lb catfish!

### **Hartley Lands, Swattenden Lane, Cranbrook**

Two lakes to consider at this site, Reservoir and Finches lakes. Don't be put off by 'reservoir'. It's not a featureless water with a concrete dam at one end, no it's a modest body nicely landscaped with plenty of birdlife to observe while waiting for the float to go under. Finches lake, that sits beneath Reservoir, is a very pretty narrow stretch, sheltered from nipping winds and benefitting from greatly improved and well maintained swims.

### **Wylands Farm, Powdermill Lane, Battle**

The Old Speci lake is a truly beautiful and secluded place to spend a day. The water does house largish carp, but there are plenty of other species to entertain.

### **Greenacres Farm Fishery, Sissinghurst Road, Biddenden**

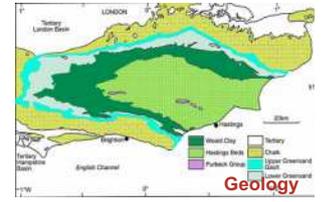
From the fisherman's lodge follow the track down to Heron Lake. Again, a sheltered water affording plenty of room to cast to your heart's content. Very well stocked with healthy fish.

***Keith Emmett***

# Talks



Wealden Hall Houses



I expected that “Retirement” would be a smooth transition from full-time paid work to part-timer paid work, to unpaid part-time work. In this latter stage I wasn’t expecting a new and different career, but it has got me going!

For three years now I have been writing articles for Watch on the Weald. The choice of subjects is almost accidental. Some I am familiar with (for example, we have lived in and restored four listed Wealden Hall houses). Other articles require a lot of research (PLUTO – the story behind the WW2 fuel pipeline through the Weald to the Rhine). They are all related to the Weald. They all hold my interest.

This year has seen a new development – giving talks. My articles in this magazine have caught the attention of a member of local groups with an interest in one of the subjects. As a result I have given talks to a History Society on PLUTO and to a Nature Recovery Group on The Ground Under Our Feet (geology). Another PLUTO comes up in August.

Each talk starts with who I am, what WKPS does, then the subject and finally a wrap-up by the group organiser. It is a good opportunity to convey information and to explain the work of WKPS.

Twenty years after giving work-based presentations I am now catching up with PowerPoint – some way to go yet - and PowerPoint via zoom. It really feels like a new career – a challenge but exciting, and I hope, resulting in talks that are relevant and well received.

*David Northcroft*

## what a wonderful weald help us keep it that way



**wkps**  
weald of kent protection society

The aim of our dedicated team of volunteers is to protect our beautiful Wealden towns, villages and countryside from the effects of damaging and unsuitable development, preserving its charm and character for future generations to enjoy. We welcome active members to help us with a range of activities, from scrutinising planning applications to organising events. If, like us, you care about the Weald, please get in touch and get involved.

find out more: [www.wkps.org.uk](http://www.wkps.org.uk)  
[secretary@wkps.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wkps.org.uk) 07919 871543

# WEATHER TO GO OR STAY



Now here's a thing; for many years I have dreamed of spending that miserable time of year of February to early March somewhere warm and comfortable, away from the long nights, the rain and the fact that the landscape seems to take forever to show me that spring is around the corner. So, this year I did just that, 6 weeks on the Costa del Sol in a villa close to the beach, with a pool – what's not to like!



Sometimes be careful what you wish for is what I say. Of course, the weather was warmer, the restaurants were good, the mountain scenery was great but... I missed things. I missed the history that goes with our historic Wealden landscape, the castles, age-old villages, the long list of battles fought in and over where we live, that create those moments of reflection. I longed for the landscape of woods, marsh and farmland that are the ancient tapestry that is the Wealden landscape. I also reflected on our seascape with its fishing and travel history, a gateway to and from both this unique area and the UK as a whole.

I found myself longing to see the bare trees, and those small signs that spring is not too far away. For example, celandines showing their brilliant yellow star-shaped flowers, hazel catkins, and of course the wonderful nodding heads of thousands of daffodils planted, naturalised and very present. In the world of fauna, in Spain I was lucky enough to see Eurasian Cranes, Storks and an impressive convocation of eagles, an amazing sight, but back home I missed winter migrants like Brent Geese, Fieldfares and Redwings leaving to return to their northern summer homes. The sights and sounds of departing migrants are especially visible in this area with some

well-known and famous bird observation points at Dungeness and Rye harbour to name but two. I can recommend, for example: <http://ploddingbirder.blogspot.com/> if you want to keep up to date with what is going and what is arriving and of course there are many others too.

Finally, I missed my people. By this I don't just mean friends and neighbours, but 'how we do things around here'. Of course, I had some wonderful experiences in Spain with helpful and friendly locals and expats alike, but you cannot beat your own home space. I am lucky to be surrounded by great countryside, good friends, a historic landscape, and a plethora of points of interest from local produce and crafts to historic landscapes, buildings and villages. It's funny, but sometimes you need to go away and look back to appreciate what you have.

So, what about next year? Well, I'd like to try somewhere different for less time, somewhere historic and I am open to ideas on that one, but definitely, yes definitely NOT 6 weeks away from the Wealden landscape, its history, wildlife and people. We are lucky to live in a unique and beautiful area of the UK. I am planning to explore even more of it. It gets into your blood and bones, and I am very happy for that. Bring on the seasons, I plan to appreciate them all.



*Caroline Brent*

# Nature Notes

Ukraine is the second largest country by land mass in the whole of Europe and won its independence from the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Geographically Ukraine is also known as the Eastern European plain and is one of the world's major food producers.

Now, in early April, the country is crawling with Russian troops and Ukrainian citizens are giving everything to protect their motherland.



However, the national animal of Ukraine is not some gigantic creature, but a Nightingale. The Nightingale is an essential element in Ukrainian folklore as a harbinger of spring and a voice of sweet, happy sounds, and we think of it in much the same way in the Weald of Kent – one of the Nightingales last English strongholds.

These birds along with thousands of other species, repeat a perfectly routine migratory event every spring. A bird launches itself into the night sky – perhaps a Nightingale in West Africa, flying upwards into the darkness, joining the countless other birds engaged on similar journeys. These birds are driven by instinct crafted by natural selection over the

course of millions of years. That instinct has told the Nightingale it is time to go, time to venture thousands of miles to Ukraine where it should find living conditions better for the next few months, as has been the case for generations, upon generations of its ancestors. The Nightingale travels without any knowledge of what may have happened to its breeding grounds, or any of the places in between since the last time it made the journey. It just goes. The Ukrainian Nightingales believe there is somewhere to go and a way to get back. May the force be with them!

In these troubled times WKPS have been unable to hold any fundraising events, but thanks to generous legacies from members we continue to financially weather the storm. WKPS now has a link on the homepage of its website to make it easier to accept donations directly. We also hope that you consider a charitable bequest to WKPS when you plan your estate.

# Dates for the Diary 2022

**Nightingale Tour  
Shadoxhurst  
Wednesday 4th May**

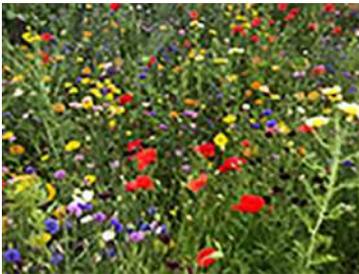
**NEARLY  
SOLD  
OUT!**



This will be a Donation only event for members and their friends.

If you would like to make a donation to WKPS (as a donation we are able to claim gift aid!) we would recommend a minimum of £15 per person or £20 per couple, but this is purely voluntary.

Drinks & nibbles at 6.30pm at Shadoxhurst followed by an educational tour of the farm before searching out the singing nightingales. Suitable walking footwear and outdoor clothing recommended. There will be quite a long walk with plenty of stops and no vehicle transport will be available.



**Wild Flower Meadows Tour  
Shadoxhurst  
Tuesday 7th June**

A new event for the calendar – running along similar lines to the Nightingale Tour.

There will hopefully be an impressive show of orchids, together with a number of other species at different stages in their growth cycles. The farm is in the Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the walk will pass through a noted block of ancient woodland. Suitable walking footwear and outdoor clothing recommended.

**WKPS Annual General Meeting  
Tenterden Town Hall  
Wednesday 15th June**

Details on flyer enclosed

# Dates for the Diary 2022

## Wealden Literary Festival Boldshaves Sat 25th & Sun 26th June



WKPS will have a stand at this unique Festival. Featuring an extensive programme for children, a commitment to the great outdoors, creativity and the local community, it is a must to visit. Talks and debates from an array of acclaimed authors and poets, with local artists and craftsmen, displaying their skills or passing them down are just fascinating.

Tickets are now on sale [www.wealdenliteraryfestival.co.uk](http://www.wealdenliteraryfestival.co.uk)



## Vineyard Tour & Wine Tasting Woodchurch Vineyard Thursday 14th July

A guided vineyard tour and wine tasting is a wonderful way to spend time with family and friends. Woodchurch will welcome you to the vineyard and give you an experience to remember. You will meet Graham Barbour the founder and owner who will take you on a personal journey and you'll learn all about the story behind the vineyard and the wine. Tour lasts approx. 1 hour 15 mins and includes:

- A guided walk around Woodchurch vineyard with an explanation of the various vineyard activities that occur throughout the year
- A tasting of 4 Woodchurch wines and a chance to learn about the wine making process.

This is followed by cheese and charcuterie sharing boards.

## Boldshaves Event Woodchurch Friday 23rd September



If you have any suggestions for future events WKPS could organise please get in touch with [secretary@wkps.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wkps.org.uk) or call 01580 861246

WKPS now has a link on its website to make it easier to accept donations directly. We also hope that you consider a charitable bequest to WKPS when you plan your estate.

**CURRENT SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2022/23 ARE NOW DUE. IF YOU DO NOT PAY BY STANDING ORDER PLEASE SEND YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS IN. OR PLEASE SET UP A STANDING ORDER AS BELOW.**

**WEALD OF KENT PROTECTION SOCIETY  
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP – CHARITY NO 261992  
Membership runs from 1st April – 31st March**

Personal details: (Please use block capitals)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

I/we enclose a cheque in favour of Weald of Kent Protection Society for £15 Single/£20 joint subscription or I/we have paid by bank transfer to A/c 01754514, sort code 30-90-28 (please clearly state your full name as reference)

Please send to WKPS Secretary, 5 Castle Hurst, Bodiam, East Sussex TN32 5UW  
Email: Secretary@wkps.org.uk

**GIFT AID**

I would like the Weald of Kent Protection Society to recover the tax on my annual subscription or any donation that I have made since the date below, or may make in the future. I confirm that the income tax/capital gains tax I pay in the appropriate tax year will be at least equal to the tax reclaimed on my subscription/donation(s).

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**STANDING ORDER INSTRUCTION TO \_\_\_\_\_ Bank Plc**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

I authorise you to pay Lloyds Bank, Tenterden 30-90-28 now and on 1st April each year The Weald of Kent Protection Society Charity 261992 (A/c No 01754514) the sum of £ \_\_\_\_\_  
Until further notice my A/c No \_\_\_\_\_ Sort code \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



Another fantastic way you can help support the work the Weald of Kent Protection Society does. Please go to [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk), the first tab is supporting, go into this and enter the name of your chosen charity as Weald of Kent Protection Society. Then every time you shop with Amazon please ensure you go to the Amazon Smile page and 0.5% of all your purchases will go to WKPS. Thank you!

## Disclaimer

The views expressed in the articles reflect the author(s) opinions and are not necessarily the views of WKPS. The published articles and all other content is published in good faith. Watch on the Weald cannot guarantee and accepts no liability for loss or damage of any kind caused by any content. Content may not be, either partially or in whole, reprinted or reproduced without written consent.



# wkps

## The Weald of Kent Protection Society

Registered Charity: 261992

President: Peregrine Massey

Chairman: Michael Bax



Society Secretary: Fay Merrick

**[secretary@wkps.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wkps.org.uk)**

**Tel: 01580861246 / 07919 871543**

Planning Secretary: Peta Grant

**[planning@wkps.org.uk](mailto:planning@wkps.org.uk)**



Article submissions & letters please send to Society Secretary