

Deer Collision Event – 9th October 2007

A Partnership Approach

– Steve Rodrick, Chief Officer, Chilterns Conservation Board

- The Conservation Board and highway authorities covering the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Bucks, Herts, Oxon and Beds) have been working together on a number of area based integrated traffic management projects for several years. The Countryside Agency was instrumental in helping these projects by providing staff time in the early days and grant aid for many years subsequently. This reflected the importance given in the AONB Management Plan to trying to manage the traffic in the Chilterns and to ensure that highways management was sensitive to the special landscape of the area. Inevitably other partners have become involved as the needs of each area were identified, usually with the help of consultants.
- The '3 counties' traffic management project began 5 years ago, to look at traffic and transport issues in an area of the Chilterns AONB covering Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire with the National Trusts, Ashridge Estates at its natural centre.
- The issues affecting Ashridge were at the heart of the project from the outset – the National Trust has been, therefore, a main partner from the beginning. In many ways the Ashridge Estate is a microcosm of the Chilterns in terms of its landscape and the type of issues which require management - fast moving through traffic, large numbers of visitors and abundant wildlife.
- Ashridge is also typical of the Chilterns insofar as it lies in two counties - a particular challenge and objective was to get adjacent highway authorities to collaborative more successfully. As this project has shown Bucks and Herts highways authorities have worked together very constructively.
- Transport Consultants JMP were appointed to carry out public consultation to establish what the issues were in the area and suggest ways in which they may be addressed.
Funding for the project has come from the counties Local Transport Plans and with contributions from the National Trust and the Chilterns Conservation Board.

Fourteen issues were identified these included:-

- B4506 Route Management Strategy
- Reduced Speed limits
- Improved Rights of Way link between Ivinghoe Beacon and Dunstable Downs Gateway Centre
- Village entry signs
- Improved links and information for Cyclists
- Improved Public transport Information
- Deer Vehicle Collisions

- Early on a link was made with the national Deer Collisions Project run by Dr. Jochen Langbein. This helped us realise that the Chilterns was a hotspot for deer vehicle collisions, and that Ashridge had a severe problem - one of the worst in the country. This cemented a partnership linking national, regional and local organisations. As the project developed further international links had to be made to learn of experience elsewhere and to source some of the technology now used for trials at Ashridge.
- The majority of issues identified in the initial JMP study report have or are currently being addressed and monitoring of deer vehicle collisions will continue, along with increasing public awareness.
- Much has been learnt from the work at Ashridge - what works and what doesn't. In many cases the trials were inconclusive making interpretation difficult. As the experimental period draws to a close we face a major challenge, notably to make sure that the knowledge and experience gained by the highway authorities is applied elsewhere in the Chilterns and the four highways authority areas in which the Chilterns lies. Little of what has been learned is unique to the Chilterns and the lessons can be applied more widely – that may seem a straight forward challenge but past experience suggests it can be difficult to achieve. Today's conference will be a good first step.