

**Field Systems in the High  
Weald  
2015-2016**

**High Weald AONB  
& Historic England  
Kent Landscapes Group Meeting  
22-05-2015**

# AIMS

- A1 To better understand the history and landscape context of field system resource in the High Weald
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- A2 To inform protection of the distinctive landscape character of the High Weald through identifying the historic character, significance and sensitivity to change, of its field systems -and understanding their relationships with other components in the historic environment in the Weald.
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- A3 To work collaboratively with local authorities, and others, to demonstrate how this understanding can be applied to assist decision-making by planners and land managers, and deepened where appropriate.

# OBJECTIVES

- O1 To provide an overview of the scope and depth of existing information about the extent, history, socio-ecological function and value of field systems in the Weald in order to support an integrated approach to the methodology.
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- O2 To develop a cost effective method of survey and characterisation of field systems utilising existing information - HLC, HER, Lidar, historic maps - that is replicable elsewhere in England, including specific techniques that will help deepen understanding of the heritage value of boundaries and the fields themselves.
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- O3 To clarify the needs and motivations of key audiences and identify synergies with other organisations, policies and programmes involved in the protection of field systems in order to provide effective and tailored guidance.
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- O4 To develop a field systems character statement and assessment framework together with supporting material using nationally consistent terms to inform diverse ways of valuing and managing change.
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- O5 To determine information gaps and the scope for further work.
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- O6 To publish the results of the project in refereed journal/s



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# Background to the Project

- Development pressure and agriculture change
- NELMS - Loss of support for permanent pasture and boundary management
- Boundary removal
- Woodland planting
- Need to meet requirements of NPPF
- Meet HE 4 priority actions in the Draft Corporate Action Plan 2015-2018



# Links with other research

- Builds on:
  - the county HLC's,
  - Farmstead Characterisation
  - Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project
  - Historic Farmsteads and Domestic Buildings in Rape of Hastings NHPP4580 (David and Barbara Martin)
- Historic Fieldsapes research:
  - Oxford Archaeology Institute English Landscape 1500BC to AD1056 *EngLaid*
  - Exeter University “Fields of Britannia Project”
  - East Anglia ‘Where the Enclosures Be’ – Martin & Satchell 2008

# Field systems in High Weald

- Pilot Project to develop methodology for identification of historic field systems
- Multi-disciplinary approach
- Field and desk based – build GIS data base compatible with HERs, use of new approaches including drone survey.
- Multiple outcomes including
  - *Draft Field systems Assessment Framework*
  - *Draft Field systems Character Statement*

# What are Field systems

- Groups of fields which show similar characteristics including association with other landscape features = Fieldscapes



# Field system attributes

- Size
- Shape
- Relationship of individual fields
- Relationship with other landscape features
  - Farmsteads, routeways, woodlands,
- Boundary type – physical & botanical, ‘furniture’
- Adjacent land use
- Biodiversity
- All the above contribute to local character & distinctiveness

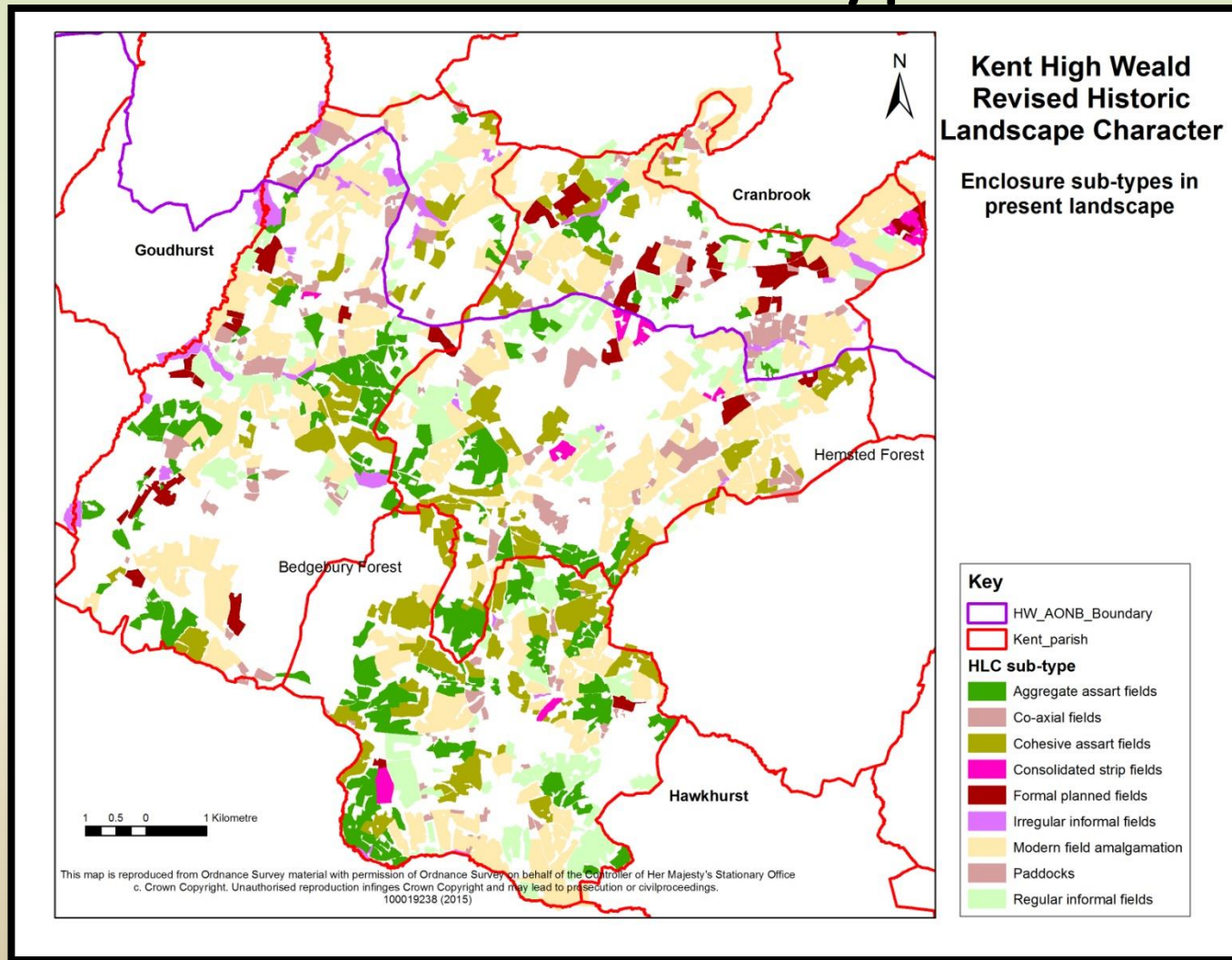
# Historic Processes which influence the character of Field systems

- Topography
- Soils
- Settlement history
- Farming systems through time
- Tenurial changes
- Modern farming

# Revised HLC for Kent

- Kent HLC 2001 – Phase 1. Early HLC with attributes ‘embedded’ in description. Broad brush and limited analysis ability
- Sussex HLC 2007 – Later HLC where attributes captured in data base. Finer-grained and infinite analysis ability.
- HW AONB gradually updating Kent HLC 2001 on a parish by parish basis to that of Sussex.
- Reveals detailed local character in field systems patterns suggesting some areas of ‘open’ type fields and field organisation.

# Extract from revised Kent HLC showing field HLC sub-types



# Practical Exercise

- Aim to look at several different field systems
  - How old each field system ?
  - Which are/is most sensitive to change ?
  - Which has most compatibility for small scale settlement expansion (50-100 houses) ?
  - What should be retained from the fieldscape to perpetuate the local character and distinctiveness of the field system ?
  - Don't know ?











# High Weald “Aggregate Assarts”

Attwater Farm, 1



Attwater Farm 4



# Ridge & Furrow in assart fields





# Kent North Downs, Historic Parkland & Semi-regular fields

Lees Court 2



Lees Court 3



# Medway Gap

**Birling, 3**

**“Modern reorganised fields”**



**Birling 2**

**“Modern reorganised fields”**





# Paddlesworth - dog-leg boundary



# High Weald

**Benenden 4 “Regular informal fields”**



**Benenden 1  
“Regular informal fields”**





# Benenden – possible headland or boundary





# Implications of boundary removal and increased field size on soil run-off



# Fieldscape at Bedgebury

