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Sense of Place Toolkit



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“ Greensand Country is a beautiful and loved landscape. It is defined by the Greensand Ridge, a band of higher ground stretching from Leighton Buzzard to Gamlingay, which rises out of the surrounding vales to create a locally unique environment. The area contains all of Bedfordshire's remaining heathland, more than half of its woodland and 29 historic parklands. It is a landscape rich in wildlife and cultural heritage, with its own special qualities and sense of place. A 'green oasis' of peace and quiet, rolling countryside and breath-taking views. A place where people feel able to slow down, unwind and connect with nature. Somewhere to escape urban life, breathe easy and feel uplifted. Come and discover it for yourself! ”

This Toolkit can help you make the most of being a part of Greensand Country. It contains ideas for how to improve your marketing; your customer relations and visitor welcome; and your own enjoyment of the landscape. By working together, we can build a strong brand for Greensand Country that benefits everyone. **Let's get started...!**



Leighton Buzzard Canal



KEY

-  Greensand Ridge Walk
-  Greensand Cycleway
-  Greensand Horse Routes

Visit
www.greensandcountry.com
for downloadable routes and maps



Introduction

Welcome to the Sense of Place Toolkit: a resource for helping you to get the most out of being in Greensand Country.

Your business, community group or organisation is located in a special landscape surrounded by some of the best-loved and most beautiful countryside in England. It is the distinctive landscape of Greensand Country that helps to attract residents, visitors and employers to the area. This Toolkit is an aid to your own marketing activity and is designed to help you draw upon the special qualities of Greensand Country in how you promote your services and engage with customers. In doing so, your business or organisation can become more competitive, more attractive and better connected with local networks.

Greensand Country has a distinct identity or 'sense of place'. This is especially important for local pride in the area. If visitors connect emotionally with a place they are more likely to develop an affinity for the area, which in turn means they are likely to spend more time there, spend more money, tell their friends about it and visit again in future. In this way, promoting a strong sense of place can benefit the local economy.

This toolkit aims to help you understand and promote Greensand Country's sense of place in order to benefit your business or organisation and help build a strong brand for the area.

As part of the development of this toolkit, a consultation was carried out with local people and visitors to understand Greensand Country's sense of place and what gives the area its identity. Many of the suggestions from the consultation have been used in the toolkit to provide your customers with personal recommendations.

The Toolkit is exclusive to Greensand Country Supporters and all content (text and images) is royalty-free and available for you to use however you choose. So dive in and get started!



What is 'sense of place'?

A 'sense of place' is the term used to describe the emotions and experiences we associate with places. It's how places make us feel.

A sense of place is what gives an area its identity and makes it different from elsewhere. It is made up of the different landscapes, wildlife, history, people, sights, sounds, smells, tastes, memories and many other things that contribute to our experience of a place. It changes when we travel from home to work, or from the city to the countryside, or when visiting familiar or new places. One way of understanding it is to think about how you might describe the area where you live – which words would you use, what would you focus on, how does it make you feel when you picture it in your mind? That's a sense of place.



How is this relevant to me?

A sense of place can influence the choices we make over where to live, work and spend our holidays. It can influence the value we place on products and services offered by businesses. It contributes to our culture and the identities of local communities. It can even impact on people's health and quality of life.

Everyone has their own understanding of sense of place, whether they use the term or not. If you are an individual with an interest in the local area, or you belong to a community group, business or organisation, then the more you develop an understanding of your area the more you will appreciate its qualities. This can benefit you and your community in a number of ways. For example it can:

- Help bring communities together and connect people with the landscape
- Add value to local products and services and help businesses develop new products
- Provide inspiration for education and the creative arts
- Improve the 'welcome' and local knowledge offered by tourism staff
- Strengthen the identity or 'brand' of an area by encouraging different groups to work together in promoting its special qualities



Why become a Greensand Country supporter?

Becoming a Greensand Country supporter demonstrates your commitment to the beautiful landscape that surrounds your business, organisation or community. As a supporter you will benefit from access to high quality marketing materials, such as a photo library and this toolkit. You will be able to display the Greensand Country logo on your promotional materials and website as a sign that you care about this landscape, its heritage and communities. Importantly, you will join a network of other supporters who also care about Greensand Country and are keen to promote its 'sense of place' for the benefit of everyone – to help boost the local economy; to protect and care for the environment; and to celebrate what people love about their local area.

By working together we can build momentum around the Greensand Country brand and continue to promote it as a great place to live, work and spend quality time.

Becoming a Greensand Country supporter is **FREE**. All we ask is that you help to support the **six principles of Greensand Country membership**:

- Raise awareness of Greensand Country as a great place to live, work and visit
- Help to care for our environment
- Support the local economy
- Promote our cultural heritage and traditions
- Contribute to the health and well-being of the community
- Share knowledge and understanding of the landscape

More information is available at:

www.greensandcountry.com/support/business-charter

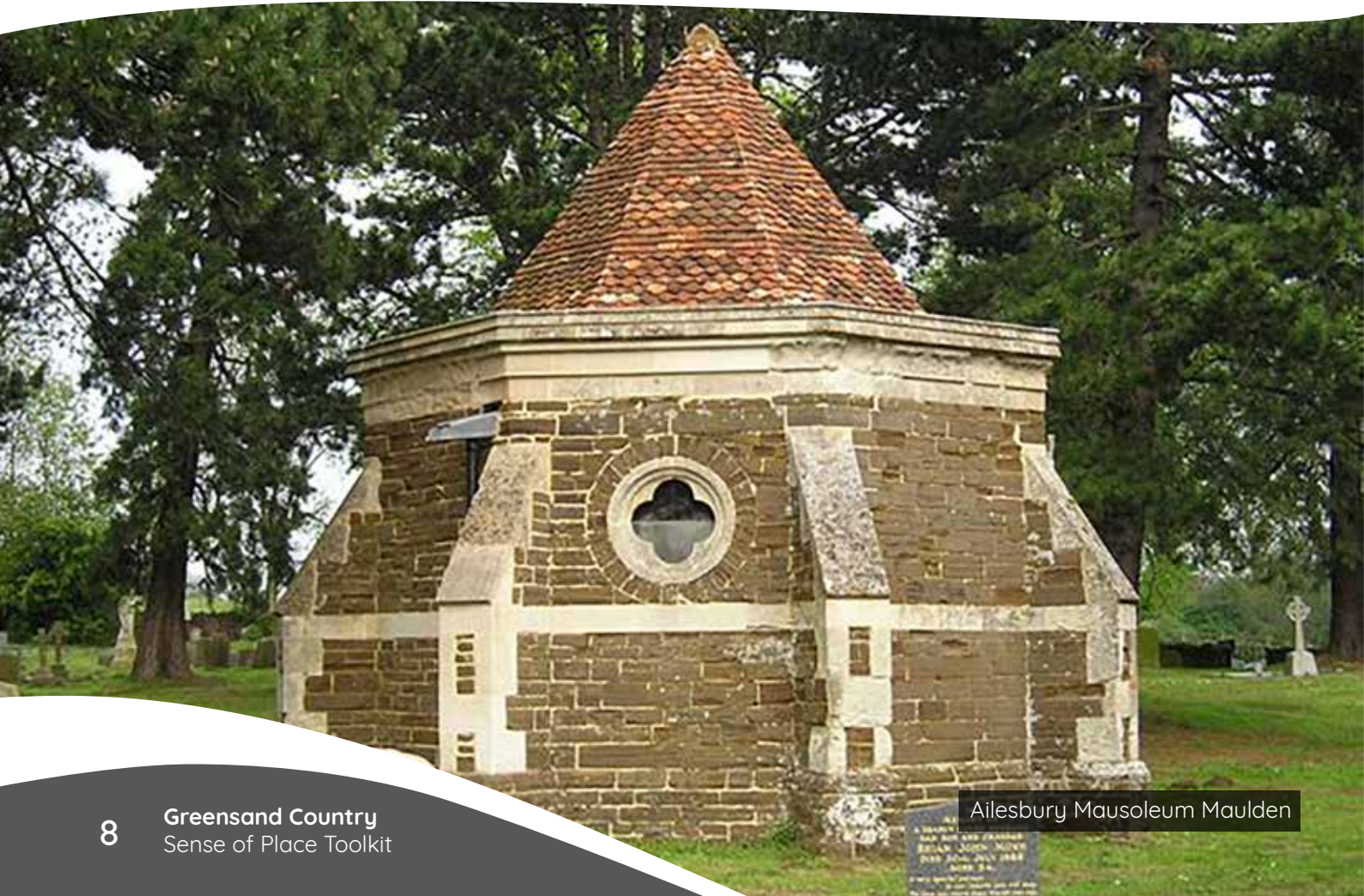
Who produced this toolkit?

The Greensand Country Sense of Place Toolkit is published and managed by The Greensand Trust: an independent charity conserving and enhancing the distinctive landscape, wildlife and history of the Greensand Ridge, on behalf of the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership (GCLP) and funded by the Greensand Ridge Rural Development Programme.

The Toolkit has been developed by consultants Countryscape on behalf of all Greensand Country Landscape Partnership partners and participants. It is based on information collected through consultation with local people and visitors to discover what is special about Greensand Country. The information collected during the study is invaluable and we would like to thank everyone who contributed to the project!

We are happy to share this information and hope it inspires you to use your own local knowledge and sense of place to benefit your work, community and Greensand Country as a whole.

Keep up to date with the latest information, events and activities in Greensand Country at www.greensandcountry.com or follow us on @greensandsocial on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.



Ailesbury Mausoleum Maulden

Contact

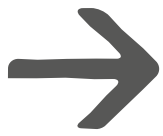
For enquiries about the Sense of Place Toolkit please contact The Greensand Trust:

 01234 743 666

 team@greensandcountry.com



English oak trees at Flitwick Moor



START HERE — How to use this Toolkit

This section explains how to get the most out of the Sense of Place Toolkit.

What is the Sense of Place Toolkit and what can it be used for?

The Sense of Place Toolkit is a collection of resources to help you benefit from the special qualities of Greensand Country. We use the word ‘toolkit’ because it is focused on practical outcomes. In the same way that a mechanic’s toolkit contains different tools for different jobs, the Sense of Place Toolkit can be adapted to your own specific needs and interests. You don’t need any special skills or expertise to use this Toolkit. All you need is a passion for your local area and a willingness to do some detective work or be creative!

The Toolkit isn’t intended to be read from cover to cover like a book. Instead, think of it as being like a ‘menu’ that you can choose from whenever you need some fresh ideas and inspiration.

You might like to use the Toolkit when:

- Creating publicity materials such as a leaflet, website, advertisement, or social media post
- Informing your customers or visitors about your local area
- Developing a plan, proposal or strategy
- Providing training to your staff or colleagues
- Working with your local community



STEP 1: Deciding what's relevant for you

The Sense of Place Toolkit is organised into different sections, each one focusing on a different aspect of Greensand Country:

- **Discover** what makes Greensand Country such a special place. Unlock the secrets of the landscape and learn about its unique natural and cultural heritage – from the important geology of the Greensand Ridge and its abundant wildlife, to the rich history of the area's great country estates, idyllic churches and more.
- **Experience** a wide range of things to see and do. Take a leisurely amble around picturesque towns and villages; enjoy a trip out with friends and family to popular visitor attractions; treat yourself to a delicious pub lunch or a cream tea at a traditional manor house; spend time shopping for quality local produce. There really is something for everyone.
- **Explore** the area's popularity as a destination for outdoor pursuits – from its network of well-used footpaths, cycleways and bridleways, to its much-loved woodlands, nature reserves, parks and panoramic viewpoints.

Start by reading the introduction to each section and decide which are most relevant to you and your interests. Then move on to Step 2.



STEP 2: Planning and preparation

Each section of the Toolkit contains five types of information:

- **An introduction**, providing a short description of the section and what Greensand Country has to offer. You are welcome to use these summaries free of charge in your own publicity materials. Click on the download links for copies of text in Microsoft Word format.
- **Lists of places, activities and features** that visitors might be interested in. These lists contain recommendations made by local people and organisations, so you can in turn be sure of recommending them to your own customers. You can also use the lists to quickly boost your local knowledge and learn more about your area.
- **Things people say about Greensand Country**, which can be used to help illustrate a particular activity or feature that you might like to promote to your customers (e.g... something from one of the lists). Visitors love to hear about places from local people and these quotes can be a great way of adding a 'personal touch' to how you communicate.
- **Action points** and ideas for simple things you can do to learn about and help support Greensand Country – and in doing so, add value to your business by making customers aware that you belong to a special landscape.
- **Information and resources**, including useful websites and contacts for obtaining more information about each topic.

You may have already decided which sections of the Toolkit are relevant to you. Now read over your chosen sections in detail and use some of the Action Points to put together a simple plan of what you'd like to do.

STEP 3: Action!

Using the Toolkit isn't necessarily about doing new things from scratch. It's often more important to look at what you are already doing and make simple improvements, perhaps just by doing things a bit differently: small steps, rather than giant leaps!

Here are two great ways to get started...

Include some information about Greensand Country and its special qualities in your own publicity materials, using the resources available in the Toolkit. This can be done very easily the next time you update your website, social media, printed literature and so on. By doing so, you'll add a 'sense of place' to your publicity. People prefer to deal with organisations they can identify with and relate to – and promoting your local sense of place helps people to do this. If you are a business, it can also give you an advantage over competitors and encourage customers to place greater value on your products and services.

Get out and explore your local area for yourself. We often take for granted the special qualities of the place in which we live and work. Try looking afresh at your area and imagine you are visiting for the first time. What time is the shop open; what special produce is on the menu in the local pub; where's best to go for a walk; are there any local stories that people like to tell; what breed are those cows in the field? Collect your own information about your area and use it when talking to customers or visitors. Share your knowledge and enthusiasm, make a connection and celebrate what's special about your place.



Warden Vineyard

There are lots of other simple steps you can take. Examples include:

If you are a business...

- Tell the story of your own family or business – and use this story to personalise your products and celebrate your own connection with Greensand Country.
- Source or develop materials to help your customers explore the area. Perhaps a map of your favourite local walks and places to visit; or an I-Spy sheet and other games for families with children.
- Consider the benefits of using local suppliers and produce next time you review your supply chain – and make a feature of these local links in your marketing.

If you are a community group...

- Use information from the Sense of Place Toolkit as a way of describing what's special about your area to other people – it can help them understand the landscape better and what it has to offer; and it also helps to strengthen the Greensand Country 'brand'.
- Set up a project exploring the sense of place of your local area. This can be a great way of bringing a community together and enabling everyone to share and celebrate what's special about their place.
- Keep a record of information that might be useful for updating the Sense of Place Toolkit in future. This is your place and we want to know why it's special to you! Photographs and quotes from local people are especially useful.





If you are an organisation...

- Consider Greensand Country when developing or updating your organisation's plans and strategies – how can you help to support and enhance the area's 'landscape brand'?
- Use the Toolkit to improve your team's own understanding of Greensand Country and what it has to offer visitors. Encourage colleagues to use the Toolkit when providing information to visitors and communities.
- Help put Greensand Country 'on the map' by promoting the area and its special qualities at every opportunity! Not everyone is familiar with the name 'Greensand' and the extent of the area is sometimes a little fuzzy... so try to include a brief description and a copy of the area map when possible.



EXPLORE

Walking, cycling and riding routes

Greensand Country is a great place to get outdoors and discover some fascinating history and amazing views. There are fantastic opportunities for exploring the area on foot, bicycle or horseback.

Walking is an ideal way to get to know Greensand Country and experience what it has to offer. When on foot you are closer to nature and able to take in the views, soak up the landscape and smell the fresh air. There is a good network of Public Rights of Way in the area for you to choose from – whether you're seeking a gentle circular stroll, a brisk walk up to a viewpoint, or a more challenging long-distance footpath. The Greensand Ridge Walk is the area's most famous route, running for 42 miles from Leighton Buzzard to Gamlingay. But rest assured you don't have to tackle it all at once! The walk can very easily be divided into shorter sections and is often best enjoyed as a two-day challenge, for example, during the Bedfordshire Walking Festival. With good public transport links, pubs and accommodation along the way, it's no wonder that 'walking the ridge' is one of Greensand Country's most favoured outdoor pursuits.

Cycling is popular in Greensand Country, where quiet lanes and ever-changing scenery make for great days out by bike. There are plenty of level stretches for leisurely rides, as well as challenging climbs for seasoned cyclists and a network of off-road routes that remain passable year-round, thanks to the area's sandy soil. Check out the trails at

Rushmere Country Park and Aspley Woods. A Greensand Cycle Pass, which permits access to the trails at these sites can be purchased from www.greensandtrust.org

Accompanying the famous Ridge Walk, the Greensand Cycleway / Cycle Ride route runs the length of the area, covering 42 miles between Leighton Buzzard and Gamlingay. It's a great ride to enjoy in one go, but you may prefer to split it into shorter sections or ride one of the circular routes that branch off the main Greensand Cycleway.

Horse riding is a fun way to explore the landscape and the sandy soil of Greensand Country makes it the perfect place for hacking along greenways and bridleways – many of which are dry and mud-free even in winter. The British Horse Society has worked with local organisations to create new circular horse-riding trails and there are several B&Bs offering livery and stabling for overnight guests and their horses. Riders wishing to venture 'off the beaten track' of public bridleways can purchase a Greensand Horse Riding Pass, which permits access to the Greensand Trust's dedicated network of riding trails.

Visit www.greensandtrust.org for details.



Parks and nature reserves

- **Rushmere Country Park** — One of Greensand Country's most popular destinations and a great place to discover nature and enjoy outdoor leisure pursuits over 400 acres of beautiful woodland, heathland and lakes and part of a National Nature Reserve.
- **Amphill Park** — Once a deer park that surrounded Amphill Castle and was popular with Henry VIII. The castle, which was demolished in the 16th Century, was located close to Katherine's Cross. The park now contains a diverse collection of flora and fauna, along with some of the most stunning views from the Greensand Ridge escarpment.
- **Cooper's Hill Nature Reserve** — A great place for nature rambles with a sculpture trail for visitors to explore. Cooper's Hill is one of three remaining areas of heathland in Greensand Country (the others being RSPB The Lodge nature reserve & gardens and Rushmere Country Park) and one of the largest areas of heathland in Bedfordshire.
- **Wildlife Trust Flitwick Moor** — The largest area of wetland in Bedfordshire, renowned for its wildlife and peaty soils.
- **Wildlife Trust Riddy Nature Reserve** — Old water meadows adjacent to the River Ivel near Sandy, now a haven for wildlife.
- **Shuttleworth Swiss Garden at Old Warden Park** — Within the garden are 13 listed structures, an adjacent woodland sculpture trail and resident peacock!
- **RSPB The Lodge nature reserve & gardens** — The Lodge offers an exceptionally rich combination of wildlife and heritage experiences, spanning 220 hectares of woodland, heath and grassland with trails, a natural play area, shop and refreshments.
- **Woburn Park** — Woburn Abbey Deer Park covers 3,000 acres and is home to nine species of deer making it one of the largest private conservation parks in Europe. Woburn Abbey is the seat of the Duke of Bedford and is surrounded by this beautiful deer park.
- **Woburn Gardens** — The 28 acres of gardens at Woburn Abbey offer amazing colours that change with the seasons throughout the year.
- **Sandy Smith Nature Reserve** — Sandy Smith Nature Reserve lies on the floodplain and northern slopes of the Flit Valley between Clophill and Chicksands and includes meadow and wet woodland habitats.



Woburn Deer Park

Woodland

- **Maulden Wood** — One of the largest and most important remnants of ancient woodland in Bedfordshire. The wood is split between greensand and glacial boulder clay areas, which support a diversity of plants and animals.
- **Rushmere's Oak Wood Sculpture Trail** — The Oak Wood Sculpture Trail consists of a series of wooden sculptures and carved benches, created by local craftspeople and chosen by visitors to Rushmere.
- **Chicksands Wood** — Peaceful woods with lots of flora and fauna. Pathways are permissive access and can be reached via the Greensand Ridge Walk.
- **Rowney Warren** — A haven for both walkers and cyclists. Some of the woods are maintained as a mountain bike course, the remainder is a quiet area of pine, oak and beech trees for those seeking a peaceful stroll.
- **Aspley Woods** — Approximately 326ha of mainly conifer plantation with some areas of semi-ancient natural woodland, that lies between Woburn Sands, Bow Brickhill and Aspley Guise, with walking, horse-riding and cycle trails.





“ Greensand Country contains more than half of Bedfordshire’s woodland. The rich woodland habitats support badgers and a wide range of bats. Dormouse and other threatened species are being re-introduced in some areas, and many of the ancient woods are home to rare species of butterfly, such as Purple Emperor and White Admiral ”



People say...

"All of the views are spectacular, but I think the one from Lidlington viewpoint has a real wow factor."

"I think of the Greensand Ridge as both a footpath and a destination in its own right. When walking we usually include a stop off at a pub or tea room along the way."

"Having walked all 42 miles across the Greensand Ridge it is a wonderful diverse walk."

"Amphill has a lovely park, very varied, great history and wildlife. Something for everyone then a nice walk on to Houghton House close by Maulden Heath, a hidden gem."

"My favourite days out have been in the woodlands and heaths of Greensand Country, where I would stumble upon the nationally-rare Adder basking in the bracken, or a butterfly sweeping through the dappled light of the trees."



Action points



Make it clear that your business is within Greensand Country. Display your FREE Greensand Country Supporter window sticker and be sure to tell visitors why you love the area!



Help your visitors to explore the area on foot, bike or horse. Use the Greensand Country website and others to find information about the best trails and most popular events. Where might someone be able to hire a bike, or go horse riding?



Discover the area yourself – explore your local patch and find a few walks or rides that you would recommend from your front door. Try to include some great views, interesting places or pit stops such as pubs and cafés along your routes. Create a simple route map if you're able to.



Recommend a variety of grades of walk – gentle ambles for all abilities; challenging hikes for the more active and adventurous; as well as good seasonal experiences (woods in spring and autumn, or views from the ridge in winter).



Provide facilities for your active guests, if possible – drying space for boots and waterproofs; secure storage for bikes; hearty food and take-away lunches.



Share links to Greensand Country's interactive website for information and downloadable routes. Invite your followers to connect to Greensand Country's social media profiles for the latest events and updates and access free walking, cycling and horse riding leaflets.



Provide maps and guide books (on loan) and tell your visitors where to buy them locally.



Create an information pack for your visitors promoting local routes and attractions. Collect everything together in a folder and try to keep it up-to-date.



Encourage wildlife into your own grounds by providing bird feeders, nesting areas, wildflowers and other plants to attract insects and birds.



Find out about the VisitEngland Welcome Scheme, which provides training and advice for accommodation businesses in welcoming guests with particular requirements (walkers, cyclists, families and people with pets).

Further information is available at
www.greensandcountry.com/explore

EXPERIENCE

What's on and Things to do

Plan a great day out in Greensand Country. There's something for everybody with idyllic villages to explore, home cooked food to eat, adventures to be had, unique handmade crafts to buy and history to discover.

Views: There are many stunning views to discover in Greensand Country. The ridge itself is a prominent feature in the landscape and provides a dramatic backdrop to the views from the lower lying countryside. The ridge is accessible from many of the surrounding villages and towns. From its elevated slopes you can experience panoramic views across the countryside including Marston Vale and the Ouse Valley. Woodlands often frame views on lower ground, whilst landmark churches and other historic buildings provide focal points in the landscape.

Towns and villages: Experience the varied character of towns and villages across Greensand Country. Places such as Woburn, Old Warden and Ampthill contain distinctive styles of architecture characteristic of the area's historic estates. For example: Old Warden estate houses are built in an elaborate 'English Garden' style, with thatched roofs, dormer windows, painted render walls and timber porches; whilst

the Duke of Bedford estate buildings in Woburn are generally built of brick in a distinctive, Georgian style. Greensand Country's idyllic villages contain various historical sites, as well as boutique shops, restaurants, cafés and pubs.

Things to do: If you're looking for a day out then Greensand Country has some fantastic attractions for the whole family. Learn about nature at Rushmere Country Park or Woburn Safari Park; discover the history of aircraft and vehicles at The Shuttleworth Collection and Swiss Garden; and don't miss the trains at Summerfields' Miniature Railway!

Places to shop, eat or drink: Support local businesses, enjoy great experiences and discover unique products in Greensand Country. Stop off at a pub or tearoom after a day of walking to enjoy locally sourced, home cooked food. Or shop for antiques and unique handmade crafts in one of Greensand Country's picturesque villages.



Favourite views

Consultation during development of the Sense of Place Toolkit and local Green Infrastructure Strategies has identified “ten best views” of Greensand Country, as recommended by local people and visitors. This is just a starting point and you may have a favourite view of your own, or know of others through speaking with your customers. If so, let us know by sharing your information and photographs via www.greensandcountry.com/shareyourexperience.

- **View over the Heron Valley from Rushmere Country Park** — The visitor centre and Tree Tops Café at Rushmere Country Park offer visitors stunning views over the Heron Valley. Visitors also enjoy ‘Heron Watch’ from the deck outside the visitor centre. From here you can spend your time watching the herons nesting, whilst a team of volunteers and viewing devices make the experience more interactive.
- **Views of Stockgrove Lake** — The view of Stockgrove Lake, with ducks and swans often framed by the surrounding woodland, is a favourite of visitors. Take a break on one of the benches around the lake and soak up the scenery! The lake is part of a Historic Estate of Stockgrove House and Park, which in part now forms Rushmere Country Park.
- **The view from the Greensand Ridge at Ampthill Great Park** — Many of the favourite views suggested by visitors are those from Ampthill Great Park across Marston Vale. The views from Katherine’s Cross and Breakheart Hill are particular favourites.
- **Old St. Mary’s Church, Clophill** — Old St Mary’s Church is on higher ground to the north of Clophill. The Grade II* listed Church is a scheduled ancient monument and was restored by the Clophill Heritage Trust in 2014. They now offer tours including a visit up spiral staircases to the Church Tower, where you can experience spectacular views over the countryside. It’s ideal for kids and adults to explore, some have surprised loved ones with a proposal at the top of the tower.



View from the Greensand Ridge



- **Views from RSPB The Lodge nature reserve & gardens** — People tell us that all the views from RSPB The Lodge nature reserve & gardens at Sandy are fantastic. There are many viewpoints along each of the trails around the reserve, and The Lodge has a specific accessible raised viewpoint overlooking the new heathland. Binoculars are available to hire from The Gatehouse for a donation.
- **Views from Haynes village** — There are many favourite views from the village of Haynes, including from the higher ground looking out towards Warren Plantation and Chicksands Woods; and the views across the valley towards Haynes Park (the seat located at Plummers Lane is the ideal spot to enjoy the view towards Haynes Park). A perfect sunrise can also be experienced when taking in the view from Haynes across the rolling Greensand dip slope to distant Rowney Warren.
- **Views at Cooper's Hill** — Cooper's Hill sits on the Greensand Ridge and is the largest remaining area and best surviving example of heathland in Bedfordshire. This is a much-loved visitor destination with a good network of paths to help you explore.
- **Looking towards Woburn Abbey** — From the Greensand Ridge, Woburn Abbey looks magical, especially as the deer frequent the lake for a drink.
- **Views at Maulden Woods** — This is a beautiful landscape to experience, with gorgeous views from the Greensand Ridge Walk across the Bedfordshire countryside.
- **Views towards the Ridge** — Views of the Ridge itself from the surrounding lower lying landscapes are particular favourites. The Ridge is an iconic feature of Greensand Country defining much of the area's unique character.

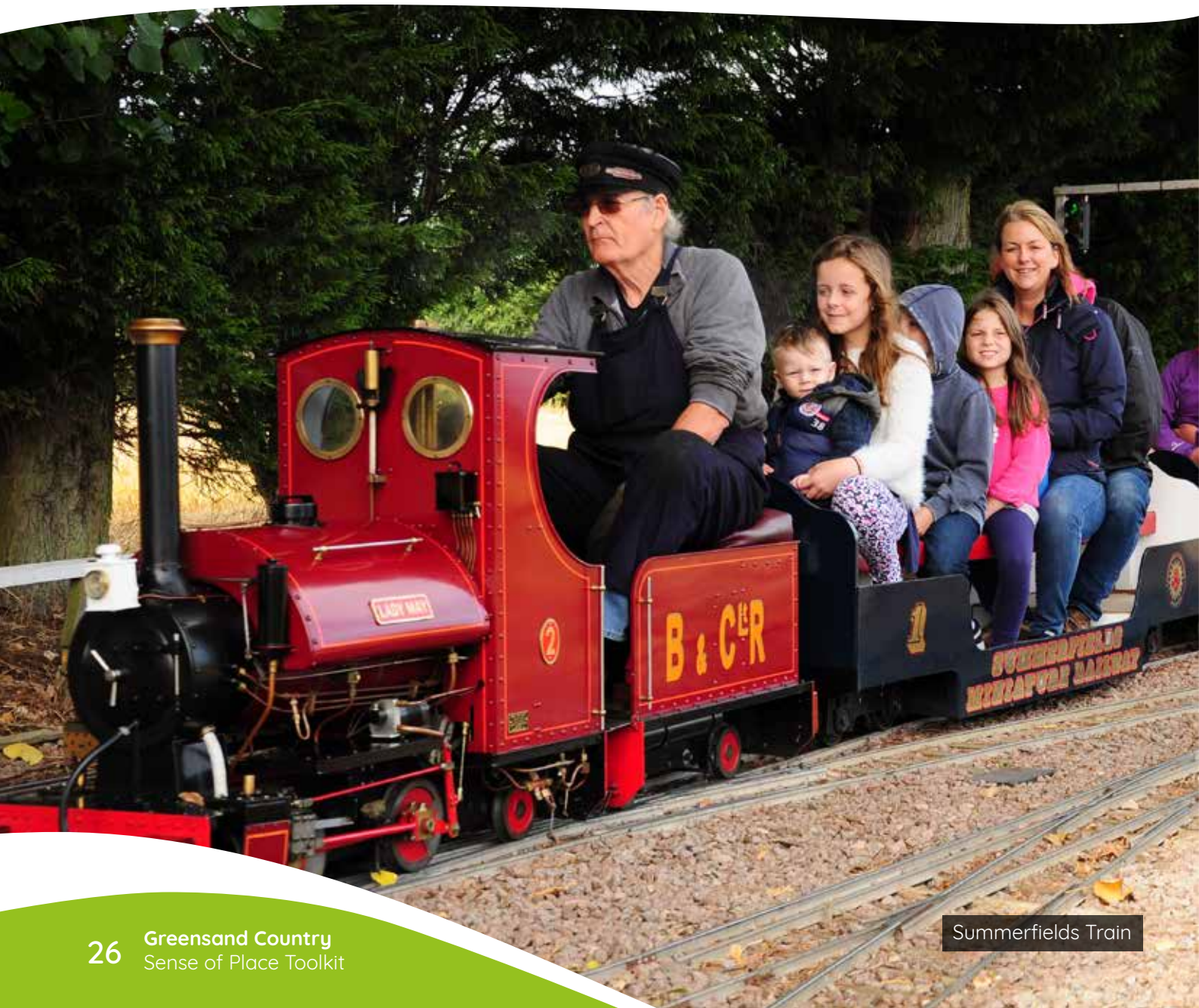
Events

- **Greensand Country Festival** – Annual event that takes place throughout May and is a celebration of the area, which encourages those living within the landscape to get out and explore the outstanding countryside on their doorstep.
- **Ampthill Great Park Events** – Seasonal events throughout the year including Forest school, walking events and cinema film showings.
- **Ampthill Festival** – Organised and run entirely by volunteers, the annual festival comprises of AmpRocks, AmpProms, AmpGala and Ampthill LitFest.
- **Ickwell May Day** – A celebration of spring held on the first bank holiday in May, with a procession, crowning of the May Queen and dancing around the Maypole.
- **Leighton Buzzard living history day** – Celebrating and exploring different periods of history with costumes, displays, food and family experiences.
- **Leighton Linslade Carnival** – Held on the second Saturday of July every year, the carnival is a great family friendly event with stalls, rides and a float procession.
- **Linslade Canal Festival** – An annual festival with over 9,000 visitors, the one-day canal festival celebrates and highlights canal life and conservation with great entertainment, good quality craft stalls and beautiful boats.
- **Rushmere Country Park** – A wide range of events, including Heron Watch, Rushmere Rocks, Summer Fair, Local Food Festival and Fairy Festival, plus many more talks, walks and activities held throughout the year.
- **RSPB The Lodge nature reserve & gardens, Sandy** – Home to a variety of events, from cycling and running to Forest Bathing!
- **The Shuttleworth Collection and Swiss Garden Events** – Including afternoon tea, casino nights, air shows and popular wreath making.
- **Woburn Abbey events** – Including garden shows, carriage tours and afternoon tea at Woburn Abbey.
- **Clophill Eco Lodges events** – discover a variety of workshops, animal encounters and craft café events including wreath workshops, Earth Days and the family focused Pumpkin Festival every October.
- **The Bedfordshire Walking Festival** – offers a wide variety of walks from short child friendly family activities and interest walks, through to Rambler led half day and full day experiences.
- **Bedfordshire Geology Group** – promotes understating of the geology of the area via a range of events.



Attractions

- **Woburn Lido** - One of the UK's few remaining outdoor pools and the largest in Bedfordshire. There's also a smaller lido in Eversholt. Both are great on a hot summer's day!
- **Summerfields' Miniature Railways** - A great day out for all the family. Visit during public running days and enjoy watching and riding on miniature trains.
- **Woburn Safari park** - A wildlife park with over 1000 animals. Also on site is a Go Ape course with zip-wires and rope bridges.
- **Swiss Garden at Shuttleworth** - A peaceful, tranquil space featuring 13 listed structures and an adjacent woodland sculpture trail.
- **The Collection at Shuttleworth** - Home to the best collection of genuine WWI aircraft (that all still fly) in Europe, alongside other historic aircraft from 1909 to the 1950s.
- **Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway** - One of the last survivors of 2 foot (610mm) gauge light railways built in Britain for industrial use. It is one of the largest attractions in the area and is a registered museum.





Things to do in the wild

- **Birdwatching** — RSPB The Lodge nature reserve & gardens is a great place to spot woodpeckers, ravens and red kites. Barn owls are also spotted around St Mary's Old Church in Clophill.
- **Heron Watch** — At Rushmere Country Park you can enjoy watching the herons nesting each spring.
- **Look out for spectacular blooms of bluebells** — in spring along the Greensand Ridge.
- **Reptiles living on the heathlands** — The heathlands of the Greensand Ridge are some of the last remaining areas in the Midlands. Cooper's Hill is Bedfordshire's largest remaining area of heathland and home to the adder and common lizard.
- **Otters on the River Flit** — If you're lucky you might see an otter hunting in the river, or signs that an otter is nearby! Look out for bubbles under the water or slipways made by the belly of a sliding otter.

You may even come across their droppings known as 'spraint', which has a distinctive aroma and can usually be found near tree roots or rocks. Kingfishers can also be seen along the river near Clophill.

- **Spot rare butterflies** — Flying in the treetops of Greensand Country's woodlands, you may be able to spot purple emperor or white letter hairstreak.
- **Dormouse** — A volunteer-led scheme to reintroduce the endangered hazel dormouse. These timid creatures are very difficult to spot, but if you're very patient and quiet, you might get lucky!



Towns and villages

- **Ampthill** — Ampthill has a rich history, a weekly market (Thursday) and plenty of places to shop, eat and drink. Much of Ampthill's unique charm is owed to the former residents of Ampthill Park House: Lord Upper Ossory reorganised the layout of the Market Square, built the charming thatched Ossory Cottages and erected Katherine's Cross.
- **Aspley Guise** — Aspley Guise is a thriving village with an interesting history. From visitors coming to 'take the air' in the 19th century, to its role during the Second World War in hosting several top secret code-breaking facilities.
- **Clophill** — Clophill has a long history, including Old St Mary's Church from Saxon times and the triple Motte and Bailey of Cainhoe Castle from Norman times. There is evidence of a Roman road running east-west through the village and in the Domesday Book of 1086, the village is called "Clopelle".
- **Eversholt** — For many years, most of the land in the village of Eversholt was owned by the Dukes of Bedford and the inhabitants worked on the Bedford estate.
- **Flitwick** — A popular commuter town, Flitwick also offers an open-air market every Tuesday, selling local produce, and its famous Carnival in June.
- **Gamlingay** — At the eastern end of the Greensand Ridge Walk, Gamlingay is steeped in history with many listed buildings.
- **Haynes** — The village of Haynes is first referenced in the Domesday Book of 1086 where it is referred to as Hagenes, a derivation of the Anglo-Saxon word for 'enclosure', but from which the word 'hedges' was derived. The village is home to the Parish Church of St. Mary's, which is of medieval origin dating back to 1150. Today you can find a pub, Post Office and farm shop amongst other local businesses.
- **Leighton Buzzard** — The picturesque, medieval high street in Leighton Buzzard is home to a selection of independent and high street shops.
- **Maulden** — A small village that includes several old pubs, 17th Century thatched buildings and other historical features.





- **Old Warden** — The village of Old Warden sits on the Shuttleworth Estate, where Old Warden Park, a superb historic mansion, formerly the home of the Shuttleworth family, acts as a grandiose centrepiece.
- **Woburn** — During 1724 a fire destroyed much of the town. The Duke of Bedford sent his architects to the village, which was rebuilt in a Georgian style.
- **Potton** — An historic parish dating from the 13th Century, once famous for its horse fairs (the largest in the country during the mid-1800 to 1900s), local beer and the Great Fire of Potton in 1783, which destroyed a large part of the town. Today, it's a great place for eating out and browsing independent shops.
- **Ridgmont** — A small village sitting atop of the Greensand Ridge, home to one of the largest brickworks in the world during the mid-1900s. The Ridgmont Station Heritage

Centre is popular with visitors, offering a tearoom, gift shop and a collection of railway-related artefacts.

- **Sandy** — A small market town, that hosts part of the Story in Stone Historic Mosaic Trail with Potton and Biggleswade. Home of the RSPB head quarters and previously home to Captain Sir William Peel and the delicious Bedfordshire Clanger from Guns bakery as featured by Jamie Oliver. Visit the Roman museum at Sandy Town Council



People say...

“My favourite days out have been spent with family and friends and of course the dogs! Picnics with grandchildren, fun and games in the park and bug hunting.”

“Lots of experiences packed into a small place. I like how the landscape changes: one moment you have open views; the next you’re surrounded by intimate woodland.”

“I love exploring around my village of Clophill, we have some beautiful walks and rides around here. I also really enjoy Woburn, it’s a beautiful area.”

Action points



Visit local shops, pubs, restaurants and attractions for yourself. Use your own experiences out to create a list of places that you would recommend to your customers. They'll appreciate your suggestions!



Promote upcoming events and festivals. Visit www.greensandcountry.com, follow @greensandsocial on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and read your local paper to keep up to date with future events that your customers may want to attend.



Create special offers with other local businesses.



Tell the story of your own business personality and local character. People love personal stories; and what might seem like trivial details to you might be very interesting to others! Include some of this background in your promotional materials and online to help give your business 'local character'.



Buy products from local producers and suppliers and encourage your customers to do the same – especially things like arts/crafts and places that offer local produce, such as farmers markets, tearooms and restaurants. Visitors enjoy buying locally and it helps to support the local economy too.



Labelling. If you sell local produce, make sure you **label it as local** – either on your price list/menu or when talking to customers. Try to tell the story of the produce: where it comes from, how it's made and so on. Visitors are often happy to pay more for good quality produce with 'provenance'.

Further information is available at
www.greensandcountry.com/experience

Kelchner beers are a local favourite, together with the famous Bedfordshire Clanger (a type of pasty), Old Warden wine and locally-grown chillies.

DISCOVER

What makes Greensand Country special

Greensand Country covers 40 miles of scenic landscape, which is defined by the Greensand Ridge and reaches three neighbouring counties: from Cambridgeshire in the East, across Bedfordshire and to Buckinghamshire in the West. The area's unique landscape and geology results in a place of rich natural and cultural heritage.

It's no accident that Greensand Country is distinct from its surrounding areas. The acidic soil found here, resulting from the special geology of the Greensand Ridge, meant that the area was less well suited to agriculture and was instead used for the siting of monasteries.

Following the dissolution of the monasteries, the land was given to major landowners who established their own stately homes and gardens, deer parks and estate villages. Towards the middle of the 19th Century the

railways, brought by the Industrial Revolution, transformed local towns and created new industries such as quarrying, brick making, cultivation and milling.

It is this mixture of historic parkland, estate villages and former industry – together with the patchwork of habitats along the Greensand Ridge itself – which combine to give Greensand Country the unique 'sense of place' that is cherished by residents and visitors today.



Old St. Mary's Church Clophill



Historic houses and parklands: Nearly all of Bedfordshire's Grade I listed manor houses are located within Greensand Country, including Woburn Abbey, Haynes Park, Moggerhanger Park, Southill Park, Wrest Park, Warden Abbey and the ruins of Houghton House. Grade II listed manor houses include Ampthill Park, Shuttleworth Mansion House, Segenhoe Manor, Flitwick Manor, Heath Manor, Crawley House, Hazells Hall and Aspley House. Many of these estates boast extensive historic parklands, which are characteristic of Greensand Country and offer space for visitors to roam amidst stunning scenery.

Heritage: There are numerous historical sites and heritage centres in the area. The Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre contains

a collection of railway artefacts, whilst the Woburn Heritage Centre is a museum of local history. There are many parish churches, predominantly built of the local sandstone and notable buildings such as Ailesbury Mausoleum, situated in the churchyard of St Mary's Church, Maulden and believed to be the earliest mausoleum in England and St Mary's Old Church in Clophill originating from Saxon times.

Natural Heritage: The nature and landscape of Greensand Country has been shaped by its geology, soils and historic land use. The area is famous for its patchwork of different habitats, including woodland, heathland (heather and acidic grassland), wetland, acid grassland, farmland and rivers.



RSPB The Lodge



History

- **Ailesbury Mausoleum**, arguably the earliest mausoleum in England. It was built in 1656 by Thomas Bruce, 1st Earl of Elgin to commemorate his second wife, Diana.
 - **Northill Church**, a Grade I listed church dating back to the 14th Century.
 - **Old Warden Church**, originally associated with nearby Warden Abbey. There is evidence of this Grade I listed church in documents dating from as early as 1135.
 - **Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre**, a small but growing collection of railway-related artefacts in the restored former booking office.
- The Centre tells the story of the Marston Vale line between Bedford and Bletchley and shares the 1846 Victorian former station building with the Ridgmont Station Tea Room.
- **Old St Mary's Church in Clophill**, around 400 years old and abandoned in 1848. The observation tower offers visitors spectacular views of the countryside.
 - **The Woburn Heritage Centre**, located at Old St Mary's Church, the Heritage Centre is a museum of local history and a tourist information point.

Historic houses and parklands

- **Houghton House**, built in the Jacobean style for the Countess of Pembroke in 1615. It was designed as a nobleman's hunting seat with many elegant rooms.
- **Shuttleworth House**, built in 1875, the house is a popular venue for weddings, conferences, team building and as a filming location for period dramas. **Open on selected days for public viewing**
- **Woburn estate**, set within 3,000 acres of deer park, visitors can enjoy the award-winning Woburn Abbey Gardens, Woburn Safari Park, Woburn Golf Club and The Woburn Hotel.
- **Moggerhanger House**, a Grade I listed Georgian historic house, set in 33 acres of parkland and woodland. It is recognised as the most complete surviving work of architect John Soane (1753 – 1837), who is best known for designing the Bank of England. The house is open as a tourist attraction from mid-June to mid-September and free access to the grounds is available throughout the year.



Houghton House, Ampthill

Landscape Character of Greensand Country

The Greensand Country Landscape Character Assessment (2016) provides a detailed description of the character of the landscape. It describes four character areas, including what makes them special and any notable features:

Each character area has its own distinct sense of place. You can think of them as different 'jigsaw pieces' that fit together to form the Greensand Country landscape as a whole. They can be used to help illustrate the variety offered by Greensand Country – that it comprises a patchwork (or jigsaw) of different areas, with different characteristics and experiences to enjoy.

Greensand Ridge

The Greensand Ridge forms an area of elevated land and is at the core of Greensand Country. Its distinctive north facing steep slope is iconic of the Greensand Ridge, with areas of pasture and woodland on the steep slopes. The area provides panoramic views off the Ridge and dip slope. It includes Rushmere Country Park; the largest remaining ancient

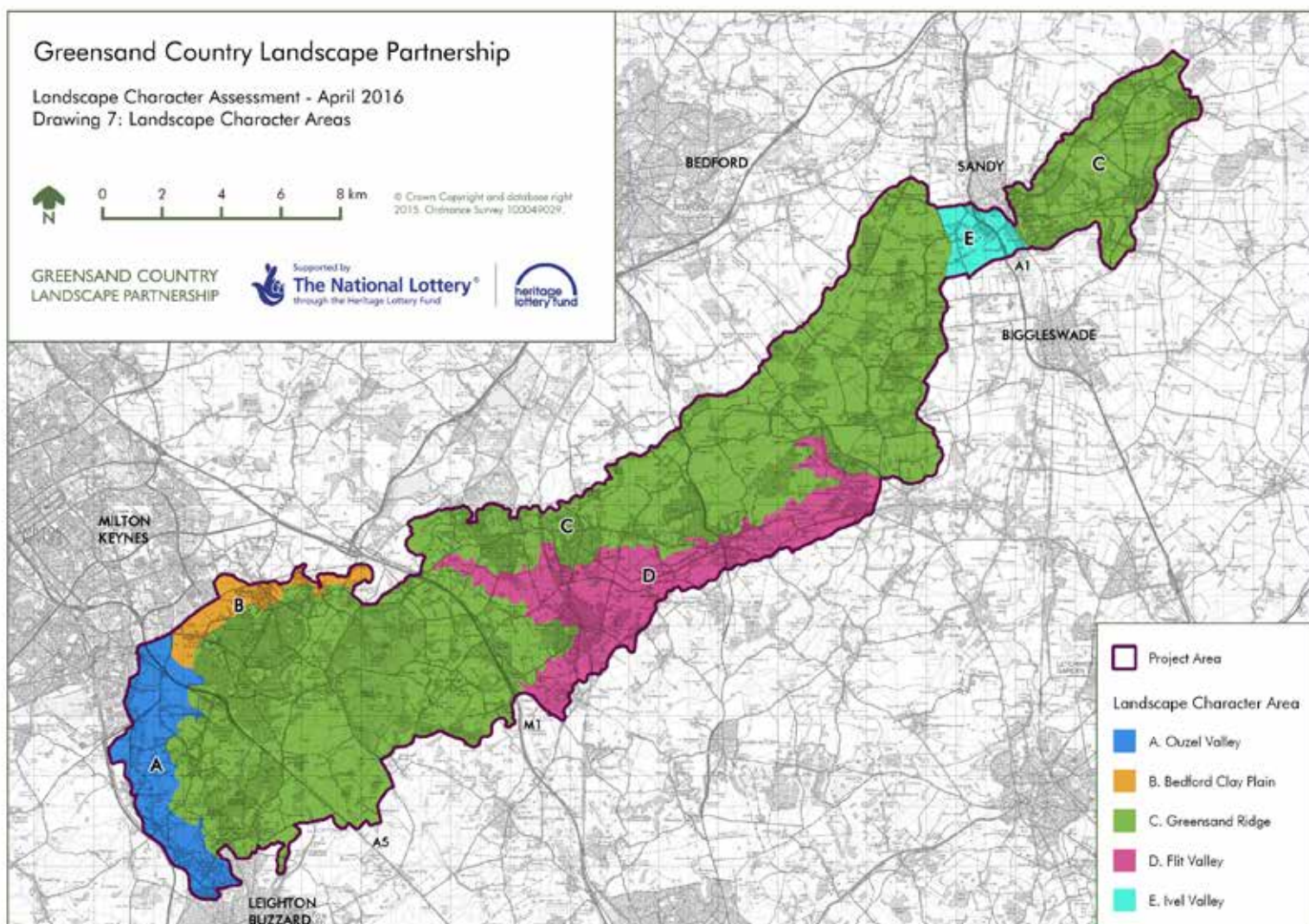
woodland in Bedfordshire at Kings Wood; and the regionally important geological site, The Pinnacle at Sandy, which reveals the underlying sandstone geology.

Ouzel Valley

The Ouzel Valley flanks the western edge of the Greensand Country and runs in a north-south direction, extending beyond Greensand Country. The scarp of the Greensand Ridge sits above the valley on its eastern side, the steep wooded slopes defining the valley. Overall the valley has an enclosed and intimate character. Areas of open water, marshy grassland and wet woodland habitats provide significant wildlife interest. It includes listed structures associated with the Grand Union Canal such as bridges, pumping stations, cottages and locks.



View from the Greensand Ridge



Flit Valley

The Flit Valley is a magical place known for its folklore of medicinal waters and its peaceful, intimate surroundings. The valley lies along the southern edge of the Greensand Country separating it from the clay hills and chalk landscape of the Chilterns to the south. Wooded valley sides at Simpsons Plantation/Warren Wood and wooded skylines define the valley in the central section. Moors and wet woodlands form a repetitive pattern along the valley floor. Here willow pollards, native black poplars, scrub and wetland vegetation are common along with habitats including fen, acid mire, reed beds and marshy grassland. It includes the important wetland site at Flitwick Moor, the largest area of wetland in Bedfordshire and one of the best wetland sites in the South East.

Ivel Valley

The Ivel Valley lies between Moggerhanger, Northill and Sandy, cutting through the Greensand Ridge at the north-eastern end. This is a low lying, relatively flat and expansive valley to the west, but is well defined by the Greensand scarp to the east. With open views to the Greensand Ridge and over the parkland landscape to the west, the Ivel Valley is important in linking physically and visually the different parts of Greensand Country. It includes the Local Nature Reserve at The Riddy (Sandy) and listed buildings within hamlets including rural cottages, a manor house and farm.



Natural heritage

- Local wildlife to look out for:** Greensand Country is alive with diverse and wonderful wildlife. Key species include the Adder and Common Lizard on the dry heaths at Stockgrove and Rushmere; Otter and Kingfisher on the Flit river; and Purple Emperor, White Letter Hairstreak and White Admiral butterflies in the woods at Chicksands and Kings Wood. On the heathland and acid grasslands look out for Slow Worms and Common Lizards, Sand Wasps, Digger Wasps and Green Tiger Beetles. In the east of Greensand Country is the RSPB The Lodge nature reserve & gardens where you'll find an abundance of birds, amongst them star species such as Great Spotted Woodpecker, Hobby and Nuthatch. The wet meadows of the Riddy are one of the few remaining places in Bedfordshire where you can find Water Voles. Meanwhile, you can spot Buzzards and Red Kites soaring in the skies right across Greensand Country, searching for food.
- The historic geology of the Greensand Ridge:** Approximately 125 million years ago, the area we now know as Greensand Country was dominated by tropical shallow seas. Sediments of sandy minerals were deposited as silt, sand and gravel, which eventually became compressed into the Greensand rocks. Because the Greensand is a more resistant rock, it was not eroded as quickly as the softer clays surrounding it, leaving a ridge as a prominent feature in the landscape. Today, the ridge forms the 'backbone' of Greensand Country – it is the area's most prominent landmark, home to diverse habitats, abundant wildlife and enjoyed year-round by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.



Silver-washed Fritillary, Chicksands Wood

European Otter



- **Fantastic heathlands:** A heath is a shrubland habitat found mainly on free-draining acidic soils. Most heathlands are thought to date from the Bronze Age some 3000 years ago when humans cleared trees for use as fuel and building materials. While historically Greensand Country contained extensive areas of lowland heathland, only fragments now remain. However these fragments are of great importance both locally and nationally, forming a vital link between other lowland heathlands and providing a habitat for much flora and fauna. The area's historic association with heathland is reflected in the use of heath in many place names - e.g. Heath and Reach,

Wavendon Heath, Sandy Heath, Potton Heath and Gamlingay Great Heath.

Greensand Country Landscape Partnership has supported RSPB The Lodge nature reserve & gardens, The Greensand Trust and The Wildlife Trust to create better habitats and improve the chances of colonisation on heathlands across the Greensand Country landscape, including at:

- **RSPB The Lodge nature reserve & gardens**
- **Cooper's Hill Ampthill opposite Ampthill Great Park**
- **Lords Hill and Shire Oak Heath at Rushmere Country Park**



People say...

“The wealth and diversity of history from the monasteries to the Georgians is surprising.”

“What makes my visits even more delightful are the subtle signs of our heritage and past, such as the old coppices and wood banks of Rushmere Country Park.”

“It’s a great area to walk around and discover varied countryside with lots of places of historical interest.”

“It’s an unexpected landscape, with a rich mosaic of habitats and features, formed by the presence of Greensand Ridge.”



Action points



Research the history of your local area and share your discoveries, or point people in the direction of local history experts.



Find out the location and opening times of nearby heritage sites and advertise these to your customers in advance (so they can arrange to visit, for example, when a particular place is open to the public). Be sure to mention the smaller places as well as the big attractions – sometimes the less well-known sites are the most interesting!



Promote local guided walks or events run by heritage organisations or history societies.



Provide reference material if you have some – for example, books on natural and cultural heritage (ask for recommended books at your local library). This works especially well if you're an accommodation provider or café – your guests will appreciate having some reading material that is relevant to their visit.



Speak to friends and neighbours about past events and reminiscences – some of the best stories are shared by word of mouth.

Further information is available at
www.greensandcountry.com/discover



Geology Wall at Clophill Eco Lodges

Greensand Country Landscape Partnership

This Toolkit has been developed with support from the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership: a collective of organisations working with landowners and local communities to help make Greensand Country a living landscape, cherished by present and future generations.

Thank you to everyone involved!

