

Big Chalk is calling for topic group members

If you wish to join a topic group, please contact Bruce.Winney@landscapesforlife.org.uk

We are seeking passionate individuals who are knowledgeable about their subject and can match this with the drive, ability and capacity to work together to make things happen. Joining one of these topic groups is an exciting opportunity to demonstrate collaborative working and leadership within a specialist topic on the national stage. The identified groups are:

Conservation practice and land management
Working with farmers and landowners
Local Nature Recovery Strategy practitioners
New landscape projects
Evidence, data, recording and volunteers
Natural capital - soil water and carbon
Health and wellbeing
Engagement

Why Topic Groups?

The partnership development report resulting from the 2021/22 consultancy was clear that Big Chalk needs to develop a community and facilitate conversations. From these, learning and practice will be shared and improved, new collaborations will develop and these will lead to the development of well-considered proposals to deliver even more work on the ground. Proposals may include but not be limited to a Big Chalk proposal to the National Lottery Heritage Lottery Fund.

These topic groups are being suggested to kick-start this new Big Chalk programme. Each topic group will only work if people come forward. If people step up, we will work with them. If not, the group will be held in abeyance for when it is needed. Once established these groups will need to be self-convening. We have a central resource to network them, draw together common threads and report to the Big Chalk Board.

Conservation Practice and Land Management

A technical group exchanging knowledge and learning concerning the management and restoration of habitats and species within calcareous landscapes. Some of the questions addressed may include:

- What are the latest lessons and guidance emerging from scientific research?
- What are the future research questions that we need addressing?
- What are the specific conservation measures for target species and how can they be integrated into a broadly habitat led approach?
- How is the restoration of large scale extensively grazed mosaic habitat most effectively undertaken in a calcareous landscape?

Working with Farmers and Landowners

A group focusing on the best way to engage with and support those who make decisions about how land is managed. Ultimately the Big Chalk vision will only become a reality if these peoples land management decisions support it. Questions addressed may include:

- What are the best techniques and messages for engaging with this audience?
- What does this audience have to say to help us?
- How can we best support land managers and owners to support Big Chalk?
- What are the key messages to policy makers and fund holders that we collectively need to communicate to support farmers and landowners in supporting Big Chalk?

Local Nature Recovery Strategy Practitioners

There will likely be around 19 Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) areas co-incident with the Big Chalk area. This group will bring together those involved in their production to consider how Big Chalk can support local LNRS processes to look at the bigger picture, and also how the resulting strategies can support Big Chalk. This is about the LNRS mapping but also so much more: priorities, policies, measures etc. Questions addressed may include:

- How can the Big Chalk vision for calcareous landscapes be integrated into LNRSs?
- What can the Big Chalk Partnership provide to LNRS practitioners to help with this?
- How well joined up will the LNRSs be across boundaries within calcareous landscapes?
- What extent of consistency across LNRSs is it possible to develop, to allow a common Big Chalk edition to be drawn from them?

New Landscape Projects

A number of area-based partnership projects aimed at improving connectivity across and between calcareous landscapes are already at different stages of development and we hope that there will be many more. This group will network these projects to share experiences and encourage collaboration. Questions addressed may include:

- What lessons and experiences can be shared to help others?
- What are the common needs and challenges of area-based partnership projects?
- What is the potential for collaborative working across these projects to secure resources and address needs collectively?

Evidence, Data, Recording and Volunteers

Different partners are undertaking different monitoring programmes using varying methodologies. This group will examine the challenges of identifying acquiring and using data and evidence in support of the Big Chalk vision particularly across the Big Chalk area. Questions addressed may include:

- What will success look like? How will we know we are delivering the Big Chalk vision?
- What monitoring programmes are available and which ones are being used?
- Is it possible to acquire common and or sufficiently consistent data across the Big Chalk area? E.g., common habitat definitions and a suite of indicator species.

- Can we develop sufficiently common volunteer recording and citizen science programmes to deliver this?

Natural Capital - Soil Water and Carbon

We are asking many things of our calcareous landscapes: food and goods production, nature recovery, climate change adaptation and mitigation and health and wellbeing to name just a few. This group will exchange knowledge and learning concerning the key natural capital assets of calcareous landscapes to help policy makers balance these sometimes-conflicting demands. This group will be of particular interest to those working on protected landscape management plans. Questions addressed may include:

- How can we best balance the often-conflicting calls on calcareous landscapes?
- What is the latest science that could help inform this?
- What nature-based solutions consistent with the Big Chalk vision should we be promoting?
- What are the key messages and target audiences that will allow us to act as champions for the natural capital assets of calcareous landscapes?
- How can protected landscape management plans best reflect and support the Big Chalk vision.

Health and Wellbeing

The mental and physical health benefits of access to a rich natural environment are well understood and the Big Chalk area plays a huge role in delivering this to the good of the nation. Questions addressed may include:

- What are the measures that ensure that Big Chalk landscapes cater for and improve the nation's health and wellbeing?
- How are these measures best integrated into Big Chalk projects?
- How can we build the evidence of the health and wellbeing benefits of the Big Chalk area and best communicate these benefits to key audiences?

Engagement

Environmental organisations, particularly those with a statutory or locally-determined purpose to facilitate engagement, have a responsibility to ensure that engagement is broad, welcoming and inclusive for all parts of society. Southern England's beautiful and wildlife-rich chalk and limestone landscapes present a huge opportunity. There is also a long legacy of cultural responses to this landscape, which could help to inspire new or underserved audiences to engage. Questions addressed may include:

- How can Big Chalk help bring the benefits of engaging in the Big Chalk area to broader and new audiences?
- How can creative activities help broaden engagement in our landscapes?
- How can past and new creative endeavours help communicate the Big Chalk vision?