**Landscape**

Look at how the river has shaped the land around it.

*The story of the Cuckmere valley begins at the end of the last Ice Age, when melting glaciers carried sand and gravel across the valley floor and deposited them on the underlying chalk. The material carried down scoured out the valley and was carried out to sea.*

*As the earth’s temperature rose, plants grew and forests stretched across the tops of the Downs and through the river valleys. Above the glacial deposits in the Cuckmere valley are probably up to 10 metres of peat formed from the decay of largely alder swamp vegetation that existed between 4000 and 1200 B.C. Above this there could be up to 8 metres of alluvial silts and clays deposited by the river.*

*500 years ago, a minor rise in sea levels produced a shallow tidal estuary where the river is today and salt marsh was formed across the valley floor. The deposits from the marsh can be seen in the brown material in the banks of the river, which has formed a brackish water silt or alluvium. It is still possible to see the traces of the former creeks, which would have wound their way across the salt marsh as they do in modern salt marshes.*

*Since this the valley has been drained and man-made ditches can be found along the whole valley floor. Predicted sea level rises in the future could again cause flooding in the valley and the creation of new salt marsh.*

- Using the map of the catchment area, ordinance survey maps, and photographs provided create a model of the Cuckmere using Plaster of Paris showing the upper catchment area, its tributaries, where it cuts through the Downs and the meanders and floodplain.

**Resources** – Map of catchment area of the Cuckmere (provided)
- Ordinance survey map for tracing the river from its source to its mouth.
- Pictures of the river and its features (provided)