

ANNUAL REVIEW 2013/14

WELCOME TO THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) works in partnership with a wide range of organisations, landowners, farmers, local businesses, residents and visitors, who are committed to caring for the South Downs National Park. This year we launched with our partners the first Partnership Management Plan for the National Park. This sets out a long-term vision and explains how it will be delivered over the next five years through more than 100 separate projects.

This Annual Review outlines the key achievements of the SDNPA set against our objectives from our Corporate Plan for 2013–16. With this plan spanning three years we are extremely pleased to have already achieved many of our aims and set clear baselines against which to measure our progress.

We have used case studies to showcase some of the many projects which we are proud to have worked on with our partners. You will read about

water voles, preparations for a National Park Local Plan, the new South Downs Centre, sustainable travel and much more.

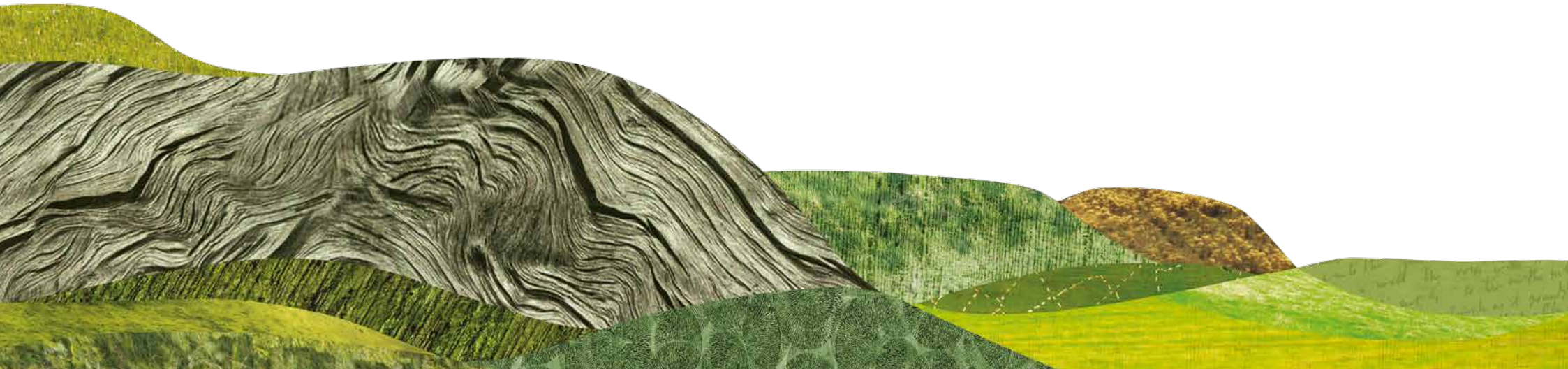
Whether you live in or near the South Downs National Park, are a business, one of our partners, a visitor, or simply someone who cares about the future of this unique and beautiful landscape, we hope you find this document a useful insight to the rapid progress we have made to date and the work we are currently undertaking, as well as a measure of our deep commitment to the delivery of our ambitious long term vision for the nation's newest National Park.



Trevor Beattie
Chief Executive



Margaret Paren
Chair

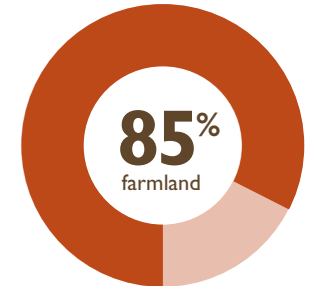


THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK IN A NUTSHELL

Largest National Park population **112,000 residents**

18 distinctive landscape types

3rd LARGEST NATIONAL PARK IN ENGLAND



1,200,000 poultry

120,000 sheep

46,000 cattle

17,000 pigs

91,000 volunteer days annually

165 conservation areas

46 MILLION visitor days annually

4 MARKET TOWNS

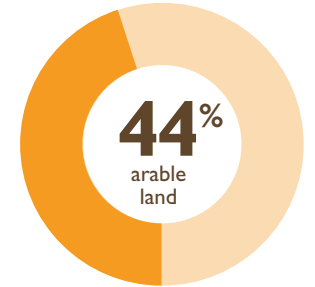
21 km of coastline (including the defined Sussex Heritage Coast)

Provides water for **1.2 million people**

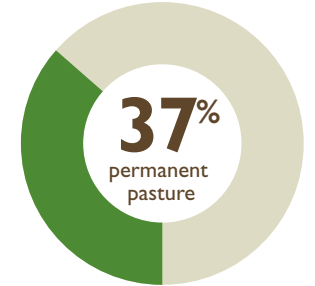
24% woodland cover

45% of which is ancient woodland

4% chalk grassland



2 MILLION people within 5km



738 schools in or nearby

4.4% OPEN ACCESS LAND

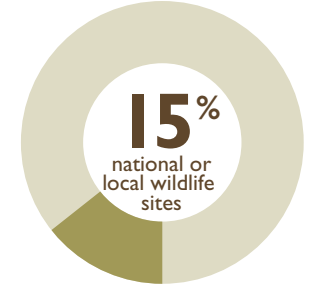
28 registered historic parks and gardens

616 scheduled monuments

13 European wildlife sites

183 parishes

5,860 listed buildings



3,300 km of rights of way including the South Downs Way

1. SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AS A SPECIAL, THRIVING, LIVING AND WORKING LANDSCAPE

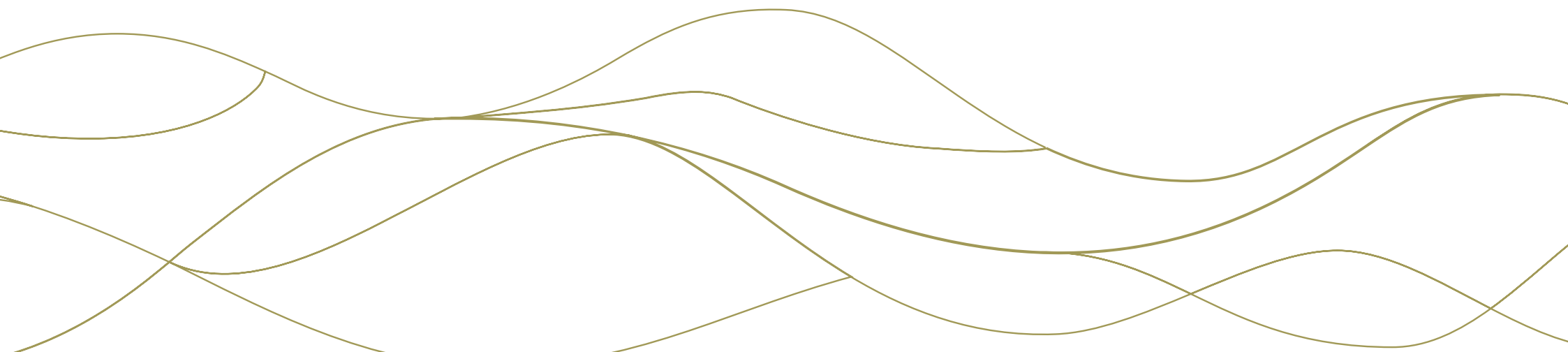
We are working with a range of major partnerships to deliver key outcomes which conserve and enhance the landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets in the South Downs National Park. We are also managing the impacts of large-scale and cumulative small-scale developments.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Produce the final Partnership Management Plan (PMP) for the South Downs	The Partnership Management Plan was launched in January 2014 by the Minister for State and has quickly become the framework for collaborative working across the National Park.
Agree a project plan and monitoring system for buildings at risk	Our Historic Buildings Officers have established links with partnership Authorities, Building Preservation Trusts and others in the heritage sector to agree ways to tackle buildings at risk, including the use of Statutory measures as a last resort.
Prepare a draft Sustainability appraisal for the Local Plan	The Sustainability Appraisal Report (for the Issues and Options stage of the Local Plan) was drafted and sent out for consultation with the Local Plan Options paper in February, with 159 respondents feeding back their views. Comments received during the consultation are informing the development of the Local Plan.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Increase the area of new Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreements within SDNP	With support from our Ranger team, 100 more hectares of South Downs farmland is now receiving HLS payments from Natural England.
Increase the area of chalk grassland and heathland in improving condition	Our Nature Improvement Area has helped farmers and landowners in five key areas along the South Downs Way to restore and manage their chalk grassland. This year we have established a heathland partnership bringing together a wide range of organisations to improve management of their heathlands via a successful bid for Heritage Lottery Fund support for bigger, better and more joined up heathland.
Increase the % of woodland in active management	The amount of woodland under active management in the National Park has risen from 35% to 49%. Through our South Downs Forestry Partnership we have visited over 40 woodland sites and mapped nearly 100 businesses linked to the forestry supply chain.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Increase the % of conservation areas with up-to-date character appraisals	This year we established that 13% of conservation areas have up-to-date character appraisals and in the coming years we will be working to steadily increase this.
Increase the % of Listed Buildings 'at risk' rescued during the year	Following on from a comprehensive Building at Risk survey carried out at the end of 2012/13, 1.5% of listed buildings (87 buildings) were found to be at risk. During 2013/14 our work has focused on four iconic buildings.
Increase the % of scheduled monuments 'at high or medium risk' conserved during the year	Between 2011 and October 2013, the percentage of monuments at risk decreased from 8.1% to 6.85%.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Increase the % of major planning applications dealt with within 13 weeks	This has been a busy year for major planning applications. While we managed to reach or exceed our target for 6 months of the year, the middle of the year saw a dip.
See an increase in the length of power lines undergrounded	This year we have improved the landscape by securing the undergrounding of nearly 2km of power lines in sensitive areas of the National Park. Even more importantly, a further 7.8km has been approved for undergrounding during 2014/15.



FORESTRY AND WOODLANDS

Nina Williams is the Forestry and Woodlands Development Officer for the South Downs National Park...

With over 38,000 hectares of woodland the South Downs National Park (SDNP) has a greater area of tree coverage than any other National Park in England and Wales. The SDNP boasts many types of woodland with 45 per cent of this classed as Ancient Semi-Natural Woods, meaning the land has been under constant tree cover for more than 400 years. My role is to support new and existing owners to manage their woods so wildlife thrives, woodland products reach local markets and the woodland economy becomes more sustainable.

Around half of this woodland is under active management. Our aim is to increase this figure through the South Downs Forestry Partnership – a project that co-ordinates the efforts of key organisations such as the Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts and Local Authorities. Working closely with landowners and local enterprises this project will respond to the emerging markets for woodfuel and sustainable development. Woods have the potential to boost our timber industry, create local jobs and contribute an estimated £22.8m to the SDNP's economy.

In 18 months we have increased the area under active management from 35% to 49%, conducted over 40 woodland site visits and mapped nearly 100 local businesses linked to the forestry supply chain. A detailed map of the woodland showing key habitats, landscapes and existing stewardship agreements has been developed to focus efforts on areas that will deliver maximum improvements. This is the first time that woodland resource has been mapped across a landscape scale and it has been praised as best practice across the industry.



CONNECTING CHILDREN WITH THE SOUTH DOWNS

The unique landscapes of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) are on the doorstep for over half a million children and young people. With over 730 schools and an array of outdoor learning organisations in the vicinity, there is an abundance of educators poised and enthused to connect these young people with the environment around them. The Our South Downs Partnership project works to connect the incredible diversity of landscapes, habitats, places and learning providers to give children high quality, structured, all year round programmes of learning and engagement around the Special Qualities of the National Park.

In 2013/14 the project had many successes, for example:

- **120** teachers, students and outdoor learning providers attended the Our South Downs conference promoting opportunities for learning outside the classroom in the SDNP.
- **2,500** children from **45** schools displayed their artistic impressions of the South Downs alongside professional artwork in an art exhibition at the Towner Gallery in Eastbourne.

- Over **65** learning providers are now online via the interactive learning map on the SDNP website.
- **3,496** students from **58** schools were able to visit outdoor learning providers within the SDNP thanks to the SDNP Travel Grant Scheme aimed at encouraging groups from more deprived communities to access the fantastic outdoor learning providers in the SDNP.

The Our South Downs Partnership project continues this year with a focus on increasing the connection between target schools and the growing body of resources created through this partnership.



2. PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK TO CONNECT TO ITS UNIQUE AND SPECIAL PLACES

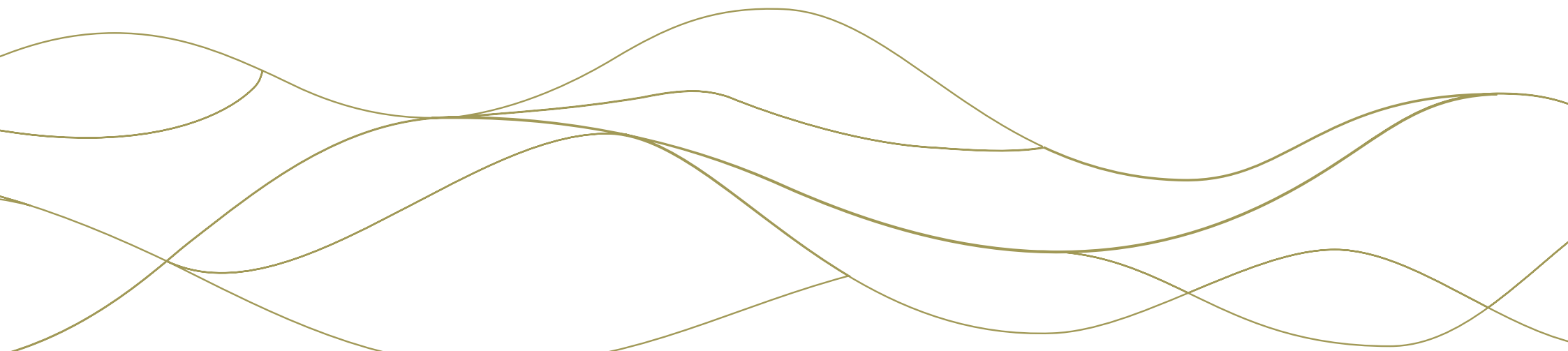
We are promoting opportunities for awareness, learning and engagement, seeking to ensure quality access management and accessibility, and supporting the development of sustainable tourism.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
See an increase % awareness of the National Park of residents and those outside the National Park	<p>Our sustainable transport campaigns have reached 5.5 million people through media stories, online engagement, social media and printed leaflets.</p> <p>We were present at a total of 40 partner events across the National Park.</p> <p>The National Park story has been told through 1363 pieces of media coverage including television, radio, print and online.</p>
Increase the % of Partners using shared identity	With partners we have developed a shared visual identity for the National Park which will be rolled out over the coming years.
Increase the % of black & minority ethnic (BME) communities in the visitor profile of the National Park	Working with BME group Sompriti, last year we introduced leaders of the BME community in East Sussex to the National Park over 10 sessions – from these, 10 volunteers from the community are now being trained as walk leaders.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Increase the % of schools within a 5km buffer using the South Downs for Learning Outside the Classroom at least once per year.	We are working with over 48% of schools within the National Park and 31% within 5km of the National Park boundary through the Our South Downs Project. Since the launch of the project we have been actively engaged with 280 schools.
Increase the number of people participating in walks guided by SDNPA staff	During 2013/14, 595 people enjoyed 40 walks led by SDNPA staff.
Increase the total number of SDNPA Volunteer Ranger days	Volunteer Rangers play a vital role in the National Park and this year they gave 5819 days of their time, an increase of over 700 days from the previous year.
Increase the % of transport hubs with targeted information about how to access the SDNP	People arriving at Petersfield and Cooksbridge railway stations now receive targeted information about how they can access and enjoy the National Park.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Increase the % of total length of rights of way (RoW) that are easy to use	<p>This year we have improved access on the South Downs Way by resurfacing 1575m of the route at 5 locations, 46 signposts were replaced and 24 bridleway gates have been repaired or replaced with new.</p> <p>We have also installed a new Countryside Access Management system which has helped us to survey the condition of access along the South Downs Way and Serpents Trail.</p>
Increase the length of leisure cycle routes	Residents and visitors can now enjoy an extra 8.5km of cycle paths.
Increase the % of visitors using public transport modes	Roughly 9% of visitors use public transport. We are increasing that number through our Discover Another Way campaign. For example our new online Discovery Map enables visitors and residents to plan their journey into and around the National Park using public transport.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Increase the % of residents using public transport modes	Our sustainable transport campaigns also encourages residents to use public transport. For example, over 500 people redeemed free travel vouchers to attend the Sussex Festival of Nature outside Brighton in June.
Increase the financial contribution by SDNPA to cultural, artistic and traditional crafts	We have supported three projects using the arts to explore issues such as water supply and those aiming to develop more energy efficient and sustainable arts performances inspired by the landscape.
Increase the number of apprenticeships in rural or traditional crafts	Thanks to collaboration with partners to identify types of work suitable for apprenticeships, we are now recruiting four apprentice Rangers.





WATER VOLES RETURN TO THE RIVER MEON

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) works directly with a range of volunteer groups, the largest of which is the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (SDVRS). Providing support and training to the group we facilitate its work, both directly with the SDNPA and with a range of approximately 20 partner organisations.

During 2013/14 the SDVRS was crucial to the running of our water vole release programme. In the last ten years water voles have disappeared from the River Meon. This chalk stream is a great habitat for the little mammals so their demise is put down to predation by the non-native American mink.

Now, thanks to a joint project led by the SDNPA, with the Environment Agency, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, Natural England and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the UK's most rapidly declining mammal is making a comeback.

Trained staff and Volunteers carried out surveys to confirm habitat suitability at Tichfield Haven on the River Meon before releasing 450 water voles into their new home. With more releases planned over the coming years, once completed this will be the largest water vole release accomplished in the country.

This project would not be possible without the dedication and enthusiasm of landowners, angling clubs and river keepers throughout the catchment of the river. As well as the partners and of course the water vole project volunteers who have been completing surveys, admin work, releasing water voles and carrying out mink raft repairs and installations.

DISCOVER ANOTHER WAY...

In July 2013 our travel awareness campaign, 'Discover Another Way', was launched to influence positive travel behaviour amongst residents and visitors of the South Downs National Park (SDNP). The aim is to have 370,000 visitors to the SDNP switching to sustainable transport by the end of 2015.

Opportunities to trial car-free transport with free and subsidised tickets were offered through partnership work with Brighton and Hove Buses and other key stakeholders including Southern Rail during summer 2013.

During spring 2014 we focused on promoting access by public transport to key visitor attractions in the National Park. '2 for 1' discounts were negotiated with 13 different attractions as a pilot to be rolled out further during summer 2014 as part of the new 'Discovery ticket' promotions.

The new Discovery ticket gives visitors the freedom to explore everything the region has to offer by bus, with unlimited travel across the SDNP and beyond. After a new multi-operator ticket agreement was signed during spring 2014, the 'Discovery' ticket brand and marketing strategy were developed and implemented throughout the summer. The ticket was promoted as part of a new online 'one-stop travel shop' of interactive journey planning tools, downloadable day-out itinerary ideas, and discounts at various local attractions and businesses for public transport users.

So far over 5 million people have been reached through a variety of offline and online media including over 60,000 views of campaign Youtube videos and nearly 170 print, TV, radio and online stories published or broadcast. This is in addition to leaflets, adverts, face-to-face events, social media and other activity all helping to influence travel behaviour.



3. ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS BY BUSINESSES, COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS ACROSS THE NATIONAL PARK, AND MANAGE OUR OWN CORPORATE IMPACT

We are providing information and support to help communities better understand their environment and the impact of their actions on it and making sure they are engaged in the design and development of their local surroundings. We are supporting the growth of sustainable local businesses.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Develop the South Downs National Park Local Plan	The Local Plan for the National Park is a huge undertaking now in full swing with 159 responses received to the first options consultation.
Increase the % of new buildings that are built to good or excellent sustainability standards	We have worked with the developer of 400 homes in the North Street Quarter, Lewes, to carry out an independent sustainability assessment. This has triggered a feasibility study for using a novel, low-carbon heating solution for the development.
Increase the proportion of communities with access to essential services within 5km	Using the Local Sustainable Transport Fund we have worked with partners to increase the frequency of Breeze bus services in the Brighton and Hove area, as well as provide seasonal Sunday services across other National Park routes.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Increase the proportion of local communities with Community led plans	Over 40 neighbourhood plans are now in progress with active advice, support and guidance from our team.
Increase the proportion of local communities preparing or with a complete local Landscape Character Assessment	We have updated the Community Planning toolkit to include a section on Local Character Assessment to encourage more communities to take on the challenge of developing their own local Landscape Character Assessment.
Increase the numbers using the Sense of Place Toolkit	756 users, including tourism businesses, have accessed the toolkit via the website. (A combination of new and repeat users.)

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Increase the number of businesses using shared South Downs brand	Following its development, a toolkit for the shared visual identity is being prepared and will be made available to partners, businesses and communities.
Increase the number of Green Tourism Business Standard (GTBS) accredited businesses	There are 16 GTBS accredited businesses in the National Park. We have focused on supporting the promotion of sustainable tourism businesses through the Our Land website and now over 100 businesses use the National Park as part of their marketing offer.
Increase the number of staff using car sharing schemes for commuting	During 2013/14 the Liftshare scheme was rolled out – 10 staff regularly share lifts for commuting and the scheme currently has 57 people registered. The SDNPA has also begun using hybrid pool cars.

What we said we would do...	What we have done...
Increase the % of energy sourced by the SDNPA from renewable sources	Work has been completed on the new South Downs Centre which includes a biomass boiler, photovoltaic cells, state-of-the-art, recycled external insulation and brown roofs.
Reduce SDNPA greenhouse gas emissions	With the Liftshare scheme and other measures now in place the projected savings for the coming year are 10 tonnes of CO ₂ .
Implement revised performance management system by December 2013	A new performance management system called Aspireview is now in place and beginning to capture the breath of work being carried out within the framework of the Partnership Management Plan.



THE SOUTH DOWNS CENTRE

2013/14 saw the completion of the South Downs Centre – the new home of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA).

As we are responsible for planning in the National Park it was important to set an example of how listed buildings can be developed sustainably. The new Centre does this by preserving and refurbishing two important listed buildings to the highest possible level of sustainability – BREEAM¹ Excellent at design stage.

The building offers cost-effective operation for the SDNPA due to sustainable building infrastructure such as improved insulation – including innovative glass-fibre cladding to the 1930s building exterior – a biomass boiler using locally-sourced wood pellets offers a green energy source to heat the buildings and photovoltaic cells installed on the large flat roofs conserve energy and generate revenue by exporting electricity back to the grid.

The new building also supports the organisation's aims to promote sustainable travel. Electric vehicle charging points are on site for the SDNPA

1. BREEAM is the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method for buildings and large scale developments.



electric vehicles and a public vehicle charging facility will soon be installed as part of the South East eV network. Being so close to Midhurst bus station, providing priority parking for car sharers, and the installation of a Bike Fix-it station and bike stands support the SDNPA's ambitions to encourage staff and visitors to travel sustainably.

The Centre also supports the local economy with an exhibition about the National Park, a link to visitor information, a 'green' conference centre and a community hub providing free space for non-profit community organisations, events and activities, as well as the Chichester Citizen's Advice Bureau.

LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

Between February 2013 and April 2014 we received 159 formal responses to the Local Plan Options Consultation Document and a further 37 responses to the Community Infrastructure Levy Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule consultation.

This consultation was the first chance for people living in or interested in development in the South Downs to comment on possible options for addressing the major planning issues facing the area over the next 15 years. They could also comment on suggested levels of contribution that developers should pay in the form of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to meet needs for new infrastructure caused by developments. This will be the first CIL to be considered for any National Park in the UK.

These two documents are key to determining the future of development in the South Downs and mark the first time the National Park Authority will set out its own approach to planning for the National Park.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning for the SDNPA, explains:

"This is a significant piece of work and an important step in getting the best Local Plan for the National Park. When the Local Plan is adopted in 2017 we will have a dedicated planning strategy and policies that manage the future of these precious landscapes which have rightly been recognised for their national importance."

When adopted, the National Park Local Plan will replace the planning policies of the individual districts developed before the National Park was designated, as well as those joint plans created in partnership between the SDNPA and neighbouring authorities.



HOW THE AUTHORITY IS FUNDED

The main source of funding, for all National Park Authorities, is a National Park Grant from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

In 2013-14 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) received a grant totalling just under £10.6million. This was the largest grant of any National Park Authority in England, reflecting the geographic spread and population of the South Downs.

As the Planning Authority for the National Park, a significant part of the National Park Grant is dedicated to processing and determining planning applications for development. In 2013-14 the SDNPA received income of almost £1.4m through planning activities.

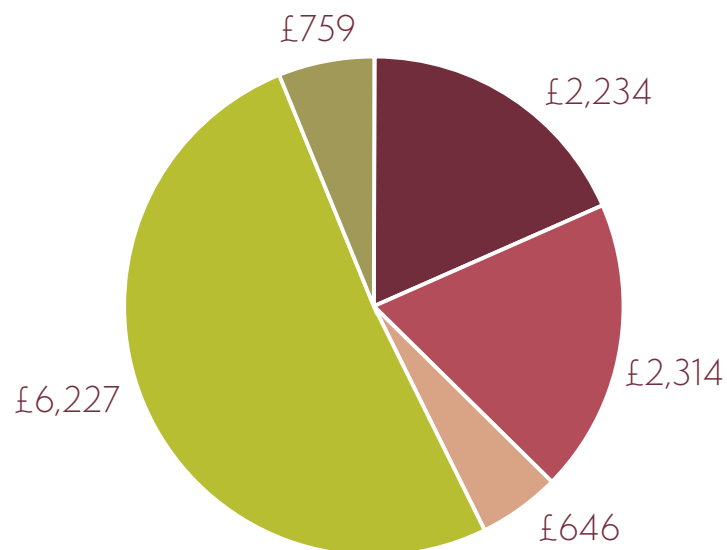
The SDNPA was also successful in attracting for a range of specific grants to carry out enhancement work in pursuit of the purposes and duty. During 2013-14 the SDNPA received over £1 million of income through specific grants.

In total the income received by the South Downs National Park Authority in 2013-14 was just short of £13.2million.

HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT

As well as the statutory duty to act as planning authority for the National Park, and the need to provide proper governance by supporting the roles of Members, Audits etc., the SDNPA spends the funds it has available in pursuit of the purposes and duty. The allocation of how those funds are spent is illustrated in the following chart.

SDNPA Spend 2013-14 (£000s)



- Living landscapes
- People and Places
- Sustainable Futures
- Planning – Development Management
- Corporate & Democratic Core

Sustainable Community Projects

The Sustainable Communities Fund budget in 2013-14 was £250,000. This is allocated from SDNPA’s overall budget.

Through this fund the SDNPA has committed £185,730 to 38 new sustainable community projects across the National Park.

THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK VISION

By 2050 in the South Downs National Park:

- the iconic English lowland landscapes and heritage will have been conserved and greatly enhanced. These inspirational and distinctive places, where people live, work, farm and relax, are adapting well to the impacts of climate change and other pressures;
- people will understand, value, and look after the vital natural services that the National Park provides. Large areas of high-quality and well-managed habitat will form a network supporting wildlife throughout the landscape;
- opportunities will exist for everyone to discover, enjoy, understand and value the National Park and its special qualities. The relationship between people and landscape will enhance their lives and inspire them to become actively involved in caring for it and using its resources more responsibly;
- its special qualities will underpin the economic and social well-being of the communities in and around it, which will be more self-sustaining and empowered to shape their own future. Its villages and market towns will be thriving centres for residents, visitors and businesses and supporting the wider rural community;
- successful farming, forestry, tourism and other business activities within the National Park will actively contribute to, and derive economic benefit from, its unique identity and special qualities.

For more information on how we aim to deliver this vision please have a look at the following documents:

- [Partnership Management Plan 2014 – 19](#)
- [State of the National Park Report 2012](#)
- [Corporate Plan 2013 – 16](#)





SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

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Key

- South Downs National Park
- South Downs Way
- South Downs Way (footpath only)
- Railway stations
- Railway
- Countryside sites
- Settlement