

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	15 July 2021
By	Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager Planning Policy Manager
Title of Report (note)	Annual Review of Planning Performance: Financial Year 2020/21

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Receive and note the Annual Review of Planning Performance**
- 2) Consider whether it wishes to make any recommendations to Officers relating to performance arising from the report**

I. Introduction

- I.1 Planning is an important statutory function of the Authority and helps further the National Park's statutory purposes and duty. Planning also plays an important part in helping deliver the vision, objectives and outcomes of the National Park's Partnership Management Plan (PMP).
- I.2 The Policy and Resources Committee have Terms of Reference which include:
'To monitor and review the performance, including financial performance, of the Authority in the context of its business delivery, and the management and maintenance of the Authority's assets in accordance with the Authority's agreed budget, Corporate Plan and other approved plans, and make recommendations for changes as appropriate.'
- I.3 The SDNPA is one of the largest planning authorities in the country, both geographically and in terms of the number of applications and other related matters dealt with. Consequently the Authority's Planning Directorate, together with our five host authorities, interacts with many thousands of people a year and this contact may be an individual's only contact with the Authority.
- I.4 Whilst a summary of all appeal decisions is reported to Planning Committee on a quarterly basis it is Policy and Resources Committee that has wider oversight of the Authority's planning performance. This report sets out, in a presentation at Appendix I, an overview of planning performance in the financial year 2020/21. Information is provided on:
 - i) Overall Workload
 - ii) The Section 101 contracts we have with five host authorities for the provision of planning services
 - iii) Validation performance
 - iv) Speed of decision making on planning applications
 - v) Appeal performance
 - vi) Planning enforcement
 - vii) Impacts on planning performance seen from Covid-19
 - viii) Quality assurance

- ix) Our current performance focus
- x) Challenges

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Planning performance, as an Authority and within that of the five host authorities, is subject to regular performance management with performance being consistently monitored, evaluated and reported on a wide variety of metrics. Planning performance is also discussed with the host authorities at a senior officer level, as well as at regular meetings the Authority Chair and Chief Executive have with their counterparts at the host authorities.
- 2.2 Overall planning performance continues to be good and all government targets have been met. Speed of decision making (despite restrictions on site visits at points in the year) and appeal performance are good whilst validation performance (not reported to Government) has dipped slightly.
- 2.3 The number of planning applications submitted dipped noticeably in Q1 but rebounded in subsequent quarters such that the number of planning applications submitted in the financial year as a whole was consistent with pre-pandemic levels.
- 2.4 Our Enforcement teams have continued to deal with a high number of complaints and correspondence about alleged breaches across the Park. We have been, and are, engaged in a number of complex and high profile injunctions and stop notices which are particularly demanding on staff time.
- 2.5 As identified in the attached presentation there is room for improvement including addressing variations in host authority performance, principally with Lewes District Council who have had issues with validation and speed of decision throughout the year. This should also be set against the advantages the hosted authority arrangements bring, including providing planning services closer to the communities served, established and effective partnership working and allowing the Authority to concentrate on the more significant applications. Furthermore, some variation in performance has been a factor since the Authority was created.
- 2.6 Moving forward dealing with the ongoing impacts and implications of Covid 19 will be necessary and the Planning team is ready to carry out any associated work.

3. Monitoring and quality

- 3.1 The Authority, in respect of its planning function, publishes an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) each December. There are clear links between the Corporate Plan and Partnership Management Plan (PMP) monitoring and the AMR, for example, completion rates for affordable housing. The report under agenda item 9 of this Committee draws together a comprehensive overview of Corporate Performance & Project Performance for 2020/21 including the Corporate Plan and the PMP.
- 3.2 The AMR reports on a number of planning documents such as the South Downs Local Plan, neighbourhood development plans and waste and minerals plans. It considers the performance of policies across the National Park, and trends against various indicators including those directly affected by the planning process as well as those more indirectly affected.
- 3.3 The AMR includes all indicators which are monitored along with any relevant targets, and which Local Plan policy each indicator relates to. An output is set out for each indicator followed by a brief commentary highlighting the key findings of the output and relating these back to local and Government policies.

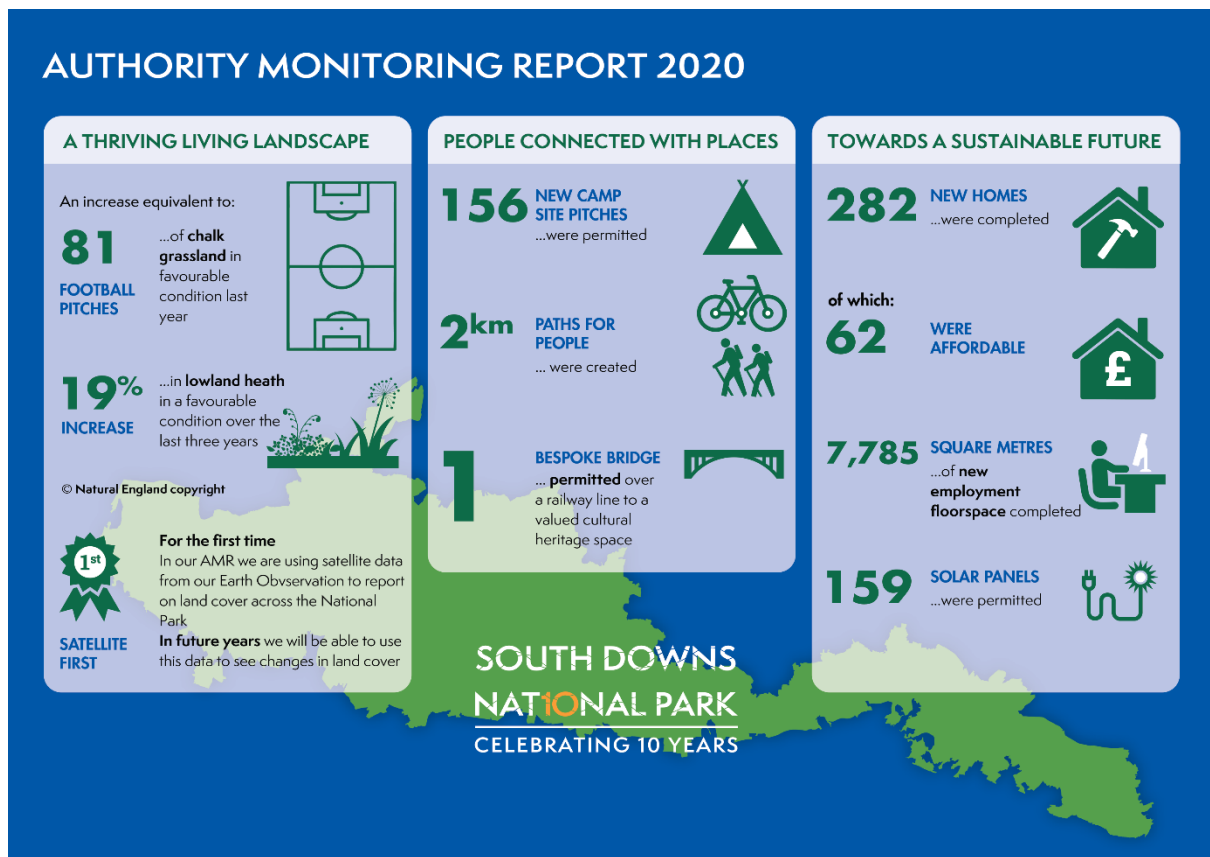


Figure One: Graphic from the Authority's 2020 Annual Monitoring Report

- 3.4 The Authority identifies five overarching priorities for the next five years in its Corporate Plan. These are the climate emergency, biodiversity, health and well-being, economy, housing and infrastructure and the Seven Sisters Country Park. There are indicators in the AMR relating to all these priorities apart from Seven Sisters. For example, in regard to biodiversity, Indicator SDLPI1 reports on the area, condition and connectivity of target priority habitats and Indicator SDLPI2 reports on the population and distribution of priority species. The AMR is therefore an important document in monitoring the effectiveness of the Authority's planning policies and its contribution to PMP and Corporate Plan objectives.
- 3.5 Once the Environment Bill is enacted there may be opportunities to add further value to the environment in the National Park. This is because both biodiversity net gain and conservation covenants are named in the Bill and they both represent important tools in nature recovery. The South Downs Local Plan already has a requirement for biodiversity net gain of course (Policy SD9) but enshrining the requirement in legislation will make the requirement more stringent and nationally established. Conservation covenants would allow landowners to set legally binding obligations on their land for themselves and subsequent owners, allowing environmental benefits to be secured for the long term for the public good.
- 3.6 The Authority adopted a Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document in August 2020. This adds further detail and guidance on the policies in our Local Plan and helps to mitigate climate change through significant improvements in the environmental performance of new buildings by, for example, requiring energy reduction measures in new homes over and above that required by Building Regulations and by requiring electric vehicle charging points in new dwellings. This represents an important example of the way in which our role as Local Planning Authority helps directly deliver on PMP objectives and outcomes.
- 3.7 A decision was made by officers in April 2020 to monitor the value added to all planning applications determined by the SDNPA and its host authorities. This is recorded, concisely,

for each planning application by the case officer and the outputs from monitoring in 2020-21 will be reported in the 2021 AMR. For the purposes of the 2020 AMR four case studies were analysed to show how in each case value was added through the planning system.

4. Planning Newsletter

- 4.1 Since Autumn 2017 the Authority has produced a newsletter three times a year covering key planning news. The newsletter also showcases some of the Authority's key achievements in planning and the distribution list has grown to some 1,400 people. The last newsletter, from Spring 2021, is included for reference at Appendix 2.

5. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No further decisions required. Another update on planning performance will be presented to Policy and Resources Committee in 12 months.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	Not directly – the delivery of planning services are resourced from the Authority's core budget and income brought in from Planning.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Performance management is established practice for ensuring value for money.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None, but note there is social value to the partnership arrangements
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	As this is a monitoring report there are no direct equality considerations arising out of this report. The Planning system is delivered in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None arising directly. The Planning function is undertaken in accordance with all appropriate data protection requirements.
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy: I.	None directly arising.

6. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 6.1 There are risks to the Authority and the National Park if the Planning system is not operating efficiently or effectively. However, there are limited risks arising from this report itself.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Variation in authority performance overall may be subject to adverse media comment	Medium	Low	Officers monitor performance regularly and addressing performance variations is discussed, with actions agreed, at senior officer level. An annual update on planning performance to Members is an important part of performance monitoring and local government openness.

MIKE HUGHES

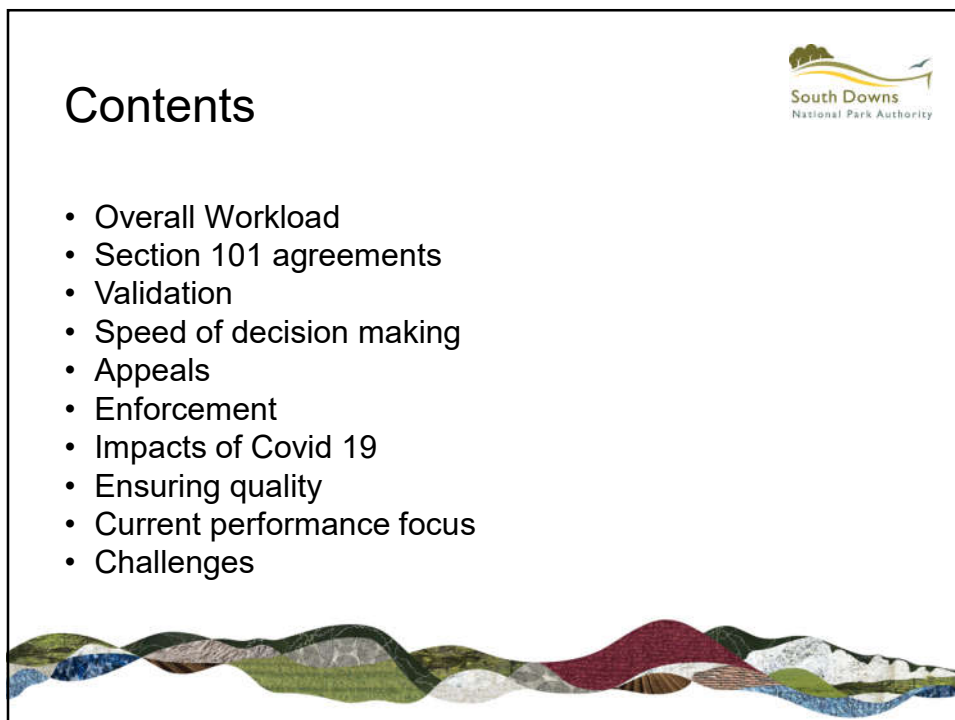
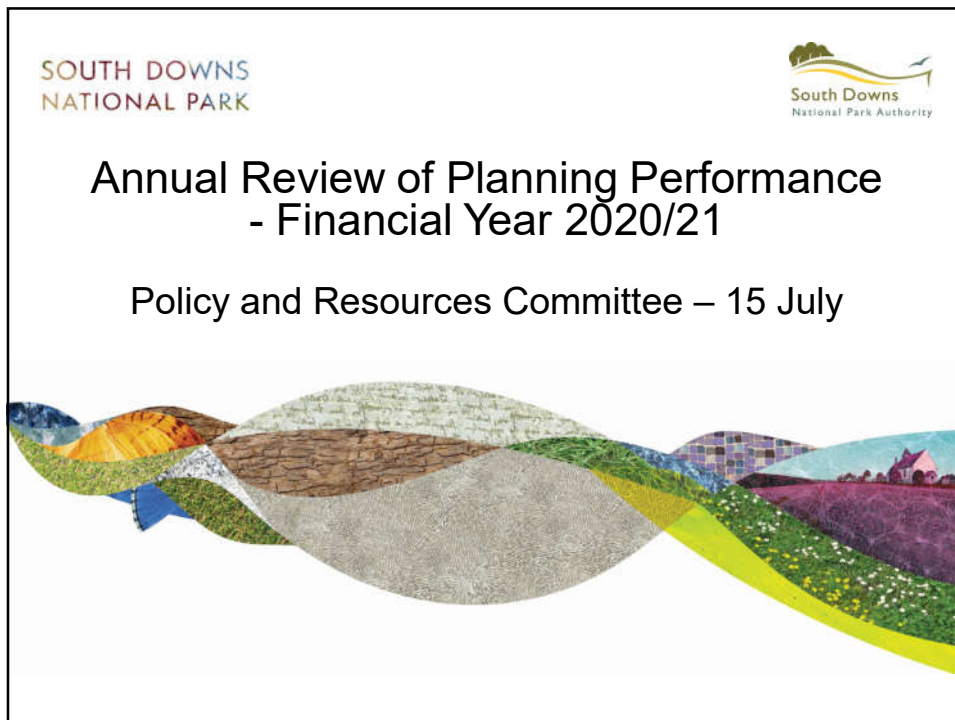
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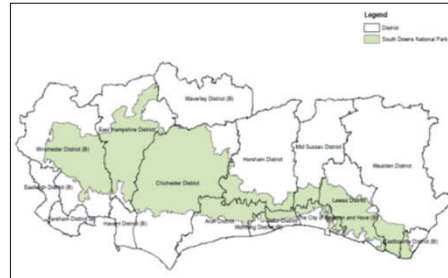
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Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presentation – Annual Review of Planning Performance – Financial Year 2020/21 2. SDNPA Planning Newsletter, Spring 2021
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive; Director of Planning; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	Web links: SDNPA Corporate Plan: https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SDNPA_Corporate_Plan_2020-21_06-FINAL.pdf SDNPA Annual Monitoring Reports: https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/authority-monitoring-reports/



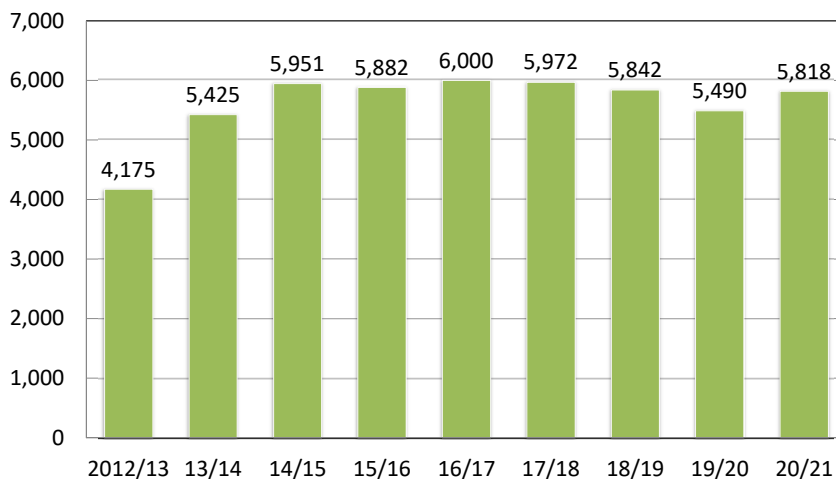
Overall Workload



- The SDNPA is one of the largest Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in England:
 - Covers one of the largest geographic areas
 - Within the top 30 largest planning authorities in the country, as measured by the number of applications dealt with (there are just over 300 LPAs in England)
 - We determine more planning applications than most London Boroughs
 - We determine as many planning applications a year as Manchester or Sheffield City Councils



Overall Workload – All Cases



Section 101 Contracts



- SDNPA itself deals with all planning matters (planning applications, enforcement and appeals) within the following District Council areas where they lie within the National Park:
 - Adur
 - Arun
 - Brighton and Hove
 - Mid Sussex
 - Wealden
 - Worthing
- Elsewhere SDNPA calls in, for its own determination, the larger applications and those that have the potential to have most impact on the National Park
- SDNPA deals with all minerals and waste matters across the National Park (formerly dealt with by the County Councils)



Section 101 Contracts



- We have contracts with 5 host authorities to deliver planning services (planning applications, enforcement and appeals) on our behalf.
- Over the last 3 financial years (at a gross cost of £2.19m for 2020/21) the percentage of the total planning application workload dealt with between us and the host authorities is as follows:
 - Chichester = 29.7%
 - East Hants = 21.4%
 - Ourselves = 19.6%
 - Lewes (also deal with Eastbourne cases) = 14.1%
 - Winchester = 12%
 - Horsham = 3.2%
- However caseload figures are not directly comparable as the SDNPA team deals with the largest and most complex applications



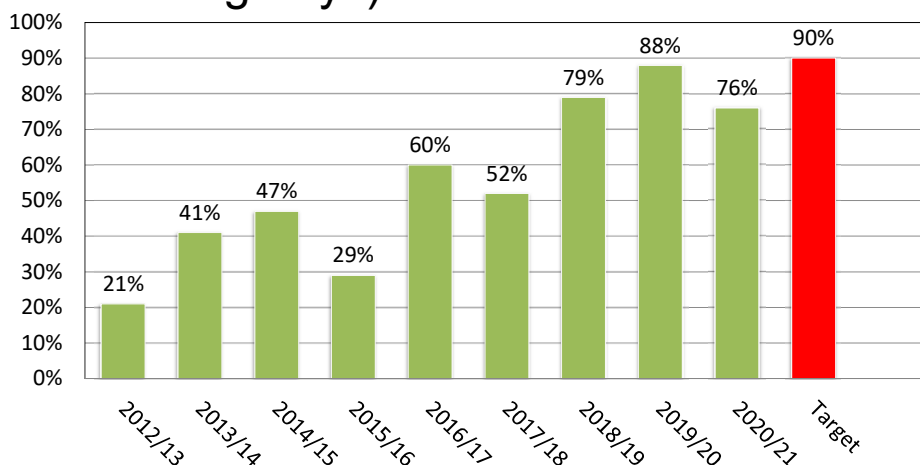
Validation Performance



- Validation is the proportion of all applications that are either made valid or invalidated (with reasons) within 5 working days
- This is a SDNPA performance measure, we do not report this performance to Government
- Speed - and accuracy - of validation is an important factor in user's experience of the planning system
- There has been wide variation in host authority performance on this metric in the past.
- Validation performance has slipped back this year, although there has been no reduction in speed of decision making on applications as later slides show



Validation Performance (within 5 working days)



Different types of planning applications



- **Major** = 10+ dwellings, over a 1,000 sq m of floorspace, site area exceeds half a hectare, minerals applications, waste applications.
- **Others** - 1-9 dwellings; up to 999 sq m of office, industrial, retail floorspace; householders; change of use, listed building consent.
- Taken together they are known as 'PS2' applications
- A consistent benchmark for performance management and consultation requirements across England.

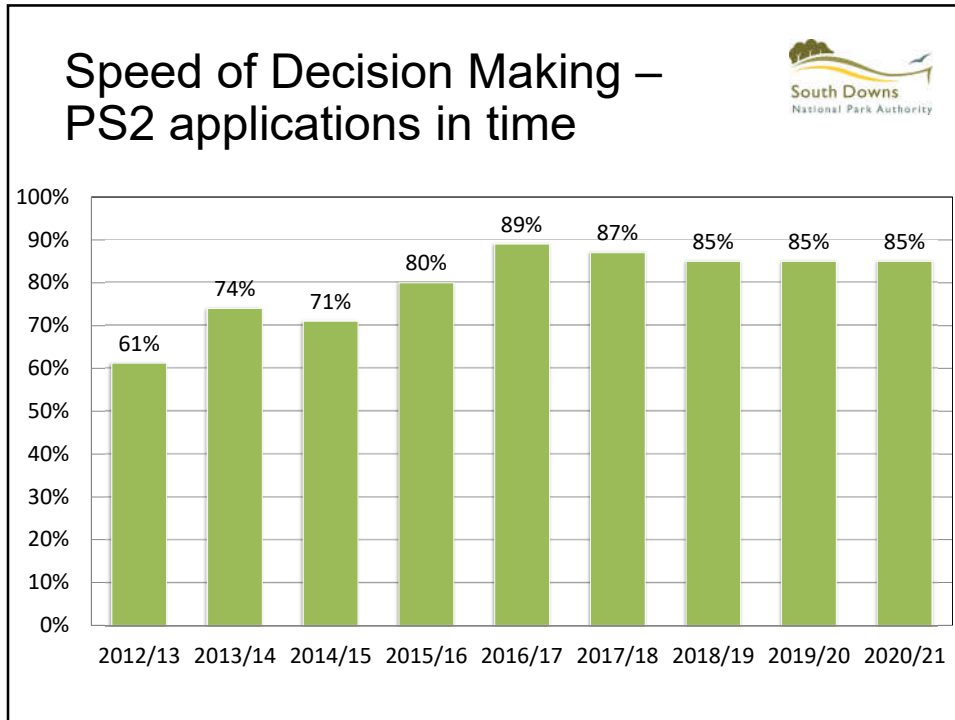


Government Requirements – Speed of Decision Making



- That at least 60% of **major** applications are determined within time. There is a 13 week target determination period (16 weeks if EIA development)
- That at least 70% of '**others**' are determined within time. There is a 8 week target determination period.
- If these targets are not met it could result in the Authority being put into special measures and having planning powers removed. The Authority is comfortably in excess of these targets.
- There is also a quality criterion. No more than 10% of our total planning decisions can be overturned at appeal in a 2 year period. For the 2 year period the Government specify (October 2018 to September 2020) less than 2% of our total decisions have been overturned by the Planning Inspectorate.





Speed of Decision Making 2019/20 and 2020/21 - MAJORS

	2019/20		2020/21	
	Total Number of applications	%age in time	Total Number of applications	%age in time
SDNPA OVERALL	47	85%	54	85%
Chichester	5	100%	5	100%
East Hants	7	86%	15	67%
Horsham	0	N/a	0	N/a
Lewes	1	100%	1	100%
SDNPA	33	82%	29	90%
Winchester	1	100%	4	100%

Speed of Decision Making 2019/20 and 2020/21 - **OTHERS**



	2019/20		2020/21	
	Total Number of applications	%age in time	Total Number of applications	%age in time
SDNPA OVERALL	2,117	85%	1,977	85%
Chichester	637	87%	611	87%
East Hants	439	92%	444	91%
Horsham	94	93%	83	88%
Lewes	378	69%	307	60%
SDNPA	266	84%	252	88%
Winchester	303	89%	280	96%



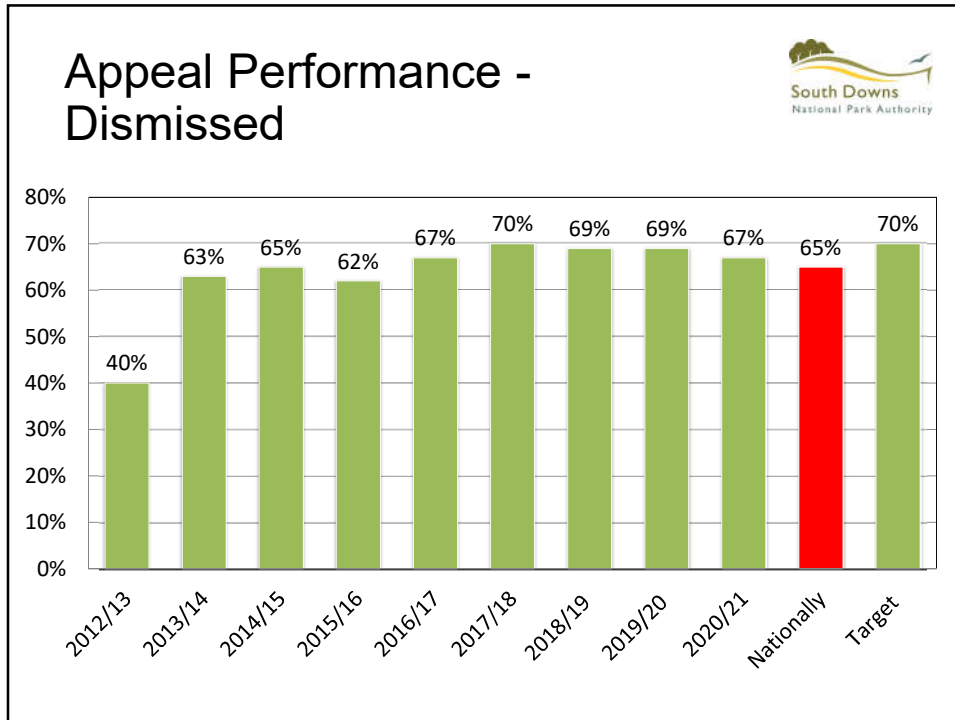
Minerals and Waste



	Total number of applications determined in 2019/20	Total number of applications determined in 2020/21	Percentage in time
Majors	8	4	100% (in both financial years)

- Government require at least 60% of these decisions to be made on time
- Again there is a quality criterion from government. No more than 10% of our total minerals and waste decisions can be overturned at appeal in a 2 year period. This means that if we lost just 2 appeals we would not meet this criterion and would be at risk of designation. This is a risk common to most Mineral Planning Authorities, especially National Park Authorities, given the low numbers of applications involved.





Appeal Performance

	Total number of appeal decisions received	Number dismissed	Percentage dismissed
2020/21	81	54	67%
2019/20	123	85	69%
2018/19	106	73	69%
2017/18	80	56	70%

- A summary of all appeal decisions is reported to Planning Committee quarterly

Appeal Performance by Host Authority over 3 years



	Number of appeal decisions between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2021	Percentage dismissed
Chichester	107	61%
East Hants	59	74%
Horsham	7	71%
Lewes	22	82%
SDNPA	74	64%
Winchester	41	68%

Planning Enforcement



- We report the number of enforcement notices to Government each quarter but there is no requirement to report on speed of enforcement
- There has been a notable increase this year in complex enforcement cases, including those requiring injunctions.
- In terms of detailed enforcement figures:
 - In 2020/21 645 new enforcement cases were opened, whilst 544 cases were closed
 - In 2019/20 650 new enforcement cases were opened whilst 740 cases were closed
 - In 2018/19 693 new enforcement cases were opened, whilst 750 cases were closed
- The Authority monitors the time taken to determine enforcement cases and Link officers run through older cases with host authorities every other month



Impacts of Covid-19



- Speed of decision making and appeal performance was maintained throughout however validation performance reduced slightly.
- There was a reduction in the number of applications received and validated in Q1 but the number of planning applications received for the rest of the financial year was at or above pre-pandemic levels.
- Overall there was an increase in formal representations (largely objections) submitted on planning applications of 31% compared to the previous year.
- Anecdotally officers' email correspondence has increased markedly.
- During lockdown 1 and the Government's stay at home instruction SDNPA and our host authorities did not generally carry out site visits, save enforcement matters of significant irreversible harm.
- During lockdowns 2 and 3 the approach to site visits varied between host authorities
- The implications of officers being on site can be different between assessing a planning application and investigating an enforcement complaint. In the latter case officers' presence may be unwelcome and they may be confronted, potentially making observing social distancing more difficult.

Ensuring Quality – Regular Performance Management



- Critical role of link officers
- Regular relationship meetings with senior staff at the host authorities
- Regular officer groups – development management, enforcement and technical support to share good practice and updated procedures
- Agreed action plans produced where there are specific matters of concern
- All complaints received reviewed
- Agents forum every 6 months



Ensuring Quality – Customer Satisfaction Survey



There is a link to a short customer satisfaction survey on every decision notice (issued by both us and the hosts) since 1 October 2018.

- 333 responses received to 31 March 2021
- The two most common positive responses about our planning service were ease of communication (65%) and the quality of information and advice provided by officers (54%)
- The two most common negative responses were that website information could be improved (29%) and communication could have been more frequent (26%)
- Communication was mentioned in both positive and negative feedback, highlighting its crucial importance in planning
- The SDNPA's website has been overhauled since most of these responses were received
- 73% of respondents were satisfied with the overall service provided, 10% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied whilst 17% were dissatisfied.



Current Performance Focus



1. Dealing with Covid 19 impacts and implications, including planning for the recovery
2. Speeding up dealing with enforcement cases
3. Addressing variation in performance which has room for improvement around speed of decision making (particularly at Lewes)
4. Dealing with older planning application cases



Main Challenges



- Impacts of Covid-19
- Vacancies and continued difficulty recruiting qualified and experienced planners
- Maintaining and improving service quality given continued pressure on public sector budgets
- Potential impacts of Government's planning reforms



SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK



Thank You



SOUTH DOWNS PLANNING

NEWS FROM YOUR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY



Welcome to the planning newsletter for the South Downs National Park Authority
Send your comments to us at planningnewsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

The Climate Change conundrum – how much change are we prepared to take?

It's been an extraordinary year for many reasons, not least the pandemic that has changed so many aspects of all our daily lives and continues to be a rollercoaster journey of ups, downs, and imponderables.

Seeking to be optimistic, the virus, at least in the UK, appears to be abating.

Global warming and associated climate change, however, are not.

The Government recently announced radical new climate change commitments that will set the UK on course to cut carbon emissions by 78 per cent by 2035.

This potentially world-leading position will require change, adaptation and flexibility and means the next decade will be decisive in terms of what we can achieve as a nation and, indeed, global community.

More electric cars, better insulated homes, renewable electricity, tree planting and simple lifestyle changes, such



as walking and cycling more, will all have a role to play.

Some councils and sectors are already well on the way to significantly



slashing their carbon footprint, promising to go over and above the Government targets.

What is abundantly clear is the planning system will have a key role to play in this next decade and much is, of course, being made of the green recovery.

Quite rightly, one of the positives to come from the pandemic has been greater appreciation of the fragility of our biosphere and how nature and people can work symbiotically.

The big question is how far are we prepared to adjust and change?

How much are we prepared to shift our decisions and behaviour, being aware of the real costs of the lifestyles and economies we choose, and their impact on nature?

While it's great that Boris Johnson has signed the UN Leaders' Pledge for Nature to prioritise a green recovery and deliver biodiversity targets, this is going to take a mind shift for many of us as we factor in short-term costs, while perhaps not getting immediate return.

Buildings are a key challenge in our quest to become carbon net zero (meaning that any unavoidable emissions are offset).

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Ecological scheme will help tackle nitrate issue



The Meon Valley in Hampshire

Creating new wetland habitat at a farm in the National Park will boost biodiversity and help to prevent ecological deterioration in the Solent.

Planning permission has been granted for ecological enhancements at Whitewool Farm, in East Meon, that will help to offset the problem of rising nitrates in the region.

The issue has been well-publicised after Natural England issued advice in 2019 to local planning authorities regarding the high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in the Solent, alongside evidence showing the likely cause being wastewater nutrients from existing housing and agriculture.

High nitrate levels can lead to eutrophication and algal blooms, seriously damaging the marine habitat.

To prevent further deterioration of The Solent, Natural England has been seeking to achieve nutrient neutrality in new developments.

The approved development in the National Park involves enhancing the ecological value of a small section of the Whitewool Stream. This will allow nitrates to be naturally extracted from the water by planting nitrate-absorbing vegetation.

The final scheme will create a wetland and reedbed habitat through landscaping, alongside a wet woodland and hedgerows.

It is anticipated to result in a decrease of 4,000 kilograms per year of total nitrogen that would otherwise end up in The Solent. The scheme underwent changes and improvements through the application process to address the views of consultees and National Park Authority officers. Planning permission was granted subject to a number of conditions being met.

Richard Ferguson, Development Management Lead for the Hampshire area, said: "The scheme will greatly enhance the biodiversity and habitats of the area and improve the water quality of the River Meon. Improving biodiversity, water quality, and conserving and enhancing eco-systems are key planning policies in the adopted South Downs Local Plan."

According to the UK Green Council, about 45 per cent of the UK emissions come from the built environment, with about 10 per cent directly associated with construction.

The planning system's ability to effect change on existing building performance is, at best, limited. However, we can make significant change going forward when planning our places, spaces and communities, ensuring the highest quality built form is required and then delivered.

We may have to challenge ourselves regarding materials. Design is about far more than materials, but they are an important component in terms of climate adaptation. While many materials can be 'dressed up' to look very similar to those around, is that always right?

In a National Park where 23 per cent of the land is covered by woodland, I believe we should be making use of timber. It locks in carbon into its very structure and can be used in a myriad of ways.

Cross-laminated timber, in particular, is supremely strong and can support many buildings. In fact, up to 84m, as I learned recently, in the commanding timber skyscraper that is Brumunddal, Norway. Closer to home, the aptly-titled Forest Green Rovers, based in Gloucestershire, are having their new stadium "Eco Park" built entirely from timber.

There are, of course, plenty other 'green' materials for building, including straw, hemp and rammed earth.

We must also not forget the use of greenery and used water re-harvesting – whether to create pleasant and oxygen-providing spaces or actually on buildings themselves. While the Bosco Verticale in Milan may be a bit beyond us, greening buildings should be used at every opportunity.

All this is particularly important given the Government pledge to have 30 per cent of the nation's land "protected" by 2030. Given that existing protected landscapes need to adapt and develop, so will any new designations.

It's imperative that in these areas we accept that new development will occur. Coming back to my original train of thought, it's clear that the need for housing and other land uses will not abate.

But, in this decisive decade for climate change mitigation, building construction should tread as lightly as possible upon the land and its resources. The over-riding goal? That net environmental impact is positive.

Are we, and the planning system, able to recognise the value of the building material and its contribution to net zero growth and potentially make allowances in other directions?

A compelling arena of debate and one I'll be following closely.

Tim Slaney,

Director of Planning, South Downs National Park Authority



Farming complex plan gets the green light



The view of Caburn Downs from Iford Hill

Plans to consolidate a farming operation in East Sussex have been approved by the Authority.

Members of the Planning Committee voted to give the green light to three applications submitted by Iford Farm, near Lewes.

The Estate was seeking permission to create a consolidated farm complex – including five new buildings, additional hardstanding and the creation of a new access track.

The plans were devised to ensure that farming at the Iford Estate can be carried out more effectively and better meet the pressures of modern farming in the future.

The plans had been revised after an earlier proposal was refused by Planning Committee over concerns about the scale of the development. The fresh proposals were developed following an extensive public consultation exercise in which the Estate invited feedback and comments from local people to help shape the scheme.

The revised plans were also developed taking into account the prominent landscape setting of the farm.

Members agreed with the considerations of the officer report and concluded that the schemes would provide a more centralised base for the farming operations.

It was agreed that the proposals would not cause an unacceptable detrimental impact to the landscape. Biodiversity net gain from the additional woodland planting and surface water attenuation pond was also welcomed.

The benefits to the farming operation are supported by the policies in the South Downs Local Plan.

The proposal was also supported by a Whole Estate Plan that sets in context the proposal and provides a framework for delivering related benefits to the locality and the landscape.

Following the decision, Tim Slaney, Director of Planning, said: "This scheme supports the future of the farming operation, which makes a significant contribution to the local economy, and also enables conservation and biodiversity enhancements to be delivered."

Homes development is turned down by Authority

A housing development at a large depot site was refused by the Authority over concerns about biodiversity benefits and lack of affordable housing.

The Authority refused planning permission for the proposal to build 75 new homes on the former Brickworks and Council Depot Site in Midhurst.

The site is allocated for 65 to 90 dwellings in the South Downs Local Plan (Policy SD78), therefore the principle of redeveloping the site for new homes is supported.

However, the Authority had a number of significant concerns, including issues such as design, lack of affordable housing, ecology and impacts upon wildlife sites.

Flood risk and drainage were other concerns that led to the conclusion that the application should be refused permission in its current iteration.

Officers are now working with the applicant on a revised scheme and a new planning application is expected to be submitted in the next few weeks.



Appeal is dismissed by Government inspector

The Government's Planning Inspectorate has dismissed an appeal lodged by a developer against a decision by the Authority.

An appeal was lodged after the Planning Committee considered an application for the former Tews engineering site, next to Petersfield railway station.

The plans included 29 apartments and 240 sq m of office accommodation.

Planning Committee accepted that this vacant site would be suitable for redevelopment but considered that the proposed three affordable dwellings were insufficient and that the design of the new building lacked quality in this prominent location.

In a recent decision a Planning Inspector dismissed the appeal.

The Inspector agreed with the Authority that the development could provide more affordable housing than proposed and that the proposed frontage building to Lavant Street would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.

Revised proposals for this site are expected in due course.

Look no feather – signal box is brilliant for birding!

A charming signal box has been lovingly restored to its former glory and is now the perfect vantage point for bird-watching.

The signal box at Lewes Railway Land Local Nature Reserve was in desperate need of renovation after years of wear and tear.

Now the structure has been given a new lease of life, thanks to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding approved by the National Park Authority to the tune of around £15,000 for habitat restoration. CIL is administered by the SDNPA and paid by developers as a means of supporting new community infrastructure.



Work took place between January and March this year and included installing shatter-proof glass, replacing rotten timbers, and improving wheelchair access. Nature-lovers have enjoyed using the signal box as a hide to admire the bird life, which includes herons, little egrets, kingfisher, little grebe and cormorant. The CIL money has also helped to pay for improvements to water meadows and hedgerows nearby, to improve biodiversity and improve their effectiveness as flood defences.

Last October the first round of dredging and re-profiling of the ditches on the water meadows adjoining the 25-acre reserve was undertaken by Obsidian Groundworks.



As well as dredging the ditches that run between the meadows, three shallow ponds, or scrapes, were renewed to create improved wetland habitat.

This work was also supported by funding from the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust and Lewes District Council.

A further £11,000 of CIL funding is earmarked for footpath improvements and new interpretation at the reserve, which was occupied by railway sidings and was the embankment of the former Lewes to Uckfield railway line until 1989.

Mike Hughes, Planning Projects Manager, who oversees CIL funding for the Authority, said: "It's great to see the signal box back in action, giving so many people of all ages a chance to get close to some of the amazing avian species at this site.

"I'm pleased that the signal box will be used for school visits and made accessible for open days, walks and festivals.

"This wonderful reserve is a perfect example of how space can be created for nature within an urban setting."

Improving safety for pedestrians in town



Crossing a busy road has become easier and safer thanks to a new signalised pedestrian crossing.

The crossing was requested by Petworth Town Council and the work was carried out by West Sussex County Council. The A272, near Downview Road, is a main road and has to be crossed by children using the bus service to Midhurst Rother College and residents and visitors accessing Petworth Sports Ground and Petworth Deer Park.

Some £40,000 of CIL funding and Section 106 money, administered by the SNDPA has contributed to the £110,000 scheme.



Jessica Riches, Planning Officer, who helps administer the CIL payments, said: "It's fantastic to see this crossing installed and I know it will make a big difference to many people living locally, as well as visitors to this beautiful market town in the heart of the National Park."

Agents' Forum Update

Thirty agents joined us for a lively South Downs Agents' Forum on 17 March.

Lucy Howard, Planning Policy Manager, started things off with local and national updates including the forthcoming consultation on our local validation requirements.

The focus for discussion then moved on to landscape-led design. The Authority's Landscape Officer, Ruth Childs, talked us through the principles of landscape-led design and then we debated a rural case study in break-out rooms.

We hope to meet in person at our next Agents' Forum in September. Please do contact us on agentsforum@southdowns.gov.uk if you would like to join us.

A [video of the workshop](#) is available to view here.

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

“A shared understanding of landscape can integrate us”



Ruth Childs is Landscape Officer for the National Park and writes about her experiences as a leading advocate for landscape-led design on the local, regional and European stage.

Like many specialist areas of work, the environment sector can be a small world.

Recently I was reminded of this in a rather lovely way.

Back in 2014/15 I was working as the Landscape Specialist for a County Council. I was fortunate enough to get involved with developing a European-funded Interreg Project alongside other partners in the south east. The project’s concept was about building resilience in coastal communities in the face of a changing climate.

We began attending meetings with potential Dutch, Belgian and French partners from local government, universities and research organisations, developing ideas and looking for common ground. Brainstorms and workshops ensued as each organisation shared their priorities, issues and ideas. The variety of partners and places were significant – coastal cities to rural farmland, coastal flooding to rainfall and surface water problems. We had plenty of ideas, creativity and enthusiasm, but we were struggling to find a hook, something to unite us – a golden thread you might call it!

As the only landscape specialist I spent much of the time, listening (sometimes translating) and talking about landscape function and character. While feeling like a broken record, it suddenly dawned on me – regardless of each partners’ expertise or location, problems or aspirations – we all had landscape in common.



Everyone was seeking to change their landscape in a way that would help them address a whole host of climate-change-related problems. Landscape, or more specifically the European Landscape Convention (ELC), became our golden thread. I was able to convince the partners that framing our problems using landscape meant we could each approach the change we wanted to see, on the open coast or in the city, using the same method – landscape-led design.

Fast-forward, a couple of years, my own circumstances changed and I was offered a job in the private sector. Out of the blue, I received an email from one of the Dutch partners. The project had continued to develop and the partners had successfully bid for, and won, Interreg funding under the “2 Seas” programme. They were planning their launch event and needed a keynote speaker to talk about the ELC and landscape-led. I was so pleased and excited to be able to take up this opportunity and spend a few days in Belgium, catching up with the partners and speaking about my favourite subject.

Speeding ahead to November 2020. I’m now working for the South Downs National Park and I was kindly signed up to the CIRIA week-long intensive SuDS Design course by a colleague. One of the hosts was a landscape architect who specialised in SuDS design, and we got chatting before the course began. He had recently been working on a project that was part of The Aquifer Partnership – a collaboration of key partners seeking to protect local South Downs groundwater. He showed some photos as part of the training of the work they’d been doing, retrofitting SuDS on the outskirts of Brighton to address significant surface water flooding.

It turns out that this was one of the projects funded by Interreg I’d helped to develop back in 2015.

It was a wonderful reminder of the legacy that is possible to achieve and the way in which a shared understanding of landscape can integrate us, helping people to work together for the benefit of a whole place.

Landscape-led design continues to be a big part of my professional life as it’s a strategic policy in the South Downs Local Plan. Using a thorough understanding of a local landscape, or place, can facilitate positive change that can be secured within a landscape’s visual, character and functional capacity.

Prestigious awards return

The Sussex Heritage Trust’s annual awards have been launched, with a brand-new award promoting outstanding design in the National Park.

The only Sussex-wide Heritage Awards supports excellence in conservation, restoration, and the good design of newly-built projects, while also encouraging the use of traditional skills and crafts.

This year the National Park Authority is sponsoring The South Downs Design Award, which will go to a project that clearly demonstrates a positive contribution to the National Park, including schemes that have conserved and enhanced the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

A call for entries across nine categories was launched earlier this year and judging will begin next month.

Last year saw a total of 25 Award winners, of which eight featured in the South Downs National Park, including the Historic Stew Ponds Project at Arundel Castle and West Dean College Roof Restoration at West Dean College of Art and Conservation.

Winners will receive a hand-crafted slate presented by the President of the Sussex Heritage Trust, The Rt Hon Lord Egremont DL at a ceremony on 14 July.

New pavilion is on song!



Oyster and lobsters on the menu at Glyndebourne Opera House will have a dual purpose this coming season, as the waste shells will be crushed and crafted into part of the external cladding for a new pavilion.

Wine corks, grass clippings and timber from Ash dieback will be among the other building materials for this unique new development in East Sussex.

Architects BakerBrown Studio received planning approval from the South Downs National Park Authority for the new event space at the world-famous opera house.

The single-story dining pavilion will nestle within existing yew hedges and frames stunning views out over an existing croquet lawn towards the South Downs.

Many of the building materials are sourced either from the site itself, or from the nearby Sussex Weald, and many of these are materials more normally described as “waste”.

Material specialists Local Works Studio have helped the team develop a palette of building components made of waste and material from the Glyndebourne Estate itself. These include Ash dieback for the timber frame, windows and doors, and chalk from previous excavations to make lime mortar for brickwork and plaster for the interior walls. Food waste – namely oyster and lobster shells – will be collected and processed into beautiful external wall tiles. Corks will be collected on site and bound with mycelium to create bricks for interior walls. Furthermore, underfired bricks from a local brickyard will be used for the interior floor finish.

But perhaps the most unusual element will be the building’s insulation. A mycelium mix provided by Biohm will use the site’s grass clippings to grow insulation panels.

The pavilion is due to start on site in September 2021 after this season’s opera festival is finished and will be completed for April 2022.

Waste material that will be used for the pavilion will be collected from April this year.

Gus Christie, Executive Chairman of Glyndebourne, said: “We are extremely excited that such an innovative building has achieved Planning Approval in the South Downs National Park. It picks up and runs with our ambitions to prove that humans can work with the natural world rather than against it.”

The development will also provide the company with a teaching and learning facility for local community groups.

Authority responds to major consultation



Winchester Cathedral from St Catherine's Hill

The Authority has submitted its response to the Government’s consultation on the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and new draft National Model Design Code.

The consultation sought views on draft revisions to the NPPF to implement policy changes principally in response to the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission “Living with Beauty” report.

Meanwhile, the consultation is also seeking views on the draft National Model Design Code, which provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design.

The response was approved by Members of the National Park Authority at Planning Committee on 11 March.

Alun Alesbury, Chair of Planning Committee, said: “The South Downs National Park Authority welcomes this opportunity to comment on the draft revisions to the NPPF and the draft National Model Design Code.



“We strongly support the addition to paragraph 175 of the NPPF that any development within the setting of national parks and other protected landscapes should be sensitively located and designed to avoid adverse impacts on the designated landscapes.

“We also welcome the Government’s emphasis on good design and the creation of beautiful places both in the amendments to the NPPF and the draft National Model Design Code.”

[The full response can be read here.](#)

Enforcement action taken against landowner



Cissbury Ring, near Worthing

An appeal has been dismissed by the Government’s Planning Inspector after an enforcement notice was served by the Authority for a harmful change of use on a farm.

Back in March 2020 an enforcement notice was served on the landowner of Land East of Pony Farm, near Worthing, in West Sussex.

The notice was served for the material change of use of the land from equestrian by the importation and storage of waste materials.

The activities taking place were deemed harmful to the landscape character of the locality, and failed to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area because of the size and type of waste material being imported.

The unauthorised change of use of the land also had a harmful visual impact on the rural landscape of the area and public amenity.

The landowner appealed the Enforcement Notice and applied for costs.

Following a lengthy appeal process, the Inspector has dismissed the appeal and costs application and the landowner has until 27 July 2021 to comply with the Enforcement Notice.

Heather Lealan, who leads enforcement for the National Park, said: “The South Downs National Park was designated for the entire nation for the incredible natural beauty of the landscape, as well as its biodiversity.



“This case is an important reminder that harming these special qualities, whether intentionally or unintentionally, can lead to enforcement action and is an issue taken very seriously by the Authority.”

Chalk grassland will be restored under plans



Chalk grassland visitor: The Chalkhill Blue Butterfly

An important restoration scheme that will provide tree planting and chalk grassland creation has been approved by the Authority.

The restoration work was given the green light as part of a planning application that was considered by Planning Committee for Butser Hill Lime Works, close to the A3 and the village of Buriton, in Hampshire.

The application was to consolidate two extant planning permissions for chalk extraction and aggregate recycling operations, as well as an enhanced restoration scheme for the site. The consolidation of the extant planning permissions would see end of chalk extraction from 2042 to 2024.

Following the decision by committee, the aggregate recycling operations and restoration of the site is now due to be completed by the end of 2028.

Sabrina Robinson, Planning, Monitoring and Compliance Officer for the Authority, explained: “The previously permitted restoration scheme for the site was to import material to have a flat plateau style landscape which would then be left to self-seed.

“This restoration scheme was typical of old mineral permissions and was granted prior to the South Downs National Park being created. As such it did not adhere to purposes One and Two of the National Park.

“The new scheme was landscape led and involves the importation of large amounts of clean inert waste and soils, clays and top soils to create a landform which will integrate with Queen Elizabeth Country Park which is adjacent to the site.”

The restoration will include the creation of low-lying areas to encourage aquatic habitats, a focal viewpoint on top of the ridge in the Northern Quarry, and informal paths to encourage exploration of the site.

The lime kilns will also be protected and enhanced.

Important new planning guidance on viticulture is adopted by Authority



With its sunny climate and chalky soil, the South Downs National Park has become one of the UK’s premier wine-making regions. Lucy Howard, Planning Policy Manager, gives an update on a key new planning document that will help determine planning applications in this growing sector.



A new Technical Advice Note (TAN) on viticulture was presented to Planning Committee on 15 April.

The TAN has now been published and will be a material consideration that will be taken into account by decision-makers at the Authority

and the host authorities when determining planning applications for new viticulture, wine making and other related development.

The growing of grapes for wine, known as viticulture, and the processing of grapes to make wine is expanding rapidly in the South Downs National Park as it is in many other parts of the UK.

The impact of this growth has been assessed in the South Downs National Park Viticulture Growth Impact Assessment commissioned by the National Park Authority and recently completed by Vinescapes. This study identifies some important facts and figures.

There are currently 51 vineyards, of which 11 include wineries, covering 436 ha of land in the National Park.

These vineyards and wineries employ 358 people, including seasonal labour, attract approximately 33,000



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visitors a year and contribute directly approximately £24.5 million to the local economy.

This contribution increases to £54 million if impacts on the wider economy are included.

The scale of cool climate viticulture in the National Park has the potential to increase dramatically with the study identifying 39,700 ha of land in the South Downs National Park (34.2% of existing farmland) as being suitable for viticulture.

If just one-tenth of this land (3,970 ha) were to be converted for growing grapes, this would represent an area larger than the current UK viticulture sector (3,500 ha in 2019) and more than 22 million bottles of wine could be produced annually.

The Growth Impact Assessment is a major step forward in our understanding of local viticulture, and the TAN seeks to address and provide advice on the main planning matters. The purpose of the TAN is to explain how to make successful planning applications for new viticulture, wine making and other related development that deliver multiple benefits for the National Park.

The TAN is primarily written for existing and prospective vineyard owners, estate managers, planning agents, Members and planning case officers both at the South Downs National Park Authority and local authorities providing planning services through hosted arrangements, and consultees on planning applications.



The tasting room at the Rathfinny Estate in East Sussex

The key issues that this TAN seeks to address are:

- **How viticulture relates to the purposes and duty of the National Park and delivers on Partnership Management Plan 2020-2025 outcomes**
- **What you can do without planning permission in the National Park**
- **What you need planning permission for in the National Park**
- **How to deliver multiple ecosystem services for the National Park in the context of a planning application**
- **How to comply with Local Plan policies.**

This TAN is primarily a planning document, but there is of course other legislation and regulations relating to viticulture and winemaking such as tax and duties. Advice should be sought on these matters from the relevant authorities.

[You can read the TAN and the study here.](#)

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Guidance on cycle and car parking steps up a gear



A key planning document that will help guide parking provision for vehicles and bikes has been adopted.

Members voted to adopt the Guidance on Parking for Residential and Non-Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), also known as the Parking SPD, at Planning Committee.

The Parking SPD provides relevant parking standards for the locality of the National Park giving detail to policy SD22 Parking Provision of the South Downs Local Plan.

Planning Policy Officer Kevin Wright explained: “The purpose of the Parking SPD is to give clear direction to all those involved in the planning decision-making process regarding the provision of parking for different types of transportation including cycles, electric bicycles/vehicles and motor vehicles at new development in the South Downs National Park.

“Guidance in the Parking SPD for cycle parking and the provision of electric vehicle charging points are part of the transition to forms of transport having less impact on climate change. The Parking SPD recognises the short-term need for provision for motor vehicles while the transition to other forms of transport is taking place. The Parking SPD, along with some locally specific Neighbourhood Development Plan policies, replaces all previous standards set by county councils in the South Downs National Park.”

The reports are available here.

Soft Sand Review Update

Revised policies around soft sand have now been formally adopted by West Sussex County Council and the National Park Authority.

It follows successful examination of the Soft Sand Review last year.

The new policies, now adopted as part of the Joint Minerals Local Plan, consider the availability of soft sand outside the National Park in the first instance and provide a robust framework to ensure the best outcomes for the protected landscape.

The Planning Inspector accepted the Authority’s position on the amount of soft sand we should plan for, prioritising resources outside of the South Downs National Park, and our site selection process. This included our focus on extensions to existing sites within the National Park.

There are three allocations for soft sand. The first, Ham Farm, is outside of the South Downs National Park. The other two allocations are extensions to sites with existing planning permission within the South Downs National Park: East of West Heath near Rogate, and Chantry Lane Extension near Storrington.

Development on sites in the National Park can only come forward in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Both matters will be considered at the point any application is submitted.

The documents, including the Adoption notices and the updated version of the Joint Minerals Local Plan are available at: www.westsussex.gov.uk/mwdf

Planning ahead for new camping and glamping

Draft planning guidance around camping and glamping in the National Park has been out for consultation and the results are now being analysed.



The Technical Advice Note (TAN) has been produced to help guide applicants and agents when applying for planning permission for camping and glamping tourism accommodation.

The document should be read alongside policies in the South Downs Local Plan (SDLP) and the Partnership Management Plan (PMP).

If adopted, the TAN will be a material consideration that will be taken into account by decision makers at the Authority and the host authorities when determining planning applications for camping and glamping.

Hannah Collier, Senior Planning Policy Officer, said: “Tourism is a vital part of the economy of the National Park, attracting over 19 million visitors annually, with 18.4 million day visitors and 641,900 people.

“These visitors contributed to £464.3 million of GVA to the National Park, with staying visitors accounting for £125.99 million annually.

“Camping and glamping have risen in popularity recently both nationally and in the National Park, and evidence shows that glamping businesses opening in the National Park have quickly found a strong market. Therefore this is a really vital piece of planning guidance that we hope applicants will find useful.”

The document can be read here.

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Skateparks and forests to benefit from funds



Conservationists have managed to buy part of Woolmer Forest

Gill Welsman, Planning Project Management Officer, gives a timely update on Section 106 contributions.



During the last financial year the Authority has supported 40 parish and community projects through S106 developer contributions. Totalling £553,822 the funds have supported a wide variety of projects which include:

- The purchase of a Site of Special Scientific Interest by the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation in Bordon.
- Provision of disabled facilities within existing affordable housing stock, East Hampshire
- Tree carving following the removal of trees through ash dieback, Horndean
- Improvements to Rosemary Gardens, Petworth
- The creation of a Petanque Court, Liss
- Installation of a touch screen display information board, Petworth
- Public Rights of Way Improvements, Rackham
- Provision of a water filling station at Lewes Skatepark
- Skatepark improvements in Corhampton and Meonstoke.

Officers continue to work alongside charities, communities, parishes and other non-profit organisations to ensure that appropriate projects are sourced and funded by the S106 contributions. In addition to the funds already transferred to projects, contributions totalling more than £2.6m have been allocated to projects that are currently being proposed.

Support for community housing initiative

The Authority is pleased to have been able to support Midhurst Community Land Trust in purchasing their first affordable homes. The funding secures two affordable rental properties in the centre of Midhurst and will be retained as affordable rental in perpetuity.

The low-cost housing project hopes to be the first of several for the CLT and will benefit the community for years to come.

Tenants have already been secured for the two homes, however anyone interested in applying for future properties is encouraged to visit www.midhurstclt.org/applying and register their interest in future projects.

We look forward to bringing you a more detailed report on the project in the summer newsletter.



Arundel in the springtime by Jamie Fielding

Get the free e-newsletter in your inbox by signing up at www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-newsletter

Planning statistics from the last quarter

Appeals submitted to the Planning Inspectorate	15
Appeals started	17
Appeals determined	25
Appeals successfully defended	18
Statutory submissions received	1,462
Statutory submissions determined	1,165
Neighbours notified	4,321
Representations received	2,460
Consultations issued	3,168
Conditions imposed	3,502
Enquiries for planning advice	363
Enforcement complaints received	212
Enforcement cases opened	156
Enforcement related site inspections	174
Enforcement notices served	4
Enforcement cases closed	166

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10 questions with... Ruth Childs



This edition we catch up with Landscape Officer Ruth Childs.

Three words that sum up your job in planning?

Collaborative. Challenging. Varied.

Okay, so what's your role at the National Park?

I sit in the Performance and Technical Team – we are a team of specialists and provide advice across the Planning Directorate. My role is mainly to provide guidance on the effect of development or planning policies upon landscape, views and visual amenity. This means almost anyone can ask me for guidance, so you'll often see me spinning many plates! Both built development and 'green' development can have positive and negative effects on landscape, so I'm often in touch with those in the Countryside and Policy Management Team too. My overarching aim is to help applicants achieve the landscape-led approach to design – being inspired by a place's character, heritage and wildlife to achieve sensitive change on a site, maximising benefits and minimising negative effects.

What appealed to you about working in planning?

I didn't 'plan' my career in planning. I followed my nose, and once I left the seas behind (I did my degree in oceanography and geology) I started working for a small charity focusing on species and habitat understanding and conservation, moving into landscape research and planning for an AONB and then a County Council where I began providing landscape advice. Sometime in the private sector brought me closer to planning where I produced LVIA and undertook survey and evidence work to support local plans. Last year I was invited to join the Landscape Institute – following an application process I was awarded a Chartership late last year. Much of the wider work of the National Park and Landscape Institute are aligned and so I'm looking forward to participating more with the Institute and amongst many other things, encouraging young people to take careers founded upon good understanding landscape and place.

Can you describe your typical day?

Every day is different, but there are a few things that pop up regularly. I almost always spend some time each day undertaking landscape research to help inform my opinion about an application. This is usually GIS-based and I'll study historic maps, designations and landscape

character evidence to determine how sensitive a site might be, this is usually supported by a site visit. In parallel to this I might be reviewing the planning application, starting to formulate what I think about a proposal. This involves reviewing a lot of documents!

Best thing about working in planning for a National Park?

Can I have two things?! Finding solutions as a team and exploring the Park. There is always something new to learn and each application gives me the opportunity to research and explore new parts of the Park. Working together with colleagues to find solutions and get the best outcome for the National Park is definitely top of my best things list.

What do you love about the South Downs National Park?

There is a landscape to suit every mood! The South Downs includes seven nationally distinct landscapes, so I would have to say the thing I love is its variety.

Currently reading/watching?

We've just binged the seven series of the West Wing, which I never managed to get into when it was released....I feel somewhat bereft without it now!

If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?

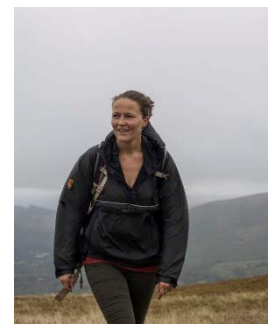
Cheesecake...no...banoffee pie....no homemade curry with all the extras...no a classic roast dinner....too difficult!

Who inspires you?

That's a big question – if I had to choose one person it would be David Attenborough. We grew up exploring and being inspired by the same ancient Precambrian landscape in Leicestershire – a landscape identified in the Hobhouse Report (1947 report setting up the designation of National Parks and 'Conservation Areas' – now AONBs) and one of the remaining few still to be designated.

Describe your perfect day (when not working, of course!)

Up early – pack a bag with coffee, lunch and an endless supply of Eccles or Welsh cakes. A lovely long walk – preferably with opportunity to get in a canoe at some point, with a picnic lunch and lots of stops for photography and snacks! A bottle of something and home-cooked food (hopefully that's already been made) in the evening.



Picture credits

P1 Right – Jamie Fielding; P1 Left – Andy Flowerday; P3 Left – Richard Reed; P4 Left (Little Egret) – John Lauper; P5 Left – Guy Edwardes; P6 Left – Jordan Whitewood-Neal; P7 Left – Emma Varley; P7 Right – Jan Knowlson; P9 Left – Brett Lamper.