

Report to **Policy & Resources Committee**
Date **27 June 2024**
By **Grants Officer**
Title of Report **Annual review of the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF)**

Note

Recommendation:

The Committee is recommended to note the annual review and year-end position of the Sustainable Communities Fund managed by the South Downs National Park Trust.

1. Background and Summary

- 1.1 The SCF is a rolling fund established to provide grants to community and voluntary groups, social enterprise organisations and businesses for ‘not for profit’ projects. Projects should take place within the National Park or within 5km of the boundary where there are strong links to park outcomes. To ensure proper scrutiny and well informed decision making a panel advises on bids for funding between £2,000 - £10,000. This panel is Chaired either by a SDNPA member or a South Downs National Park Trust trustee. [Link to more information about the fund](#)
- 1.2 In 2018 the national Park Authority agreed to transfer the Sustainable Communities Fund balance to the South Downs National Park Trust who fundraised to match the initial amount. This was successful and £331,390 was invested in an endowment fund overseen by the Trust Investment panel. Both the Authority and the Trust are recognised as founding patrons of the fund in perpetuity.
- 1.3 The return from the endowment is used to run the annual grants programme whilst the remainder, alongside additional funds raised by the Trust, is invested so that the endowment can grow.
- 1.4 The Endowment therefore now stands at £485,484. This is in line with the aspirations presented to the Park Authority at the creation of the endowment and included within the associated Funding Agreement.
- 1.5 The fund has annual budget of £35,000. £25,000 from the SDNPA and £10,000 from the Trust. Underspends can be invested, alongside additional funds raised by the Trust. A request can be made to use underspend or draw a larger sum to support high quality projects where these would exceed the annual budget.

2. 2023-2024

- 2.1 The panel welcomed a new Chair, Andrew Shaxson, as well as two new panel members following the departure of long-standing members.
- 2.2 The SCF operates under a funding agreement but there was no separate Terms of Reference (ToR). A new Chair and panel members presented an opportunity to establish a ToR which has since been approved.

- 2.3 In 2023/24 one panel meeting was held for large grants over £2,000 and one small grant round took place.
- 2.4 The SCF committed £14,936 to four new projects. The projects are listed with a brief description in Appendix I along with a map showing the allocations and second map showing all allocations throughout the life of the fund.
- 2.5 Although presenting a reduction in spend on previous years, new projects were developed during this time and submitted for funding in April 2024/25 where almost £30,000 has already been committed. The underspend on 2023/24 has been made available for use during the rest of the new financial year.

3. Other implications

| Implication | Yes*/No |
|---|--|
| Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority? | No |
| Does the proposal raise any Resource implications? | No |
| How does the proposal represent Value for Money? | N/A an already agreed fund between SDNP and the Trust |
| Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against | To be eligible grants must contribute to objectives |
| Links to other projects or partner organisations | N/A |
| How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives | The fund aligns with SDNPA ambitions |
| Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal? | None |
| Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010? | Yes – as the subject matter of the report is an update on projects and funding no specific issues arise. |
| Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal? | N/A |
| Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal? | N/A |
| Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal? | None |

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|---|----------------|
| Implication | Yes*/No |
| Are there any Data Protection implications? | None |

4. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation |
|--|-------------------|---------------|--|
| The return on the endowment investments could reduce due to changes to the economy | Possible | Major | The investment is a medium risk portfolio and is reviewed regularly by the Trust’s investment committee, which includes investment professionals. |
| Reputational risk if we are unable to provide cash match funding for some of our larger projects | Possible | Moderate | Work to generate income for the South Downs National Park through the South Downs National Park Trust. A robust monitoring and project approval system and regular reporting to this Committee. |

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- Appendices
1. Sustainable Communities Fund Project List
 2. Sustainable Communities Fund Projects Map 23-24
 3. Sustainable Communities Fund All Projects Map

SDNPA Consultees Head of Income Generation, Andrew Shaxson (SDNPA Member)

External Consultees None

Background Documents This should include documents that have informed the development of the report, particularly, where appropriate, reports on the same or similar subjects that have been to previous committees. The name of the document should, wherever possible, be a hyperlink.

