

ANNUAL REVIEW 2023/24

Agenda Item 9 Report for 2023/24 - 10 April 2024



FOREWORD

This year has been a story of big, and little wins, for nature, climate and people – and none of it achieved in isolation. Achievements have only been possible thanks to the hard work of staff, Members and volunteers and continued collaboration with landowners, farmers, local councils, parish councils, charities and local communities.

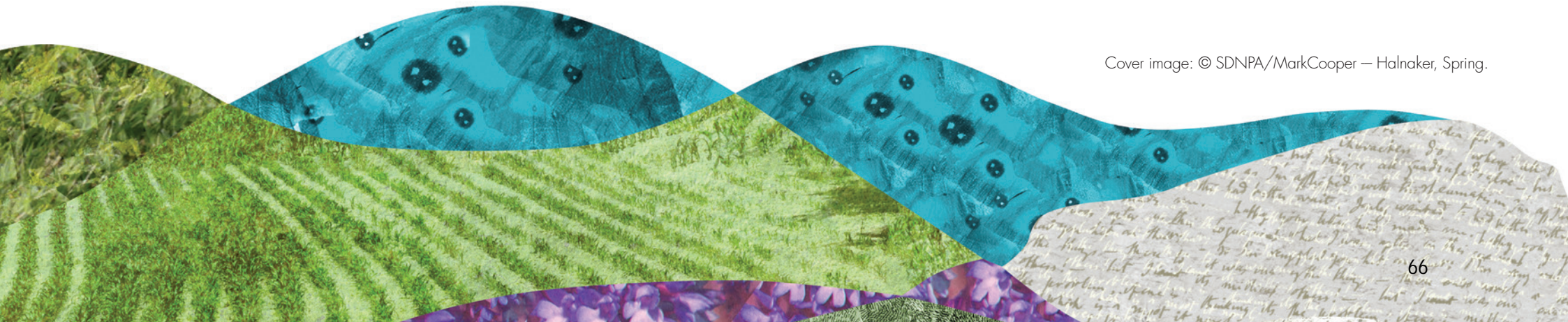
As we mark the 75th anniversary of National Parks, it's clear that these amazing restorative landscapes have never been more important for our nation's wellbeing, while our purposes around natural beauty, cultural heritage, access and enjoyment remain as relevant today as they were in 1949.

With the **2023 State of Nature** report starkly outlining just how much nature needs us at this critical time, the pressure has never been greater on National Parks to accelerate biodiversity restoration.

The National Park Authority is rising to the challenge with huge ambition and a good deal of innovation. We simply have to – and generations of today and tomorrow who rely on everything nature gives us will expect nothing less.

We were proud to announce that over 400 hectares of new habitat has been created since launching our ReNature campaign in 2021. Some 4,300 hectares of existing habitat has been improved for nature – an area bigger than the city of Portsmouth – and 14 dew ponds have been transformed into havens for wildlife. More than 66 hectares of wildflower habitat has been created for pollinators, while 60,000 new trees have now gone into the ground (over 22,000 this year). The green shoots of recovery are in evidence across the landscape.

The National Park Authority is fully embracing all the opportunities Biodiversity Net Gain brings, including leading the way as a protected landscape on nature-based solutions through green finance. A milestone was the first swathe of land, at Iford Estate, Lewes, being formally signed over to nature recovery through a groundbreaking Section 106 agreement. The first of many and a huge step forward in terms of reversing regional and national nature depletion. Dovetailing with our launch of the ReNature Credits scheme for businesses and developers, it's such an exciting time, breaking down long-standing barriers and opening up new avenues for nature recovery. We're happy to be at the forefront of it.



Cover image: © SDNPA/MarkCooper – Hahnaker, Spring.

Agenda Item 9 Report PR23/24-40 Appendix 8

People and local communities continue to be at heart of everything the National Park does. We've continued to champion the area's incredible cultural heritage. The huge success of our archaeology walks is testament to the enduring appeal of being able to delve deeper into this region's history. We were proud to announce that, since its launch in 2021, 12,000 schoolchildren have been able to connect with the great outdoors thanks to our Outdoor Learning Grant. The impact of some people projects has simply been life-changing, such as our Timescape health and wellbeing initiative that reached into urban fringe communities and further demonstrated the importance of the National Park as a "natural health service". Celebrating new and unheard voices continues to be a priority and the We Hear You Now trail at Seven Sisters Country Park – created by nine Black & People of Colour (BPOC) writers – will have a strong and hugely positive ongoing legacy.

This year has seen a wave of inspiring climate action, particularly in the Ouse Valley which is the focus of a lottery-backed scheme. From scores of children learning to ride bikes, to new community vegetable gardens, volunteer training and energy-saving workshops, people of all ages have been busy doing their bit to help their local environment. This is just a snapshot of the fantastic community-based climate action going on across the National Park in towns and villages.

Planning continues to be the bedrock of nurturing a landscape with thriving local communities. Some key decisions – such as giving the green light to a 685-home development in Lewes with over 200 affordable homes and a strong emphasis on climate-futureproofing – underline our careful, diligent and often forward-thinking approach to placemaking.

The National Park continues to support sustainability through its Green South Downs Certification scheme. This year, 27 local businesses working in the visitor economy, food and drink or land-based sectors were certified. This gives instant assurance to customers of a participating business's green credentials.

We hope you enjoy reading this Annual Review that captures the wide spectrum of the Authority's work to conserve and enhance this beautiful National Park and improve understanding and awareness of this very special place.



Vanessa Rowlands
Chair



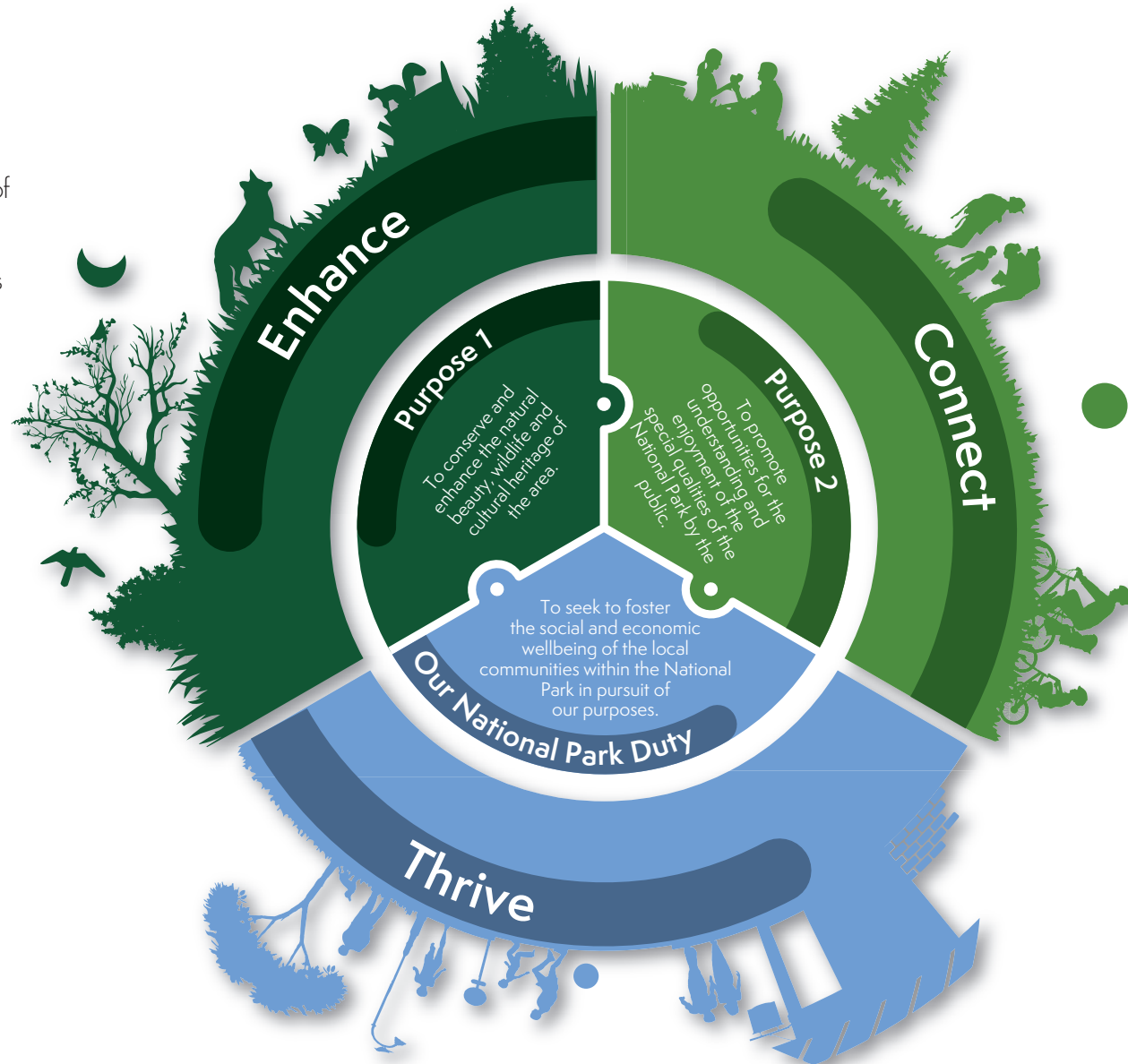
Tim Slaney
Chief Executive (Interim)

This Annual Review highlights some of our key achievements for 2023/24 that link to the objectives laid out in our **Corporate Plan 2023-25**.

THE CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH WE WORK

Our role as the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is clearly defined by Parliament in our statutory **Purposes and Duty**.

- **Our first Purpose is:** To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
- **Our second Purpose is:** To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.
- **The Duty on the SDNPA is:** To seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park in pursuit of our purposes.



The **Partnership Management Plan** (PMP) sets out the overarching five-year strategy for the management of the South Downs National Park. It brings together and coordinates the aspirations of many different partners who help contribute towards the purposes and duty for which it was designated.

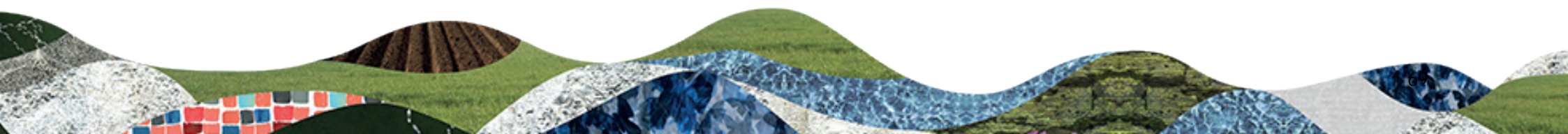
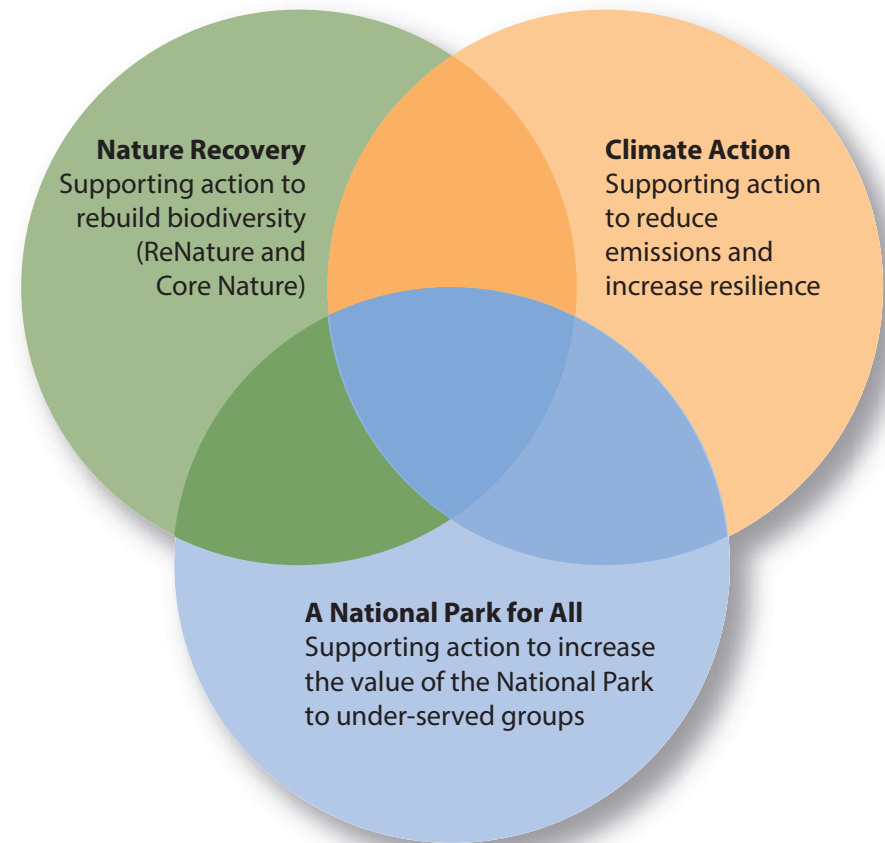
The South Downs National Park Authority's **Corporate Plan** sets out how we will deliver those elements of the South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan for which we are responsible.

Our current Corporate Plan (2020-2025) focusses on three High Level Targets (HLTs) of Nature Recovery, Climate Action and A National Park for All which broadly encompass the 10 outcomes in the PMP. Progress towards these HLTs are measured by monitoring overarching Key Performance Indicators for each HLT.

With the release of the new **Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework** in Spring 2024, we are seeking to test a wider range of thematic areas for the development of our new Partnership Management Plan, and subsequent Corporate Plan, to ensure alignment with the new framework.

These themes are:

- Nature & Biodiversity
- Climate Action
- A National Park for All
- Landscape & Cultural Heritage
- Vibrant, Resilient Communities & Economy



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 2023/24

FARMING IN A PROTECTED LANDSCAPE (FiPL)

37

...projects approved were awarded **£602,212**



FARMING

175

...farmers in **5** farm clusters covering 2/3 of the NP



CIL FUNDING

£2.08m

...on projects to improve community spaces, access and nature recovery among others



RURAL ECONOMY



355

...members Our South Downs business network

27

...new businesses enrolled in 'Green South Downs' sustainability certification programme

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

(major, minor and other) dealt with within agreed timescales



31% Affordable housing
...of completed homes given planning permission in the National Park

NATIONAL PARK FOR ALL

EDUCATION

3,984

...school children from our more deprived communities visited thanks to our grants for schools and colleges



21

YOUTH ACTION days

...engaging **131** young people in positive environmental action



VOLUNTEER RANGERS

341 Rangers spent...

1,052

...days supporting National Park work

93

...hours spent by **9** wardens surveying and minor maintenance

SOUTH DOWNS WAY

29

...gates repaired

14 new Waymarkers

3

...gates replaced

MOBILITY SCOOTERS

151

...sessions facilitated by mobility equipment



ARCHAEOLOGY WALKS

112

...participants

5

...guided archaeology walks in 4 South Downs locations led by Worthing Museum archaeologist, James Sainsbury



SOCIAL MEDIA REACH



97,774 +16%

Total followers

36%

Youtube subscribers

WEBSITE VISITORS

1.18m

unique visits

11,989 +13%

E-NEWSLETTER

signups to date

VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

4.9m

Total content reach

71k +93%

Video views

MEDIA COVERAGE

1,728

pieces generated from **50** press releases in 2023/2024



NATURE RECOVERY & CLIMATE ACTION

774ha



NEW or **IMPROVED** habitat for nature during 2023/24*

TOTAL TREES

22,285

...planted in 2023/24 covering approx. **69ha**



7km HEDGEROW restored/created

PONDS

14 restored/created/maintained



BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

27% ...on largest scale development sites

NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

31

...estates/farms/partner sites working to secure land for nature through green finance initiatives



*From previously committed land

CASE STUDY: SEVEN SISTERS

2023/24 was the second year of trading for the visitor facilities at Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP) and over 60,000 visitors were welcomed into the Visitor Centre, with many more using the onsite toilets, food and beverage outlets during their visit to the Park.

In the Visitor Centre and Food & Beverage outlets, an increased range of locally sourced products from within or close to the National Park were available with the offers changing for each season. A seasonal programme of events including private hire, art exhibitions, Christmas Fair, children's trails and special interest talks provided new opportunities to engage with visitors, alongside regular visits from community groups providing opportunities for vulnerable visitors to access the Country Park.

Individual and corporate volunteering opportunities were provided to support conservation work in the Country Park and visitor engagement at Exceat. For example, volunteers used eco-friendly and traditional scything skills to harvest new areas in preparation for increased plant diversity in the summer.

In time for the 2024 season, the Foxhole holiday cottages and camping barn were launched, with guests providing glowing reviews about staying in the idyllic location of the Country Park and the bookings for the year ahead are looking very positive.

The SSCP Ranger team continued conservation plans to manage the landscape. This included the restoration of two dew ponds at Foxhole and New Barn, targeted grazing with cattle, sheep and ponies for the restoration of chalk grassland and scrub clearance on the lagoons to enhance ground-nesting bird habitats.

Seven Sisters also secured their Countryside Stewardship Agreement with Natural England that will provide a strategic overview for managing the landscape over the next 5 years. The site incorporates:

- 65ha of chalk grassland
- 52ha of grazing marsh
- 101ha semi-improved grassland.



Further improvement at Seven Sisters includes: planned infrastructure upgrades, more site interpretation and engagement to enhance the visitor experience at the Country Park and continued landscape conservation.

SEVEN SISTERS
SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

1. NATURE & BIODIVERSITY

HIGH LEVEL TARGETS

- To secure an additional 13,000ha, or 33% of land managed for nature by 2030 from a baseline of 25%
- Maintain, enhance and/or restore existing key sites, habitats and species

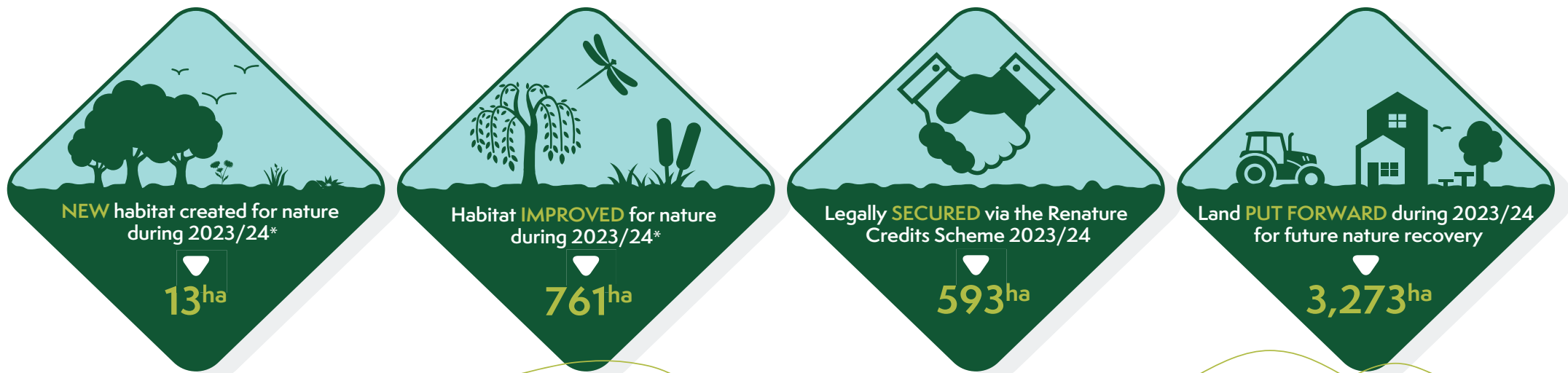
INTRODUCTION

Overall, 2023/24 continues on a positive journey towards nature recovery. As SDNPA does not own the majority of the land within the National Park, working with landowners, managers, farmers and with key partners continues to be essential. This year has seen progress at all steps along the way to establishing nature – the journey from securing land for nature through to established habitat takes time though benefits to habitats and species are already clearly evident.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The new Countryside Stewardship Scheme for Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP) is now finalised and in place. This agreement forms the core aims and delivery of the landscape management programme for the next five years. Improvements for nature have also come through various schemes or projects including the Paythorne Beelines project (111ha) and chalk grassland and ragwort control at Millpond Bottom (215ha). At South Holt Farm, 307ha has been legally secured for nature. Restoration will take place on the site, currently a mix of woodland, open land and scrub.

Since 2022, a total of 6,082 additional hectares of land have been secured or managed for nature. This is 47% of the 13,000 hectares target to be achieved by 2030.



*From previously committed land

CASE STUDY: SOUTH DOWNS GOLF COURSES

Within the South Downs National Park there are a number of golf clubs across diverse habitats, including chalk grassland, one of the rarest habitats in the UK.

Two of the golf clubs in the eastern end of the National Park have been working with us to improve their sites for nature. By working with golf courses, we can help to balance the need for essential course maintenance by greenkeepers with sensitive, nature friendly practices.

Pyecombe Golf course have been managing their site for nature for many years, supported by National Park Rangers through scrub and woodland management. The club have introduced grazing on site as well as changing their mowing practices to help enrich the soil, helping to maintain the rare chalk grassland and encourage a varied mix of wildflowers providing key habitats for important species.

South Downs golf course becomes haven for rare butterflies – BBC News

Lewes Golf Club have been collaborating with National Park Rangers for five years. The club recently made a successful bid to the Call for Nature Sites for a cut and collect machine and chalk grassland seed mix to help improve their grounds.

In 2023, along with The Southwood Foundation and Weald to Waves Partnership, Lewes Golf Club hosted the inaugural Nature Links Biodiversity in Golf Seminar inviting all the golf courses within the National Park. The seminar covered topics around how to manage the sites for nature. A good example of making nature work in harmony with course management is the use of the RSPB starling bird box design. Starlings feed on the leatherjacket larvae that can destroy course greens, encouraging them to nest on the site would benefit the clubs and support a species now in decline across the UK.

Representatives from 18 golf clubs attended. If they were able to collectively manage 50% of their land for nature, that would represent a land coverage of 255ha.

Golf clubs create a buzz for biodiversity | The Southwood Foundation



CASE STUDY: THE SELBORNE LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP – FARMERS IN NATURE

The concept of Farm Clusters first came about in 2014 following on from the Nature Improvement Area (NIA) project, which used Sir John Lawton's principle of landscape scale conservation – more, bigger, better and joined.

There are now six established Farm Cluster Groups in the South Downs National Park, covering approximately two thirds of the National Park area.

The **Selborne Landscape Partnership** was born from a group of local farmers meeting with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) and the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) to develop the group. It has now grown into a cluster of 27 farmers and conservationists restoring nature across the countryside that was once home to the pioneering ecologist Gilbert White, and the writer Jane Austen.

Recent work includes the Hampshire Hedgerows Project, partnering with SDNPA, which has helped to restore and create nearly 24km of well managed, connected hedgerows across the cluster that benefit the brown hairstreak butterfly which is reliant on young blackthorn trees on which to lay its eggs.

In 2023, the Partnership published a study which pulls together five years' worth of data collection to demonstrate how best to maintain and enhance the range of species identified in the report.

 **Farming in Partnership with Nature – A New Natural History of Selborne**



CASE STUDY: NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

Following the UK's decision to leave the EU and the removal of basic payments from the Common Agricultural Policy, our land-based sector finds itself in a financially precarious position. This is exacerbated by current high levels of inflation, an energy crisis, high cost of inputs and logistical challenges.

This generational policy shift, witnessed in farming, coupled with a huge rise in input costs, has resulted in the land-based sector being forced to diversify and make fundamental changes to their business. Farmers are increasingly focussing on the pursuit of new supplementary income streams, in addition to their traditional farming income, in order to survive.

In the UK, 41% of species have declined in abundance since 1971 and there is no sign on this letting up. An urgent call to action is required to address the dual crises of our time, nature depletion and climate change. The landmark Dasgupta Report clearly articulates how much our economies, livelihoods and well-being rely on nature. Dr Dasgupta acknowledges that our society is dependent on the continual flow of ecosystem services afforded to us by nature such as clean water, fresh air. The issue arises as these services are public goods with no established markets and no process and so fall outside of our current economic compass.

With the emergence of new nature markets such as Nutrient Neutrality, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Carbon, new opportunities are beginning to arise for landowners to not only deliver environmental gains but also support their land-based business with supplementary income streams comparable to the basic payments they once relied upon.

Through their statutory powers as a Local Planning Authority (LPA), the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is playing an active role, supporting and working with landowners and land managers to enable them to monetise ecosystem services for particular nature markets on their land through a s106 legal agreement between the landowner and the LPA that will result in land being secured for nature. The SDNPA



approach to these new nature markets is to play a supportive role adding value and ultimately empowering landowners to achieve financial stability at a time of great vulnerability. This approach favours habitat banking which ensures nature restoration is conducted in line with the Lawton Principles – bigger, better and more joined up.

The Consultancy Team within the SDNPA offer additional services to support landowners with stewardship, nature restoration design, management and maintenance advice to ensure exceptionally high-quality nature recovery is achieved across the region. The SDNPA is looking to work with traditional local government partners in the vicinity, to co-ordinate approaches to BNG and synergise strategies to maximise the potential for BNG to deliver significantly on nature recovery.

Working in partnership with Earthly, the SDNPA have now developed and are currently establishing a new voluntary nature market. This new market benefits from and utilises the Natural England (NE) and DEFRA Infrastructure in place for BNG for a new voluntary investment in nature aimed at corporate buyers. It is hoped this new voluntary biodiversity marketplace will broaden the customer base to landowners and thus accelerate nature recovery on their land.

2. CLIMATE ACTION

HIGH LEVEL TARGETS

- South Downs National Park Authority to reduce its carbon footprint by 150 tonnes per annum in line with the 2030 net zero target

HIGH LEVEL TARGETS

- 5% reduction per annum in the overall carbon footprint of the South Downs National Park from the baseline reported in 2019

PROGRESS

This year has seen much progress towards improving the energy efficiency of the South Downs Centre (SDC) in Midhurst, as well as the buildings at SSCP. Now the works are complete, we will establish a new carbon footprint baseline which we can then monitor annually using standard government methodologies.

To become more energy efficient, SDC is undergoing works to the external insulation and render which is almost complete. Additional projects across both sites include replacement LED lighting and installation of new PV panels. Five replacement hybrid pool cars have been ordered to reduce vehicle carbon emissions, and all but one of the National Park electricity supply contracts have been moved to Ecotricity, the only UK based 100% renewable supplier.

PROGRESS

The SDNPA have been working with the wider National Park family to develop a way to monitor progress and track emission reductions. With additional funding from Defra we have developed a carbon monitoring dashboard and tracker. This will enable us to update on progress annually both as individual National Park level, and also understand the collective contribution National Parks are making to UK level Net-Zero targets. The updates will involve a combination of national level Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory data and local data monitoring the carbon that is being captured through nature-based solutions such as woodland planting and habitat restoration.

The GHG inventory data is updated and issued annually in June. This is when we will be able to accurately report on progress for 2023/24 and assess where we are on our Net Zero trajectory.

CASE STUDY: COCKSHUT STREAM RESTORATION

With only around 200 existing worldwide, chalk streams provide an ecologically rare home for a whole host of wildlife.

The Cockshut – situated on the outskirts of Lewes, adjacent to Lewes Brooks Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – is a chalk stream that had previously been straightened and realigned to become an embanked ditch. Over time the channel had become degraded and lacked the shape and landscape connectivity of a functional watercourse. The stream had become choked with the highly invasive parrot's feather. Overall there was very little flow and little biodiversity.

This project, a partnership between Lewes District Council, the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust, South Downs National Park and Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust aimed to restore a more natural course for the stream and reconnect it to a series of wetland habitats. All improvements were aimed at increasing the site's biodiversity, its resilience to climate impacts, and enabling the features of the SSSI to return.

In June 2023 the project began to realign a 670m section of the Cockshut Stream into Lewes Brooks SSSI after a four year development period. Over the following three months the sites topography was altered, creating several pools, scrapes and enhanced ditches which together form 6.3ha of wetland around the new channel. The new channel has been designed to meander through the site and has a shallow profile, enabling both connectivity with the floodplain and resilience against future periods of low flow resulting from climate change impacts.

It was really important that the project allowed water to drain into the rest of Lewes Brooks at the same volumes as before to ensure that there was no detriment to the remaining SSSI ditch network. Engineering the outflows from the wetland was one of the complicated elements of the project with site outlets having to be set at precise levels to ensure the new wetland functioned without drying out the surrounding area.

Other works saw a chalk gravel substrate installed at points in the new channel along with the construction of two public footbridges and hydroseeding 4ha of wetland wildflower meadows.



The engineering works were undertaken by Ebsford Environmental, supported by design engineers CBEC and cost a total of £380,000 with funding received from Lewes District Council, South Downs National Park (CIL) and the Veolia Environmental Fund.

3. A NATIONAL PARK FOR ALL

HIGH LEVEL TARGETS

- Increase diversity of visitors to, and those engaging with, the South Downs National Park
- ‘Your National Park’ campaign reaches 20,000 people by 2025

To deliver our priorities, we target particular audiences: young people (aged 16-24); people from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse communities; people facing forms of health and access inequalities including disabled people; people living in urban areas, especially people facing socio-economic barriers to inclusion. However, we are also conscious that the National Park is here for everyone to experience and enjoy.

CASE STUDY: OUTDOOR LEARNING GRANT

This year, almost 4,000 school children from across Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex have been able to enjoy fun nature-based trips after their schools were awarded an Outdoor Learning Grant.

The grant is open to state-funded schools and colleges with 10 per cent or more pupils eligible for Free School Meals.

A total of £109,000 of grant funding has been shared between 214 schools over the past two years – one of the highest amounts ever given out since the South Downs National Park was created. Since 2021, over 12,000 children have enjoyed all kinds of activities including hiking at Queen Elizabeth Country Park, a visit to a working South Downs farm, hands-on conservation tasks, a visit to Drusilla’s Park, searching for “mini-beasts” at Woods Mill, and stepping back in time at Butser Ancient Farm.

CASE STUDY: TIMESCAPE RESIDENCY

The Timescape programme is a partnership between Havant-based charity Artscape, SDNPA and local heritage sites. It engages people facing loneliness and isolation through a creative arts programme steeped in local landscape and cultural heritage.

A series of workshops took place at Amberley Museum in West Sussex and Butser Ancient Farm, near Waterlooville, in Hampshire culminating in an exhibition in Chichester of all the amazing artwork and craftsmanship created. These sessions helped participants to learn ancient arts and craft techniques as well as providing a chance to meet up, share stories, and get hands-on with cordaging, felting, weaving, painting, and pottery.

“Nature is my medicine – it’s better than any antidepressant. It’s been wonderful to be part of this project and I’ve met some great people.”

Graham, a participant from Worthing



© SDNPA

CASE STUDY: MUSLIM HIKERS VISIT THE SOUTH DOWNS

In February we hosted a group of 150 Muslim Hikers from the Active Inclusion network, an increasingly popular group helping each other to feel more confident in nature and the outdoor space through experience.

Coming from all over England and beyond, the excited walkers, many of whom had never been to the South Downs National Park before, arrived at Seven Sisters Country Park.

They were welcomed and given detail of the site's importance, rich history and ongoing conservation efforts before heading up over the chalk cliffs to Birling Gap and back. The day unfolded with a brightness that gave way to rain, which didn't seem to dampen the hikers' enthusiasm as they were all amazed by the breathtaking beauty of the landscape. Plans are in place to hold further guided walks for people from the Muslim community in the National Park.



© Bip Mistry

CASE STUDY: THE CENTURION WAY EXTENSION PROJECT

The Centurion Way is an 11km (6.8 miles) cycling and walking path between Chichester, Lavant and West Dean.

It follows the old, dismantled Chichester to Midhurst railway line, which was fully closed by 1991. Following the latest path upgrade in 2015 as part of a project led by the National Park Authority, work is currently under way to extend the Centurion Way by 5km (just over 3 miles) from West Dean to Cocking.

Once completed the route will provide a fantastic way for walkers and cyclists to travel from Chichester right into the heart of the South Downs National Park, experiencing wonderful views along the way. The route will link with the 100-mile-long South Downs Way at Cocking, providing further opportunities for people to explore the National Park. We plan to open the first section of the Centurion Way extension in the Spring of 2025.

This year we have been working on the 2km section through Singleton Railway Station southwards to West Dean to make the former station platforms and area safe for the public, requiring listed building consent. Reinstatement works have also taken place to improve the footway link on the A286 between the existing Centurion Way, adjacent to the school, through the village to the new extension.



© SDNPA

CASE STUDY: EGRETS WAY

The Egrets Way Project is a community based project to create a safe route for cyclists and others connecting Lewes and Newhaven to the villages of the lower Ouse Valley. The group was formally constituted in 2011.

The Egrets Way key aims are to improve access to the countryside, encourage sustainable travel (particularly walking and cycling) and improve health and wellbeing in the South Downs National Park.

The National Park access team have worked for ten years on the initiative with Sustrans and the community group, Ouse Valley Cycle Network. The ambition is to provide a safe and segregated (off-highway) shared-use 10km path, away from the busy C7 road, between the market town of Lewes and the port of Newhaven.

The greenfield path will predominantly follow the alignment of the River Ouse, cross the South Downs Way National Trail and offer year round access for pedestrians, the less-abled (via mobility scooters), families with pushchairs, cyclists and, in some sections, equestrians too.

It will provide a commuter and leisure link in the strategic cycle network between the coastal National Cycle Route 2 (Peacehaven, Newhaven and Seaford) and Regional Cycle Route 90 (Lewes to Polegate), giving access to local attractions such as Monk's House National Trust and YHA Southease.

During the past 12 months, focus has been on constructing two sections utilising funding from National Highways, Lewes District Council CIL, SDNPA CIL, SDNP Trust and a small element from the SDNPA Strategic Fund. A 1.5km section (Phase 5) between Piddinghoe and Newhaven was completed in spring 2023 and a new 3km section (Phase 6) opened in October providing a new path between Lewes and Rodmell passing through Lewes Brooks SSSI.

Attention in 2024 will focus on the challenging final 1km 'missing-link', northwards from Piddinghoe where a section will interface with the C7 highway. Feasibility, preliminary designs and stakeholder consultations will be required during the year to develop a workable solution, leading to a potential planning application in 2025/26. Capability



Funding has been secured from Active Travel England to progress designs which will also support the ambitions of the community led Safer C7 Project.

Complimentary access project work in 2024 with Access in Protected Landscape funding from Defra, will aim to improve access for the less-abled, through infrastructure improvements to gates and surfacing to Egrets Way and link routes, the provision of mobility scooters with local providers for public hire, and working with the Disabled Ramblers Association to develop a number of circular routes in the Lower Ouse area.

4. LANDSCAPE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

INTRODUCTION

The South Downs National Park is a living, working and ever-changing landscape, shaped by its underlying geology and its human history.

The rock types of the National Park are predominately chalk and the alternating series of greensands and clays that form the Western Weald. Over time a diversity of landscapes has been created in a relatively small area which is a key feature of the National Park. These vary from the wooded and heathland ridges on the greensand in the Western Weald to wide open downland on the chalk that spans the length of the National Park, both intersected by river valleys. Within these diverse landscapes are hidden villages, thriving market towns, farms both large and small and historic estates, connected by a network of paths and lanes, many of which are ancient.

The distinct character of many areas of the South Downs has been created by well-conserved historical features, some of which are rare and of national importance. Bronze Age barrows, Iron Age hill forts, Saxon and Norman churches, dew ponds, historic houses and landmarks of the two World Wars help to give the National Park strong links to its past human settlement. Evidence of earlier farming traditions can still be seen today in the pattern of field boundaries, and relics of the industrial past remain in the form of old iron workings, brickworks, quarries and ancient coppiced woodlands.

The South Downs has a rich cultural heritage of art, music and rural traditions. There is a strong association with well-known writers, poets, musicians and artists who have captured the essence of this most English of landscapes and drawn inspiration from the sense of place. This landscape continues to inspire a new generation of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

CASE STUDY: WE HEAR YOU NOW

June 2023 saw the launch of a new immersive walking experience in the South Downs from writers of global heritage. The 'We Hear You Now' project has delivered an inspiring and thought-provoking walking experience that encourages visitors to discover new stories and reflections on Sussex's iconic Heritage Coast.

People walking along the beautiful chalk coastline from Seaford to Eastbourne will be able to tune in to 13 unique audio stories, each attached to a 'listening point' in the landscape, such as a bench, gate post or signpost. The audio content includes stirring, emotive and sometimes surprising stories covering fiction, poetry and even new mythologies for this world-famous coastline.

"Exploring the landscape with ecologists, archaeologists and environmental campaigners, British-Iranian writer and artist Alinah Azadeh, has used her passion for the South Downs to provide a nurturing hand to fellow creatives who have been invited to voice their relationship with the Seven Sisters and the Sussex Coast.

In 'We Hear You Now', writers of global heritage bring stories of survival, recovery and reverence for land as a living, breathing entity to create new mythologies for this iconic landscape. I hope anyone who listens to these stories feels closer to the land under their feet, and to the people and cultures who have been part, and continue to be part, of its future."

Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead for the South Downs National Park



CASE STUDY: GRANDFATHER'S BOTTOM, BUTSER HILL

This project is being delivered in partnership with Hampshire County Council and supports the objectives of the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment.

It aims to deliver improved biodiversity, extent and management of the key habitats of Butser Hill National Nature Reserve (NNR) – these habitats being chalk grassland, chalk heath and yew woodland. The project will protect and enhance 1.6ha of chalk heath and restore 7ha of chalk grassland by reducing scrub encroachment and installing infrastructure to support improved grazing. This will enable the recreation of chalk downland, with its myriad of grassland species, butterflies, insects and birds to re-establish.

Scrub removal and improved pedestrian access routes at Grandfather's Bottom will reframe views and draw the eye away from visually intrusive pylons to refocus on the dramatic topography of Butser Hill, the highest point on the South Downs chalk ridge.

Scrub clearance at Hilhampton Down will enable the creation of a new route through the hillside, directing visitors away from views of the overhead lines just over 1km to the west and towards the NNR. A new public archaeology trail and interpretation onsite will enable visitors to have a better understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of Butser Hill.

The visitor experience will be improved through new signage and car parking improvements. By enhancing the attractiveness of the car park and reducing its rather 'municipal' feel, the project is helping to emphasise the strong sense of remoteness, tranquillity and the timeless quality of this dramatic landscape.

This year has seen the completion of the new contour path at Grandfather's Bottom. During the scrub clearance works in this area, contractors found a small mammal nest, which was confirmed to be that of a dormouse. As dormice are a protected species, all work was halted in this area and new plans were agreed which would support the recovery of chalk grassland on site while also taking into account the protection of dormice and their habitat. This discovery really helps build a picture regarding the importance of Butser Hill to local wildlife.



© SDNPA

New fencing has been installed this year for better livestock management. This will have benefits for the long-term grazing management of the chalk downland.

The archaeology trail has also been completed this year by re-cutting an old walking route around Butser, which is not surfaced, but easy going. The signage (6 x interpretation posts) and leaflets are in development and will include information about the history and archaeology of the area.

SDNPA have also been working closely with Hampshire County Council on the final design of the car park improvement works, now approved by Historic England. Works in the car park will commence in the summer/autumn, following an archaeological survey of the site.

This project is supported by the National Grid, through the Landscape Enhancement Initiative, and the Tesco Community Grants scheme.

The project is due for completion by September 2026.

5. VIBRANT, RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is in the top 10% of Local Planning Authorities in the country in terms of number of planning applications. Officers and Members work to achieve multiple gains for the National Park from development proposals, using a landscape-led approach set out in our award winning Local Plan.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Significant schemes for SDNPA this year included:

- **The Phoenix Project at Lewes** – nearly 700 homes, employment and community facilities;
- **Pells School, Lewes** – 32 modular affordable homes;
- **Black Robin Farm, Eastbourne** – new art gallery and visitor centre;
- **Buckmore Farm, Petersfield** – 4730sqm of employment floorspace; and
- **Harrier Way, Petersfield** – 97 unit retirement community.

Officers were also involved in two Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, giving evidence at examinations into:

- The M3 Junction 9 scheme near Winchester; and
- Rampion 2 windfarm near Littlehampton, with onshore infrastructure running through the National Park.

The SDNPA is also working to review its award-winning South Downs Local Plan, carrying out early engagement with its town and parish councils, publishing evidence about its housing and employment needs and progressing work on potential allocations and updates to policies. It continues to support communities to produce their own planning documents, adopting two further neighbourhood development plans (taking its total to 44 made plans) and one further village design statement. It also pioneered a new approach to parish planning, supporting 40 parish councils to prepare 'Parish Priorities Statements' to inform the Local Plan Review.

As a minerals and waste authority, SDNPA worked with partner LPAs to progress the East Sussex Minerals and Waste Local Plan and can now move forward to adopt this Plan. It also worked with partner LPAs to consult on the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan prior to examination.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

The SDNPA's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) raised nearly £2m in 2023-24. We gave out over £300k to town and parish councils to spend on their own projects and over £1m to groups for specific projects.

Here are some of the projects supported over the last year.

CASE STUDY: BEACHY HEAD CHAPLAINCY IMPROVEMENTS

£92,500 in CIL funding has been spent on upgrading and improving the facilities at Beachy Head for the combined services of the Police, the Chaplaincy and the Coastguards.

The projects aims were to modernise and expand this critical site for assisting vulnerable people visiting the Beachy Head area,

The improvements have allowed the services to operate effectively to keep the public safe in an improved and fit for purpose facility.

Alongside the improved aesthetics and functionality of the building, the implementation of modern construction practices, improved mechanical and electrical installations and electric vehicle charging point for partner agency vehicles have all helped to reduce the building's carbon footprint.



CASE STUDY: QUEEN ELIZABETH COUNTRY PARK PONDS, BUGS & KIDS

Hampshire County Council were awarded £50,000 in CIL funding to be spent at Queen Elizabeth Country Park (QECF) for the restoration of an existing pond and the creation of a fully accessible facility for the education team to use for provision of nature activities with school groups and other interested parties

The works included the replacement of the pond liner, installation of fencing and a dipping platform and the removal of invasive plants. The new interpretation provides lots of information for visitors on the importance of ponds and the different wildlife that inhabit them. As wildlife returns to the pond and the new planting becomes more established the benefits to the surrounding environment will only increase.



CASE STUDY: THE ANGEL INN, MIDHURST

On the night of 15/16 March 2023, there was a serious fire affecting the Angel Inn and the adjoining properties, both Grade II listed buildings at the heart of the Midhurst Conservation Area.

The buildings stand on North Street, which is the main (and only) road through the town. As a result of the fire and the need for the fall zone (from the remaining street facades of both buildings) to protect against risk to the public and road users, the road was completely closed to through traffic for three months. This had a critical impact on the businesses within the town, with many reporting up to 80% loss of trade.

A multi-agency recovery group formed to support the recovery response to the fire, this group comprised of representatives from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), Chichester District Council, West Sussex County Council, Historic England, West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and Midhurst Town Council.

Following a meeting between the owners of the properties affected by the major fire in Midhurst, their insurance professionals and the new multi-agency recovery group, it was established that the owners were unable to agree a viable way forward to stabilise the listed building, which would allow their facades to be preserved and allow the road to be reopened in a reasonable timeframe.

It was agreed that SDNPA would use statutory planning powers to secure the stability of the surviving façades (which remain listed buildings) so as to render them safe from risk of falling and therefore enabling the opening of North Street. Works were undertaken via an Urgent Works Notice served under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990.

The 'works' consisted of letting a contract for design and build to a scaffolding and demolition specialist contractor. The direct action of works to shore up the properties began on site with the contractor Best Demolition Ltd on 15 May. An initial seven week programme was outlined including design and compliance/quality checks at the start of the contract. Building inspections were taken using Cranes from above and



drone footage and these confirmed the facades were in better condition than originally thought and should therefore be stabilised. However, the chimney structures and some minor dormer windows on the facades were considered to be too fragile and were demolished as part of the overall works programme. The works were completed ahead of schedule in six weeks and the road was re-opened by West Sussex County Council on Friday 23 June, 2023.

This direct action from SDNPA had multiple significant risks associated with it but was completed successfully and relatively quickly given that the owners had to be given prior opportunity to resolve the situation themselves. Had direct action not been taken, the road would have been closed for much longer and, indeed, might still be closed.

The works were originally paid for by the SDNPA, Chichester District Council and West Sussex County Council. After extensive negotiations, these partners have recouped some of their costs from the building owners but are still in discussions to recover the final, full amounts. The ownership of the scaffolding will revert to the building owners following full cost recovery. The SDNPA are keen to see these buildings brought back into use as soon as possible. The timeframe for this will largely be dictated by the relevant insurance companies.

ECONOMY

Our South Downs is a community created to support local businesses in their pursuit of sustainability.

We help micro and small businesses connect with each other around their common values.

This year, membership of 'Our South Downs' grew to 375 businesses, a 273% increase year on year, exceeding our target of 330 members.

In 2021, the Farming In Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme was announced by Defra to help support farmers in England's 44 protected landscapes.

Farmers and land managers in the South Downs National Park have been able to apply for funding as part of the initiative to support nature-friendly farming and sustainability.

Some of the projects that have been supported this last year are featured here.

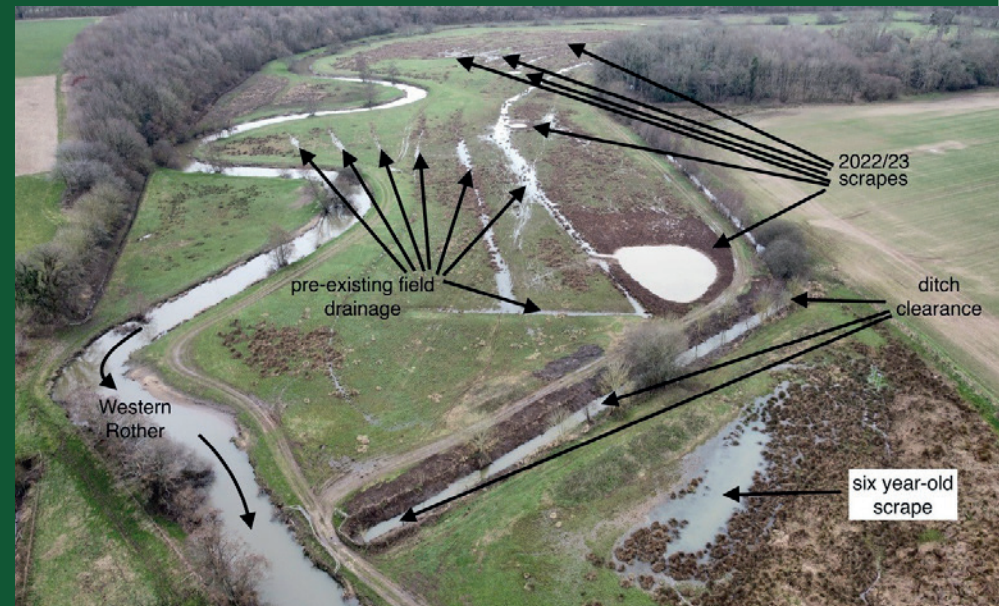
CASE STUDY: LECONFIELD ESTATE

The Leconfield Estate was awarded a grant of £18,118.15 to facilitate the improvement of wetland habitats along the Western Rother and to reconnect the floodplain to the river.

Creating scrapes, clearing ditches and repairing sluices, will allow for improved water level management of the site. By maintaining higher water levels and holding some standing water in the spring/summer, habitats will be improved for not only wading birds such as lapwing, but also a wide range of specialist wetland plants and insects.

The lowering of the river's flood bank in three places, will allow water to spill onto the floodplain during times of heavy rain. This will vastly increase the water holding capacity of the floodplain, helping to reduce flow and flash flooding that can be caused during extremely heavy rain events. In addition to increased flood storage, wetland habitats are also able to lock and store carbon.

During school visits hosted at the site, the River Bailiff discusses river processes and ecology with the students. By creating and further restoring/enhancing wetland habitats, their learning and understanding of the topic can be extended.



© Andrew Thompson

CASE STUDY: LINKING ENVIRONMENT AND FARMING (LEAF)

Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) were awarded a grant of £19,116 towards the provision of Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme (CEVAS) training for 12 farmers in the South Downs National Park and follow-up advice and assistance from LEAF to assist farmers with planning and running their first educational visit.

Using existing farmer networks, this project will recruit 12 farmers across the South Downs National Park who are keen to engage with the next generation of consumers and decision makers, promoting career opportunities and the reality of food production and countryside management. Participating farmers will undertake face-to-face CEVAS training, which gives farmers the tools, knowledge and practical guidance needed to host safe and impactful farm visits. This course shares how food and farming can be incorporated into the school curriculum and how to communicate effectively with both teachers and pupils.

This project will help young people to better explore, enjoy and understand the landscape, as well as to learn how farming practices can reduce carbon. Schools will be targeted with the aim of offering visits to those who have not visited a farm before or are located in urban areas.



© Jo Hatton



CASE STUDY: LODSWORTH BAT ROOST

In 2023, a Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) grant of £10,000 was awarded to Sussex Bat Group and Vincent Wildlife Trust to renovate and maintain a barn in West Sussex that is a vital haven for the greater horseshoe bat

Once a cave-dweller, this bat species is now very rare in the UK and tends to roost in old buildings, such as churches and barns. During the last century, greater horseshoe bat numbers fell by over 90 per cent in Britain. It's hoped the work will be a step closer to helping greater horseshoe bats return to their former ranges in southeast England.

The second phase of this three year project included building repairs and introducing electricity for lighting and heat; predator proofing with bat grilles, installing baffles to reduce light pollution, and to create hot and cool roosting areas that provide the bats with the range of micro-climates they require year round. The building's use of sustainable, natural, and traditional materials has made it more desirable for roosting bats.

Up to 25 volunteers will also be recruited and trained to help achieve the projects' objectives. New volunteers will learn skills, and their physical and mental health will benefit from participating in outdoor activities for the benefit of the local community.

Webcams at the site will live-stream bats online, and guided wildlife walks, education work and bat watching events will engage local people in this wildlife success story.

The project cost a total of £420,000 with many stakeholders providing in-kind and cash contributions including: Chichester District Council, PTES, Swire Charitable Trust, The Helvellyn Foundation, Sussex Bat Group, Surrey Bat Group and many individual donors.

A celebration event was held at Lodsworth village hall on the 30th May 2023 where partners and members of the public were invited to see the renovated building and the hear about the project and the importance of the bat colony. South Downs National



Park Trust (SDNPT) and SDNPA were present and represented by Paddy Cox, a Community Rep SCF Panel Member.

Daniel Hargreaves, Bat Programme Manager, said: "Greater horseshoe bats were once considered extinct in southeast England, so to discover a maternity roost in the South Downs National Park is incredibly exciting. It demonstrates that vulnerable species can bounce back if the habitat is suitable; this vital funding has helped secure this important roost and created a safe haven for the bats."

As well as supporting the recovery of greater horseshoes in the south-east, this project will help the species re-establish landscape ranges across southern England. There will be greater awareness among local communities, better monitoring of the species, and a wide range of partner groups will be actively engaged in supporting the species' recovery.

ON THE GROUND AND GRASSROOTS PROJECTS

Relationships are fostered and developed daily between the National Park Authority and the local councils, with Officers attending AGMs, special meetings and workshops with the 176 Town and Parish councils across the National Park. Together numerous projects are initiated every year 'on the ground'. Here are just a few highlights from 2023/24:

WOODLAND AND HEDGEROW MANAGEMENT IN THE WESTERN AREA

Over the winter of 2023/24, the western team volunteers spent many days at Chappetts Copse near West Meon in Hampshire. Chappetts Copse is a Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust site, known for its variety of ground flora, including the bird's nest orchid, narrow-leaved helleborine and the broad-leaved helleborine.

Back in December, the volunteers set to work coppicing the overstood hazel that had been left far longer than their regular 6-7 year cycle. Normally this rotation would be perfect to process and create stakes, binders, beanpoles and peasticks from the coppiced wood. This time, however, the National Park rangers used the cut material to create protective 'cages' to enable the hazel stools to regrow uninhibited by deer browsing. Chappetts Copse has a recorded dormice presence and with a few dormouse boxes within our working area, we made sure to keep a good distance to not disturb their hibernation.

HAMPSHIRE HEDGE

Tuesday 21 November 2023 marked the date of the first tree planted as part of the 'Hampshire Hedge' project, an ambitious initiative to connect the two National Parks in Hampshire with an interconnected, joined up hedgerow. The starting point from the South Downs National Park was at Compton farm, just south of Winchester. The landowner (HCC County Farms) hosted the event, inviting students from Sparsholt College as well as board members, local parish councils, partner organisations and DEFRA's Natural England team. The South Downs National Park western rangers led on the hedge planting for the day, instructing how to plant for a dense, stock-proof hedge and explaining the benefits of planting a native, species-rich mix to attract the most wildlife and provide corridors to link fragmented habitats. This project follows on from several years of hedgerow restoration work by CPRE Hampshire, engaging and training volunteers, school groups, landowners, and farmers.



© SDNPA

PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

In August 2023, an ancient craft once widespread across the heaths of Great Britain, was breathed new life by the heritage craftsman, Chris Letchford, supported by the National Park western ranger team.

A total of nine students showed up to Ludshott Common to learn the art of besom broom making. With its history rooted in early medieval period, besom brooms can trace their name back to the Old English word "besma", which means broom. Traditionally made by broom squires, besoms are typically crafted from the side shoots of juvenile birch trees with wet willow bark being used to tie the brooms together. Broom making is an excellent way to introduce the public to the ideas of heritage and heathland management on the South Downs. The cutting of birch on heathlands opens up the landscape and allows light to penetrate to the ground, encouraging heather growth and in turn providing an excellent habitat for invertebrates and herptiles. Besoms have been used for centuries to clean the physical and the spiritual. Broom making is a dwindling craft, with the number of artisans knowledgeable on the creation of the tools and skills required for this product steadily declining. With sessions like these, Chris is hoping to find a new apprentice, who can assume the mantle and keep this art alive for future generations.



© SDNPA

In April 2023, the National Park eastern ranger team had the opportunity to join some of the volunteers and Brighton & Hove ranger Will Furze in helping to patch up the flint wall surrounding Stanmer Park.

Flint walls are an ancient craft native to Sussex and an intrinsic part of the architectural heritage of the South Downs with the materials being entirely sourced from the local area. Flint, being a natural material, has a low environmental impact as it doesn't need to be processed and can be re-used. It is also incredibly durable. It is believed that the wall at Stanmer was constructed by French prisoners of war during the Napoleonic wars, and as can be expected, in the centuries since considerable amounts of it have become damaged and/or missing. The substance that binds the flints is called 'pug' and is a simple mix of sand, grit, shingle and lime. The pug in the interior of the wall can take weeks to dry, so the flints are placed between two wooden boards, which helps it to retain its shape as it dries. Placing the flints correctly is no easy task, as they need to be congruous with the line of flints in the rest of the wall. To achieve this, there is a very fiddly process involving a length of string, which is pulled taut, with the very top of each flint meeting it. Luckily for the rangers the wall extends across almost of the boundary of Stanmer Park, so there will be plenty more opportunities for practice!



© SDNPA

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND LEARNING

It is crucial for protected landscapes to share best practice and expertise to help preserve these special places and support biodiversity for future generations. In late November 2023, the central area ranger team travelled to the Bisterne Estate in the Avon Valley, just outside of the New Forest National Park.

The purpose of the visit was to see the work undertaken within the local farm cluster to deliver positive conservation outcomes for lapwing. Having suffered a 59% decrease in breeding populations since 1967 and a 19% reduction in their distribution, lapwing are now placed on the UK Red List for endangered species. By farming more sympathetically to the landscape, focussing not on output but on outcome, the Avon Valley has seen a population rise in lapwing, going against the national trend. The recipe for success includes:

- Low intensity rough grazing with cattle
- Single late summer hay cut
- A mosaic of sward heights
- Lapwing scrapes
- Predation control
- Removal of water management infrastructure

The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) gave a talk to stakeholders on the importance of predation control. Fox, crows and mink represent the greatest threat to lapwing success in the Avon Valley. The successes of the project are not limited to Lapwing however, as the change in farming model has led to healthier soils, more diverse vegetation, niche habitats, stronger invertebrates and mammal populations – best demonstrated by the resident marsh

harrier and white-tailed eagle populations. In the Avon Valley, lapwing have acted as a talisman species behind which the farming community has rallied. Perhaps the greatest outcome is not the increase in breeding lapwing numbers, but the demonstration to others of the ability that nature-friendly, regenerative farming can have to not only enhance ecosystem services, but to improve communities wellbeing & connection to nature.

The SDNPA Lead Rangers from all three teams spanning the National Park travelled to the stunning Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park to join other Ranger Manager colleagues from the wider UK National Parks family.

The hosts prepared a full and thought-provoking itinerary including trips to popular visitor sites, a brisk walk to the top of Conic Hill and boat trip to Inchcailloch. Ranger Managers learned about the opportunities and challenges facing their colleagues across the UK. Despite significant differences in our landscapes and the responsibilities of ranger services, there was also plenty of common ground. Significant outcomes from the meet include plans for improved integration and knowledge sharing through initiatives such as a Ranger exchange programme.



© SDNPA / Tim Squire



© Loch Lomond & The Trossachs NPA

SUPPORTING SPECIES IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

In May 2023, the Heathlands Reunited SAMM project team joined a team of experts and volunteers in a field close to Lord's Piece, just south of Petworth in West Sussex. To the untrained eye, it was a field just like any other, but after a few minutes of searching we were able to identify the ground burrows of field crickets amongst the other burrows of mining bees and minotaur beetles.

The field cricket (*Gryllus campestris*) is an extremely rare, declining and threatened insect in the UK. Once a common sound, the 'singing' sound the adult males make in May and June is increasingly rare. In the 1980s, the situation was so dire that only a minute population of less than 100 on Lord's Piece remained. Since 1992, a programme of reintroductions commenced to sites across Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire, funded by Natural England Species Recovery Programme to bring this species back from the brink.

Back in the field, our mission was to collect 12 males and 12 females for translocation to other suitable sites where they could thrive. There is only a short window of opportunity to undertake this tricky task as the field crickets have to be the correct stage of maturity and the weather must be warm enough for optimum chance of survival. Once a burrow has been spotted, the cricket is coaxed out using a blade of grass to 'tickle' them, before blocking off their burrow and delicately collecting them by hand and popping them into a container for transport. Due to their protected status, the tickling, and collection of the crickets could only take place under the supervision of someone with the protected license.

Agenda Item 9 Report PR23/24-40 Appendix 8

After a couple of hours, we successfully collected our crickets. A short trip across the border into East Hampshire, before these crickets were then released onto some prime field cricket habitat at Blackmoor where they will hopefully settle and breed.



© Bruce Middleton

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 2023/24 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) received a grant totalling around £10.5 million.

As the Planning Authority for the National Park, a significant part of our budget is dedicated to processing and determining planning applications for development. In 2023/24 the SDNPA received income of just over **£4.2 million** through planning activities (including Community Infrastructure Levy).

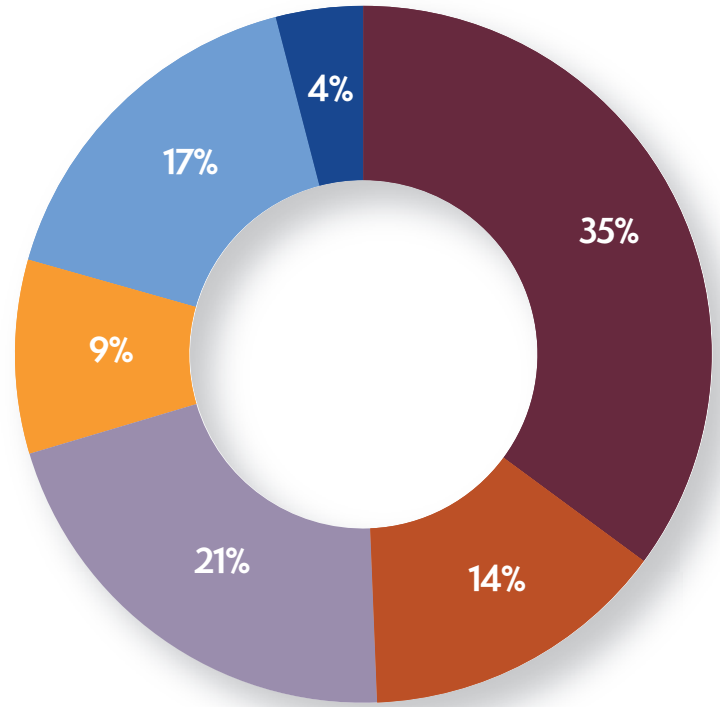
The SDNPA was also successful in attracting significant funding for projects to deliver the Partnership Management Plan. During 2023/24 the SDNPA received **£4.9 million** of income through specific grants and contributions in addition to funds secured by other partners to deliver work in the National Park.

In total the income received by the SDNPA in 2023/24 was **£19.6 million**.

- Nature Recovery
- Climate Action
- National Park for All
- Rural Economy (Economy & Land Management)
- Place Making (CIL, AMR, Major Development & Local Plan)
- Generating Income

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 broad allocation of how those funds are spent is illustrated in the following chart :



THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK VISION

At the creation of the National Park Authority we set an ambitious vision for the South Downs National Park. By 2050:

- 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.

This document demonstrates that we are well on track to achieve our vision for the National Park. For more information on how we and our partners are delivering this vision please have a look at the following documents:

- **Partnership Management Plan 2020–2025**
- **Corporate Plan 2020-2025 (Year 4&5 Action Plan – 2023–25)**



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

South Downs Centre
 North Street
 Midhurst
 West Sussex
 GU29 9DH

T: 01730 814810
 W: [southdowns.gov.uk](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk)

For your guide to everything there is to see and do in the National Park visit [southdowns.gov.uk/discovery-map](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discovery-map)

