

Report to	<b>Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>
Date	<b>21 November 2024</b>
By	<b>Performance and Projects Manager &amp; Project Management Lead</b>
Title of Report	<b>Q2 Corporate Performance report 2024/25</b>
<b>Decision</b>	

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**Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:**

**I. Receive and consider the Q2 Corporate Performance and Projects Report 2024/25.**

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**I. Introduction**

- I.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Policy & Resources Committee on the Authority's corporate performance during Quarter 1 (Q1) and Quarter 2 (Q2) of 2024/25: 01 April to 30 September 2024.
- I.2 The Policy and Resources Committee has terms of reference which include "To monitor and identify improvements arising from the outcomes and evaluation of projects identified by the Committee, audits, survey and other feedback and make recommendations as appropriate" and "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 committee also has "... oversight of bids for grant funding including to receive updates on the submission of bids for grant funding and the application of grants funds received".
- I.4 The committee is recommended to receive and consider the content of the performance report and make any recommendations arising from its consideration of the report. Any such recommendations would be subject to a vote at the committee meeting.
- I.5 Progress towards Partnership Management Plan outcomes is reported via the three High Level Target themed areas and five Corporate Plan priority areas, which includes Grant Funding. Dashboards demonstrating performance are included as appendices and explained in this report. Key project information is also included in this report at section 4.
- I.6 The report also provides Members with a progress update for the actions from the Annual Governance Statement and the Human Resources and Health and Safety report (see sections 6 and 7).

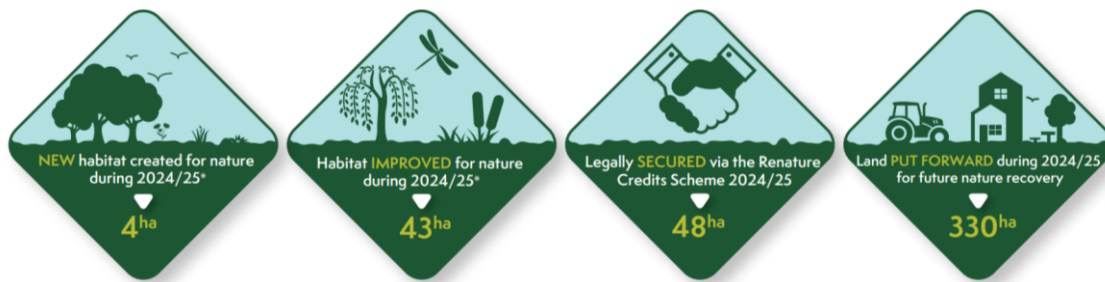
**2. Progress against High level targets**

- 2.1 **Appendix I** summarises contributions at Q2 towards the High-Level Targets and Corporate Plan KPIs.

**Nature Recovery**

**2.2 HLT#1: To secure an additional 13,000ha, or 33% of land managed for nature by 2030 from a baseline of 25%.**

Figure 1



\*From previously committed land

**2.3 Progress against HLT1 has been monitored through key performance indicators outlined in Table 1.**

Table 1 Progress against HLT1: To secure an additional 13,000ha, or 33% of land managed for nature by 2030 from a baseline of 25%

KPI	KPI Target (10-year target to 2030)	KPI contribution Q1/Q2	KPI contribution Q3/Q4	Cumulative progress to date (2022 start)
H1.1 Total hectares of habitat created for nature	13,000ha	3.88ha		421ha
H1.2 Total hectares habitat improved for nature		42.8ha		5,116ha
H1.3 Total hectares legally secured via the ReNature credits scheme		48ha		640ha
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,000ha</b>	<b>94.68ha</b>		<b>6,177ha</b>
H1.4 Total hectares land put forward for future nature recovery	N/A	329.71		3,603ha
<b>H1.5 Total ha of habitat creation &amp; improvement funded by The South Downs National Park Trust</b>	<b>2,000ha</b>	<b>22.29</b>		<b>22.29*</b>

\* Q1 & Q2 2024/25 is the first period that this data has been collected.

2.3.1 At the end of Q2, a total of 6,177 additional hectares of land have been secured or managed for nature since 2022. This is 48% of the 13,000 hectares target to be achieved by 2030. Please note that all hectares are estimated and these calculations are based on best available data.

2.3.2 The dashboard at **Appendix 2** shows that in Q1 and Q2 a total of 94.68 hectares of habitat has been created, improved or secured for nature recovery. Work in Q1 and Q2 has been focussed on habitat management through the removal of invasive species, bracken and scrub control and chalk grassland management. Q1 and Q2 also saw wildflower rich meadow

creation and plug plant planting to improve floral diversity. Two new sites have been legally secured for nature via biodiversity net gain and nitrate offsetting schemes.

- 2.3.3 HI.1: The South Downs Trust funded Beelines project has delivered two wildflower projects including the establishment of wildflower strips at Bury cricket ground. The Western Area Team has used Grassroots funding to create two new ponds, restore an existing pond and support wildflower seeding.
- 2.3.4 HI.2: Most of the new work has been focussed on bracken control, cotoneaster and Himalayan balsam removal along with cutting and scrub management.
- 2.3.5 A good example of scrub management can be seen at Butser Hill. It is one of the best sites in the UK and within the South Downs, for the Duke of Burgundy butterfly, a UK BAP protected species. The area known as Rake Bottom is one of the prime breeding spots on Butser Hill for the Duke of Burgundy. We aim to thin areas of scrub back to 15% in a dynamic way, to help support and encourage this butterfly population – 3.1ha was restored in Q1. This area is winter grazed with cattle and volunteers are helping to manage the dense scrub using hand tools and brush cutters.
- 2.3.6 Q2 saw the enclosed introduction of beavers onto a tributary of the River Meon funded through the ReNature Grant and FiPL. The location has been kept confidential. It is hoped that through the beaver introduction the following outcomes will be achieved:
- Watercourse engineering to reduce the negative effects of both extreme rain events to support the reduction of flood risk along the River Meon and in East Meon village, and drought.
  - Ecosystem and habitat improvements along watercourses that benefit a wide range of flora and fauna
  - An opportunity to use a keystone species to engage with people to talk about climatic change and land management.
- 2.3.7 To understand what the key issues are for "water and nature recovery" and how the SDNPA can support catchment partnerships in addressing them, staff have been working with all the catchments across the South Downs National Park (including the Rother). Any work for the SDNPA for "water & nature" arising from the discussions with partners will be included in the next Corporate Plan.
- 2.3.8 HI.3: Of the 27ha put forwards for nature recovery at Hinton Ampner, 8.92ha has now been legally secured for nature. In addition, at BNG sites, Wiston Estate has legally secured 20.33ha and Iford Estate has legally secured 18.75ha.
- 2.3.9 HI.4: 329.71ha of land has been put forwards for BNG nature recovery, this includes two new sites managed by Adur & Worthing Council covering 89.02ha.
- 2.3.10 HI.5: The data methodology for this KPI (Total hectares of habitat creation and improvement funded by The South Downs National Park Trust) was finalised in Q1 2024/25. A total of 22.29ha has been recorded to date.
- 2.3.11 Progress against this KPI has included habitat restoration of the chalk grassland at Butser Hill and the development of a wildlife corridor stretching from Arundel train station to the top of High Street, along London Road and towards Arundel Park. The corridor has been designed to increase insect, bird, amphibian and small mammal populations.
- 2.3.12 Development of a hedgerows initiative is also underway. Progress to date includes trialling hedgerow survey methodologies, improving the historic evidence base and hosting a hedgerows day with land managers, building on the work of the Hampshire Hedgerows Project. Further work with the ranger teams and strategy leads includes undertaking analysis of the density of hedgerows across the South Downs National Park to see where they are and aren't. A map of historic hedgerows is being developed with the SDNPA GIS team, working in partnership with the Peak District National Park Authority and the University of Lancaster to develop this work further long-term. Next steps are to develop a simple farm level plan for hedgerow management to support developing existing hedgerows into good condition.

**2.4 HLT#2: Work to maintain, enhance and/or restore 30% of existing Core Nature sites and support key species recovery within the SDNP by 2030.**

2.4.1 This HLT is measured using the indicators shown in Table 2.

*Table 2 HLT2: Work to maintain, enhance and/or restore 30% of existing Core Nature sites and support key species recovery within the SDNP by 2030*

<b>KPI</b>	<b>KPI Target (yrs 4-5)</b>	<b>KPI contribution Q1/Q2</b>
H2.1 Total extent of Core Nature sites where SDNPA activity is contributing towards favourable condition	3,541ha	26ha
H2.2 Number of species recovery programmes developed for delivery from 2023	TBC	Reported in Q4

2.4.2 H2.1: At Seven Sisters Country Park, the SDNPA have been implementing the new Countryside Stewardship Agreement in the management of the landscape including the grazing of approx. 19ha of grazing marsh for the first time in 5 years, aiming to increase the wildlife value of this habitat. Highlights this year include:

- chalk grassland surveys.
- the reappearance of dropwort in Coombe Bottom, a good indicator of chalk grassland recovery.
- Red star thistle (a very rare thistle) is spreading.
- summer cattle grazing of the floodplain grassland/ meanders.
- various fence and gate repairs, improvements and replacements are underway to support conservation grazing of the site.
- wetland enhancement works started in September including the creation of two new scrapes and the regrading of four sections of the meanders to improve the shallow, muddy feeding habitat to support wading birds.

2.4.3 SDNPA is one of eight partners collaborating over the possible declaration of a super National Nature Reserve, now called "Seven Sisters National Nature Reserve", emanating out of the existing Lullington Heath NNR. The ambition is to increase the size of the NNR from 62ha to approx. 2000ha. Whilst the SDNPA is also working with Natural England over the application, a shared vision has been co-created:

- For Nature: To see the special wildlife of the land and sea thrive through connected and innovative land management.
- For Water: To value and protect the water of the chalk landscape to benefit people and nature.
- For People: To help local communities, businesses and visitors enjoy, value and connect with the chalk landscape.
- Strapline: "Inspired by water, motivated by nature, delivered for future generations".

2.4.4 In total, 26ha maintenance work to improve habitat for biodiversity has been completed at 9 sites against HLT2.1.

2.4.5 H2.2: This year to date has seen work to develop monitoring information on the 4 priority species - Birds, bats, butterflies and bees. Data analysis has been commissioned from the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) and British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) about the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative and the Bat Conservation Trust are completing a Park-wide analysis of farmland bird and bat records for baselining.

**2.5 HLT#3: To prepare for and implement Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)**

2.5.1 This HLT is measured using the indicators shown in Table 3.

Table 3 HLT3: To prepare for and implement Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

KPI	KPI Target (yrs 4-5)	KPI contribution
H3.1 The requirement is for relevant applications to achieve at least a 10% biodiversity net gain increase from the pre-development biodiversity value.	10% BNG increase (min)	Reported annually in Q4

- Annual data will be published in December 2024 and progress will be included in the Q4 performance report.

**Climate Action**

**2.6 HLT#4: South Downs National Park Authority to reduce its carbon footprint by 150 tonnes per annum in line with the 2030 net zero target**

2.6.1 This HLT is measured using the indicators shown in Table 4 through analysis of SDNPA Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions using the DEFRA carbon calculation spreadsheet.

Table 4

KPI	Year	KPI Target (yrs 4-5)	SDNPA (Tonnes CO2)	Change on previous year (Tonnes)
H4.1 Total annual SDNPA carbon emissions	<b>2024/25</b>	-150 tonnes (CO2) on previous year	<b>To be reported Q4 2024/25</b>	
	<b>2023/24</b>		278.21	<b>-4.8</b>
	<b>2022/23</b>		283.01	<b>+16.44</b>
	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>Original Baseline (not including work at SSCP)</b>	<b>266.57</b>	

2.6.2 May 2024 saw the completion of work to replace the external insulation and render to part of the South Downs Centre. It is hoped that this will reduce heating bills in the winter months. The Invest to Save project work is still ongoing.

**2.7 HLT#5: 5% reduction per annum in the overall carbon footprint of the South Downs National Park from the baseline reported in 2019**

2.7.1 This HLT is measured using the indicators shown in Table 5.

Table 5

<b>HLT5 5% reduction per annum in the overall carbon footprint of the South Downs National Park from the baseline reported in 2019</b>	<b>H5.1 Total tonnes CO2 reported year on year in annual LULUCF (Forestry component) data.</b> 1.5% reduction (tonnes CO2)*
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\* Awaiting new target to be set through the protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

2.7.2 The updated Green House Gas inventory data for 2022/23 was issued to the UK Parks in June. A link to this data is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics-2005-to-2022>

- 2.7.3 The dashboard at **Appendix 2** shows a carbon monitoring and tracking tool set up for the National Parks by Small World Consulting. This makes use of annual updates of the national Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) inventory data. The SDNPA can also update it using local data where any eligible woodland planting or habitat creation/restoration has been undertaken that would contribute to increasing the potential of the land within the National Park to sequester more carbon.
- 2.7.4 In 2022, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) made changes and improvements to the methodology they applied for the LULUCF element of the national inventory. This required the SDNPA to re-calculate our baseline in line with their revised approach. The SDNPA original carbon footprint (2019) has also been included within the tracker for comparison. The tracker will now be able to show the carbon footprint reductions on an annual basis against this baseline in 2019. The SDNPA is waiting for a national target to be agreed as part of the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. Reporting against this will commence in 2024/25.
- 2.7.5 Future Energy Landscape (FEL) project – The SDNPA supported Energise South Downs to set up and run 10 FEL workshops with Parish and Community-groups. The project was also presented on at the SDNPA strategic workshop session on Thursday 20th June. This is forming an important evidence base for the recently launched Local Plan review. It will allow to the strengthening and improvement of SDNPA policies around renewables and community-based energy schemes.
- 2.7.6 During Q2 delivery has focused on community-based projects that support capacity building and resilience for Climate Action networks and rural communities. These projects support activity around community energy planning, retrofit and other activities that support transition to a low-carbon future. These activities will, in time, contribute to reducing carbon emissions from residents and communities within the National Park.
- 2.7.7 As part of our pledge and commitment to the UN Race to Zero programme - the SDNPA submitted its first report to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). This is a comprehensive questionnaire that must be completed with evidence of the work being done to address the key risks around climate change, build resilience and lower our carbon emissions.

**A National Park for All**

**2.8 HLT#6: Increase diversity of those engaging with the South Downs National Park**

2.8.1 This HLT is measured using the indicators shown in Table 6.

Table 6

<b>KPI</b>	<b>KPI Target (yr 5)</b>	<b>KPI contribution Q1/Q2</b>
H6.1 Number of people from underrepresented audiences engaged through engagement & project activities	100	5443
H6.2 Number of engagement activities targeted at underrepresented audiences	30	149

- 2.8.2 New targets are being developed for the next Corporate Plan as previous targets were greatly underestimated.
- 2.8.3 The People and Places Team engaged over 1,000 people through engagement events with schools, careers events, youth action days and volunteering. Some highlights are described in the below paragraphs.
- 2.8.4 A whole school engagement session focussing on pollinators was held at Truleigh Hill plus eight young people joined an SDNPA Ranger at the site to create a butterfly bank and ensure the accessible path was wide enough for users.

- 2.8.5 At Moulsecomb Ambassador School, restoration of the medieval house and neolithic houses were completed with the expert input of a local craftswoman and the support of the school grounds team. The entire Moulsecomb Primary School participated learning traditional techniques to wattle and daub the building. The project culminated in a celebratory Heritage Open Day also showcasing the knowledge and engagement of the five new Moulsecomb Heritage Ambassadors.
- 2.8.6 A successful partnership with West Sussex County Council has supported sessions with young unaccompanied asylum seekers focussing on the 5 pathways to nature connection to support HWB and self-regulation.
- 2.8.7 Celebrations of Sussex Day were included in a report on BBC South Today the events engaged 150 children <https://sway.cloud.microsoft/mSH0qo8noXAIUrbx?ref=Link>.
- 2.8.8 HeRe SAMM - Secrets of the Heath saw 2,250 visitors from the Bordon area participate in a community event focused on celebrating heritage and wildlife of our lowland heaths.
- 2.8.9 In QECP - the Muslim Hikers group led a walk for 160 participants to celebrate national walking Month, engaging communities and asking people to take action for nature.
- 2.8.10 An event in Eastbourne, aimed at connecting young people to the National Park, received very positive feedback:
- "The knowledge and enthusiasm of the staff was incredible. The activities were well planned and executed, in consideration of our curriculum needs."
  - "I honestly cannot think of anything - the day was well paced, informative, inspiring to both children and adults, and has left a lasting impression of the importance of the history and habitats of the South Downs - it has even inspired some persuasive writing in our English!"
  - "On return from the trip, the following day, we mind-mapped all that we had learnt and it filled our working wall! Personally, I had no idea about the origins of chalk, but the children also have a lasting impression of the castle at St Anne's hill (and it's prehistoric past) as well as the rarity of the habitats."
- 2.9 **HLT#7: Work to make sure the landscape, scenery and tranquillity of SDNP is available to everyone, no matter what their access needs are.**
- 2.9.1 Q1/Q2 progress against HLT7 is monitored through key performance indicators outlined in Table 7.

Table 7 Progress against HLT7: Increase the diversity of those engaging with the South Downs National Park

KPI	KPI Target (yrs 4-5)	KPI contribution Q1/Q2	KPI contribution Q3/Q4	Cumulative progress to date
H7.1 Number of sessions facilitated by mobility equipment*	100	74		225
H7.2 Metres of new and/or improved accessible path	TBC	2,425		8,195
H7.3 Number of visits to the digital Accessibility Hub	5,000	4,988		16,248
H7.4 Number of page views of the Seven Sisters Country Park Accessibility Guide	This KPI is under review	4,629		8,074

\* These figures currently represent bookings at SSCP only.

- 2.9.2 To date this year, SSCP have had 74 bookings for the mobility scooters. Bad weather and maintenance issues has impacted usage. However, there has been a slight increase in those booking on the day with some repeat customers returning.
- 2.9.3 2,425m of new or improved accessible path has been achieved so far this year through 900 metres of new path surface and 1525m of public footpath made more accessible through the replacement of seven new gates.
- 2.9.4 900 metres of surface improvements have taken place in two locations on the South Downs Way. The first was 50m of new surface and drainage to create a smooth surface and remove difficult tree root obstacles. The second was 850m of improved surface with new drainage channels to remove difficult and deep erosion gullies from the South Downs Way between Washington car park and Chanctonbury Ring.
- 2.9.5 Elsewhere, 675m of footpath was made more accessible with the installation of user-friendly kiss gates replacing step stiles at Bignor Park, 350m of footpath was made more accessible with the replacement of two step stiles with pedestrian gates in the Cuckmere Valley and 500m of path near Hartley Wood, Hampshire made more accessible with the installation of two new kiss gates.
- 2.9.6 One motorbike trap / horse stile has been removed on the South Downs Way at Washington through the Miles without Stiles project. This, together with the larger work to regrade and improve the surface of approx. 800m, opens up several km of trail to users of wheelchairs and families with buggies, including access to the iconic Chanctonbury Ring.
- 2.9.7 Number of visits to the digital accessibility hub was highest in Q2 reflecting it being our busiest quarter for visitors and those interested in getting outdoors.
- 2.10 **HLT#8: Digitally engage 100,000 people per year with the SDNP**
- 2.10.1 Q1/Q2 progress against HLT8 is monitored through key performance indicators outlined in Table 8.

Table 8 Progress against HLT8: Digitally engage 100,000 people per year with the SDNP

KPI	KPI Target (yr4)	KPI at Q4 2023/24	KPI at Q2 2024/25	Change on previous
H8.1 Total number of E-newsletter subscribers	11,500	11,989	12,168	+1.5%
H8.2 Total social media audience	110,000	97,774	106,185	+8.6%
H8.3 Total visits to the hubs throughout the year: (Nature Recovery, Climate Change, Walking hub, Communities*)	20,000	27,694	43,270	+56.2%

\*Total visits to the hubs throughout the year does not include the Communities hub which has not yet launched

- 2.10.2 SDNPA has a total social media audience of 97,774 followers. This total includes the SDNPA, Seven Sisters Country Park and South Downs National Park Trust social media channels.
- 2.10.3 The SDNPA social media audience is growing well on Facebook and Linked In but dropping on X as they implement changes to how the platform runs and are culling dormant accounts.
- 2.10.4 Total visits to the hubs has seen a sharp increase due to the number of visitors to the walking hub in Q2 (40,072) as it is prime walking season. The total figure does not include visitors to the Accessibility hub.



### 3. Progress against Corporate Plan Priorities

#### Place Making

3.1 Progress has been monitored through the key performance indicators outlined in Table 9. CPI is monitored quarterly and CP2 is monitored annually.

Table 9 Progress against Place Making - CPI & CP2

Corporate Plan Priority	KPI	KPI contribution Q1/Q2
CPI Administer the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106	CP1.1 The total CIL and S106 distributed (in £) across the three HLTs	£ 1,113,950.15
CP2 Provide specialist advice in respect of Conservation, Design and Landscape across the organisation	CP2.1 Summary of service provided to be included in the Authority's Annual Monitoring Report	Highlights from the annual AMR report are included in Q4 reporting

3.2 Highlights of progress towards CPI include:

- In Q1/Q2, CIL distributed £535,939.88; this has been spent on 19 projects incorporating nature recovery and a national park for all priorities. Projects include improving community facilities with new changing places toilets, rights of way / highway improvement schemes, new play / outdoor equipment for Schools and supporting the Hampshire Pollinators Project and Heathland Restoration in Fittleworth.
- In Q1/Q2, S106 distributed £578,010.27. This has funded affordable housing, community facilities, highway improvement schemes, nitrate mitigation monitoring and delivering a site-specific travel plan.

3.3 Highlights of progress towards CP2 will be included in Q4 reporting.

#### Generating income

3.4 In line with the Authority Standing Orders, P&R Committee is updated on funding applications through this report. Any funding applications over £50k are approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairs of the Authority and of P&R Committee. Table 10, below, includes everything submitted since the last report to P&R which has now received a final outcome. These scheme will not be reported to committee in future as they are now redundant or sit within project reporting.

Table 10

Funder & Scheme	Project	Status	Value	Lead
Natural England Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) III	Voluntary Biodiversity Units	Successful – now in delivery	£99,705	SDNPA
National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF)	Downs to the Sea	Successful – now in delivery	£1.7million	South Downs Trust in partnership with SDNPA

3.5 Applications over £50k, currently in consideration, can be seen in Table 11. These will be reported in future updates until they have achieved a final outcome.

Table 11

Funder & Scheme	Project	Status	Value	Lead
National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative	Boosting Butser Butterflies	Successful EO1, working up full bid	£100,000	SDNPA
National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative	Woolbeding – Expanding the view	Full bid submitted – pending decision	£300,000	SDNPA

3.6 Progress has been monitored through the key performance indicators outlined in Table 12. CP3 and CP4 are monitored quarterly.

Table 12 Progress against Generating income - CP3 & CP4

Corporate Plan Priority	KPI	KPI Target (yr5)	KPI contribution Q1/Q2
CP3 Aim to raise £2.5 million self-generated income p.a. through bids to Statutory sources & support for the SDNP Trust in continuing to build a philanthropic income stream.	CP3.1 Total self-generated income raised (£)	£2.5m	£2,680,799
CP4 Incubate a number of income generating initiatives, building on Seven Sisters and the South Downs Trust	CP4.1 Total income (£) generated through the new Green Finance Off Set and Brokering service	£805,945	£173,301
	CP4.2 Number of new income generating pilots	1	0
	CP4.3 Total income (£) generated through core cost recovery on externally funded projects	£200K	£238,000

3.7 Highlights from Q1/Q2 against KPIs are detailed below:

3.8 CP 3.1: In Q1, Income Generation made a strong start to the year, securing £400k. Notably, £250k was secured by our Trust for Dew Pond restoration and the employment of apprentices.

3.9 Q2 delivered significant grant success, including a £1.7 million grant for Downs to the Sea and £100k NERIF bid, combined with continued progress within Green Finance.

3.10 CP4.1: Work has progressed well on creating a strong pipeline of landowner partners which now totals 5.

3.11 CP4.2: This year has seen work continue on the establishment of the current five income generating pilots listed below:

- ReNature Credits: Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- ReNature Credits: Nutrient Neutrality (NN)
- ReNature Through Planning: BNG/NN Set up Service to neighbouring Local Planning Authorities
- South Downs Woodland Carbon Platform
- Voluntary Biodiversity Credits (VBC).

3.12 At the Green Finance Summit, hosted by SDNPA on 23rd May, Voluntary Biodiversity Credits (VBC) was launched as a new nature market. Work is now complete to secure the first parcel of land for land use change from arable to woodland. This totals 18.75 Ha and is the first scheme legally able to sell Voluntary Biodiversity Credits in England. This work will be accelerated by the recruitment of a new fixed term resource, fully funded externally, as a result of the successful Natural Environmental Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) bid. The first formal sale of VBC's has taken place at a value of £28,500.

3.13 CP4.3: Core cost recovery has been secured through our NEIRF and Downs to the Sea applications.

**Land Management**

3.14 Progress has been monitored through the key performance indicators outlined in Table 13. CP5 and CP6 are monitored quarterly.

Table 13 Progress against Land management – CP5 & CP6

<b>Corporate Plan Priority</b>	<b>KPI</b>	<b>KPI Target (yrs4-5)</b>	<b>KPI contribution Q1/Q2</b>
CP5 Facilitate and support the endorsement, actions and key priorities through the process of Whole Estate Plans (WEPs)	CP5.1 No. of Estates with new endorsed WEPS	N/A	1
	CP5.2 No. of estates working towards an endorsed WEP	N/A	Reported in Q4
CP6 Deliver the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme in the National Park	CP6.1 Total funding (£) allocated across the Defra themes of People/ Place/ Nature/ Climate	£1,025,749 FiPL Year 4 programme budget	£982,634

3.15 On the 19th September, Glynde Estate had their Whole Estate Plan successfully endorsed by the Authority during the P&R Committee Meeting. This latest endorsement represents the ninth estate to have an endorsed WEP in the South Downs National Park.

3.16 There are currently 5 Estates with WEPs at various points in the WEP Process. These are; Westerlands Estate, Firle Estate, Bereleigh Estate, , Lancing College and Plumpton College.

3.17 Works are now complete to utilise a new monitoring system for estates with an endorsed WEP. This will be trialled with a focus on Nature Recovery initially with the aim to broaden the data captured in the future once the new monitoring system has been successfully adopted by estates.

3.18 Of a programme budget for 2024/25 of £1,025,749 programme spend to date totals £982,634 (equating to 95.8% of budget).

3.19 58 projects have been approved with programme spend in Year 4, which collectively cover all four FiPL programme outcomes of Nature, Climate, People and Place. Some of the projects approved include:

- An enclosed introduction of beavers at East Meon.

- Restoration of two historic dew ponds at Stoughton.
- Restoration of a historic flint stock yard on Willingdon Hill.
- Development of an education and wellbeing facility, within a working livestock farm, to provide Green Care to young people and their families, through the repair and repurposing of redundant farm buildings.
- Establishment of an on-farm community garden.
- Provision of a rural crafts barn to host outreach, rural crafts and wellbeing classes.
- Provision of facilities to increase/improve the provision of school visits to bunkhouse facilities on the South Downs Way.

**Economy**

3.20 Progress has been monitored through the key performance indicators outlined in Table 14. CP7 and CP8 are monitored quarterly.

Table 14 Progress against Economy – CP7 & CP8

Corporate Plan Priority	KPI	KPI Target (yrs4-5)	KPI contribution Q1/Q2	Cumulative progress to date
CP7 Develop the 'Our South Downs' (OSD) enterprise network	CP7.1 No of businesses signed up	420	32	407
	CP7.2 No. of Green South Downs certified businesses	35	2	29
	CP7.3 No. of businesses signed up to South Downs Guardian	KPI now redundant as approved by P&R Committee Q3 2023/24. This will be removed for Q4 reporting.		
	CP7.4 No. of businesses signed up to South Downs Protector	KPI now redundant as approved by P&R Committee Q3 2023/24. This will be removed for Q4 reporting.		
	CP7.5 Total unrestricted income generated in £*	£60,000	£80,000	£124,280
CP8 Tourism in the South Downs National Park	CP8.1 No. of businesses signed up to Visitor Giving	4	2	5

*\*This figure has been adjusted to reflect previous income not captured, see commentary for details.*

- 3.21 CP 7.1: A stronger than expected influx of sign-ups to the Our South Downs network was driven by Our South Downs supporting the Fair Game project. Over half new sign-ups are venison suppliers, onboarded by phoning & mailing suppliers in support of producing a digital map for the Fair Game project to use at engagement events.
- 3.22 CP 7.2: Two new businesses have been certified this year to date. Key challenges are around getting businesses to follow through with payment after initial sign up/interest. Officers will work with partner organisations to help part fund Green South Downs (GSD). So far, Chichester District Council have offered to fund up to ten businesses into Green South Downs in Q3/Q4.

- 3.23 Officers have also been working with Green Tourism and other National Parks on the opportunity to roll the GSD framework out to other National Parks.
- 3.24 CP 7.5: Funding has been secured for a Climate Positive Viticulture Grant Fund of £70,000 from West Sussex Local Authorities. £10,000 has been secured from University of Sussex to partner with the Trust for a Trips for Trees programme.
- 3.25 CP 8.1: Two new Accommodation businesses signed up to Visitor Giving this year to date with two possible leads for the second half of the year. Success stems from continued promotion and support of businesses, and relationship building with interested parties.

**Authority Process**

- 3.26 Progress has been monitored through the key performance indicators outlined in Table 15.

*Table 15 Progress against Authority Process – CP9*

<b>Corporate Plan Priority</b>	<b>KPI</b>	<b>KPI Target (yrs. 4-5)</b>	<b>KPI contribution Q3/Q4</b>
CP9 Ensure that the organisation is more diverse and representative both in its staff and Members and considers Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in service delivery and policy development	CP9.1 Total % of EDI impact assessment forms complete	100%	100%

- 3.27 Due to the new Performance Tracker platform requiring all new projects to attach a completed EDI form with their project approval submission, this KPI is now redundant and no longer monitored. We will look at new ways to measure organisational progress for EDI in the new Corporate Plan.

**4. Projects in delivery**

- 4.1 As of Quarter 2 end, there were 38 projects in delivery. Of these projects, 30 have a green RAG rating, seven projects that have an amber RAG rating, and one project has a red RAG rating. Amber and red rated projects are listed below. Please see the Projects dashboard at Appendix 3 for more detailed project tracking.

**4.2 Amber RAG rating:**

- Arun Landscape Farm Cluster Facilitation: this project is 0% complete. It has been given an amber rating because several attempts have been made by the fundraising team to meet with the farm group to confirm this offer of support. Unfortunately, a meeting date has not been finalised probably due to the busy harvest season.
- Changing Chalk - Grazier Post: this project is 70% complete. A change request was submitted to the project board and has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund after feedback from farmers. The change request would allow the project to proceed without some of the paperwork which farmers did not like. However, since September 2024 bluetongue restrictions have been put in place across the Downs which aim to reduce the spread of the disease. We await to see the effect this will have on grazing across the project because animal movements should be kept to a minimum.
- Communities in the South Downs: this project is 75% complete. One of the pilot schemes requires further discussion with East Sussex County Council. A meeting is planned with the consultant in October to get the project back on track.
- Ebernoe and Butcherlands Landscape Enhancement Scheme: this project is 10% complete. It has been given an amber rating because the project is still behind in its activities due to delays with obtaining the felling licence for most of the tree works. The licence is now in place for part of the reserve so works can begin this autumn but haven't started yet. Hopefully, by next quarter, there will have been some further progress.

- Grandfather's Bottom: this project is 70% complete. It has been given an amber rating because the car park refurbishment has been delayed further. This is due to delays with the archaeological survey results. The work can't commence until Historic England have approved the survey. This now means that the car park refurbishment is over a year behind schedule, which has caused the costs of the work to increase. Fortunately, it has been possible to get some additional funding from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) and Hampshire County Council will be making up the rest of the shortfall.
- Rother Valley Way development: this project is 80% complete. The lead partner Shortcut, has and continues to deliver everything asked of them in the signed MoU and grant agreement between SDNPA and Shortcut. However, one of the identified project risks, that Shortcut are unable to secure landowner agreements in principle for the RVW route between Petersfield and Midhurst has become a reality. This does not cause the project to fail, as this was always identified as a risk, but it does mean that progress towards milestones has stalled. Alternative route alignments will have to be investigated and milestones delayed.
- Seven Sisters Reed Bed Replacement: this project is 85% complete. The project has had additional spend needed to resolve onsite issues, design changes and additional programme time for construction.

4.3 Red RAG rating:

- Adur Wetland Creation Feasibility Project (Pad Farm): this project is 0% complete. Adur and Worthing Council have had a significant restructure and no longer have staff to deliver the project. We are investigating whether the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust (OART) will be able to take the project on.

**5. Project Performance Reporting: Strategic Fund Implications**

5.1 At the end of Q2, there is a balance of £182,086 unallocated in the Strategic Fund, this amount takes into account £45,000 that was allocated in Q1/Q2 to 3 new projects.

**6. Annual Governance Statement**

6.1 The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) details 6 actions for 2024/25. These are monitored and reported on bi-annually. See Appendix 4 for progress on the Annual Governance Statement actions for Q2.

**7. Human Resources & Health and Safety**

7.1 The Human Resources & Health and Safety paper detailed 8 actions for 2024/25. These are monitored and reported on bi-annually. See Appendix 5 for progress on the Human Resources and Health and Safety actions for Q2.

**8. Other implications**

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	Projects may come forward for approval in future. No further decisions are required as a direct result of this report.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	There are no direct resource implications to this report.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Value for money for individual projects and pieces of work are assessed at the development stage, midway through a project and at the end, through an evaluative process that is reported to this Committee.  Setting aside a fund to support projects represents a positive return on investment as it enables projects to go ahead which might not otherwise.

<b>Implication</b>	<b>Yes*/No</b>
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	We have listed in the report and appendices which PMP outcomes and corporate plan objectives our corporate and project work link to.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	Where appropriate these are set out in the report.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	Please see the Climate Action section of this report which sets out high level targets around climate action.
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 - Priority area three outlines the projects that have a specific focus on encouraging all people including those with protected characteristics and those from our target audiences of young people, people experiencing health inequalities and conditions, people from diverse backgrounds and people from areas experiencing socio-economic deprivation to engage with and access the National Park. Completed EDI assessments are required at project approval stage for projects across all priority areas from Q3 2023/24. Any issues identified are highlighted within this report.
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.

**9. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

9.1 Robust corporate planning and monitoring of performance are part of the mitigations for our corporate risk as detailed in the table below:

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Unforeseen changes to the level of funding provided by relevant Government departments for future years	Possible	Moderate	A robust monitoring and project approval system with regular reporting to relevant Committees on projects. The budget available is set to sit with a Corporate Plan, setting out clear priorities to support delivery of Partnership Management Plan outcomes.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
<p>There may be some risks to our reputation if we are unable to provide match funding for some of our larger projects. This would also potentially reduce the types of funding we were able to apply for.</p>	<p>Possible</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>The main mitigation for this is to keep close scrutiny of the Strategic Fund and apply a rigorous prioritisation process when approving those projects that commit the SDNPA to significant funding over a number of years.</p> <p>Further mitigation for this risk is the work that will be carried out to generate income for the South Downs National Park and also potentially for the SDNPA.</p>
<p>Lack of robust data or changes to data makes it difficult to provide trend information</p>	<p>Possible</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>SDNPA has contracts in place to provide a range of data and this is regularly reviewed. Changes to the data required as a result of Government requirements have been factored into future planning as far as is possible.</p>

**Liz Gent**

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Appendices

1. Corporate Performance Summary Q2 2024-25
2. Corporate performance dashboard Q2 2024-25
3. Corporate project dashboard Q2 2024-25
4. Q2 2024-25 Annual Governance Statement update
5. Q2 2024-25 Human Resources & Health and Safety update

SDNPA Consultees

Chief Executive; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services, Interim Business Service Manager; Countryside and Policy Managers

External Consultees

None

Background Documents

[Corporate Plan 2020-25 year 4-5 action plan](#)