



ANNUAL REVIEW 2014/15

A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

This Annual Review reflects on a successful first year of delivery for the Partnership Management Plan by outlining the key achievements of the SDNPA set against our objectives from our Corporate Plan for 2014–17. This document also includes case studies to showcase some of the many projects which we are proud to have worked on with our partners.

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) works in partnership with a wide range of organisations, landowners, farmers, local businesses, residents and visitors who are committed to caring for the South Downs National Park. These partnerships have grown in number and deepened in impact during 2014/15.

A great deal of progress has been made against the 57 policies in our Partnership Management Plan since it was published in December 2013. This Annual Review quantifies that progress but many of our most important achievements are less tangible.

The higher profile of the National Park, the increased interest and involvement in securing its future, the deeper knowledge of its special qualities and the ever greater expectations of the future are evident for all those who live, work and visit our precious landscape. This is a major achievement for an Authority that has only just reached its fifth birthday.

It also provides firm grounds for confidence in the delivery of our ambitious long-term vision for the National Park.



Trevor Beattie
Chief Executive



Margaret Paren
Chair

PURPOSES AND DUTY

Our role as the National Park Authority is clearly defined by Parliament in our statutory Purposes and Duty, which are:



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 2014/15



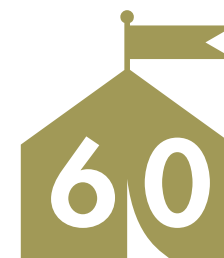
OF WOODLAND GRANT

investment for the South East is spent in the South Downs.



CHILDREN

reached through Our South Downs



EVENTS attended



KEY SPECIES

being monitored or supported*

9,413 kWhrs
GENERATED



by the solar panels at the South Downs Centre

CHALK GRASSLANDS



sites improved as part of the NIA project

NUMBER OF PARTNERS...



...helping to deliver a thriving living landscape



...helping to promote opportunities for understanding and enjoyment



...helping to deliver towards a sustainable future

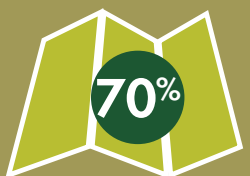


...using the National Park shared identity



PLANNING

£1,105,479 secured by section 106 agreements



PLANNING

applications validated in 5 working days



SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGERS

helping throughout the National Park



VOLUNTEERING DAYS

supporting National Park work



OF SCHOOLS

(in the National Park) using the South Downs for learning outside the classroom opportunities



319,325

number of people using the South Downs Way

*More than 34 species benefit from the habitat work we do but it is not currently possible to capture them within this measurement.

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

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

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO...	WHAT WE HAVE DONE...
Prepare for the submission of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) Local Plan in accordance with the timetable and procedures set out in the agreed Local Development Scheme (LDS)	Following extensive consultation and partnership work we have developed the preferred options for the SDNP Local Plan. This met the first year target in our Local Development Scheme (LDS).
Create a Heritage Coast Partnership Plan	Working in partnership with the Heritage Coast Partnership (HCP), a working group of heritage coast organisations, we have completed the draft HCP Plan. This five year plan combines individual organisations' aspirations and actions to protect our heritage coastline and will be implemented from 2015/16. Heritage Coast Partners include Lewes, Eastbourne and Wealden District Councils; East Sussex County Council; the Environment Agency; Natural England; the National Trust and Sussex Wildlife Trust.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO...	WHAT WE HAVE DONE...
Monitor and ensure the robustness of Conservation Area Management Plans	The National Park Authority is now involved in the management of 165 Conservation Areas designated by the previous Local Planning Authorities. Conservation Area Management Plans are designed to protect and where possible lead to better management of Conservation Areas in historic settlements – they have a 10 year life before being reviewed.
Undertake a range of projects to deliver Objective 1	Over the last year 6 projects were started relating to Objective 1. Two of these are due to run for more than a year. The total investment made by the SDNPA and our partners to these projects is £138,990. These projects focus on a variety of areas ranging from the built environment and chalk grassland, to cultural heritage and heathlands. Two of these projects are due to run for more than one year.

PROJECTS ON THE GROUND

Here are some highlights of the work carried out on the ground across the National Park during 2014–15:

ANTHOPHORA RETUSA BEE PROJECT



© Mike Edwards

We are working in partnership with the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Natural England and the National Trust to support the creation and management habitat for the potter flower bee (*Anthophora retusa*) at key sites in the Cuckmere Valley. This species has undergone a dramatic population decline since the end of World War II and is now restricted to only a few sites from Dorset across to

Sussex. Work to date has involved clearing a new ride at Seaford Head Nature Reserve to encourage the bee's food plants to grow.

BURPHAM DEW POND



In partnership with the Norfolk Estate we have funded the restoration of Burpham dew pond to add further diversity to this area of farmland which, since 2002, has seen spectacular increases in farmland birds such as the grey partridge, skylark and corn bunting. Located close to a bridleway it is clearly visible to walkers and riders to enjoy and is a reminder of the South Downs agricultural

history when such dewponds were an essential source of drinking water for sheep.

DORMOUSE MONITORING



By supplying wood to make new and replacement dormouse boxes we have helped expand the dormouse monitoring program at Binsted (a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) from 150 boxes in 2014 to 200 boxes in 2015. This is an increase of 33% which would have cost £900 if the boxes had been purchased ready made.

HIMALAYAN BALSAM CONTROL



© SDNPA/Bruce Middleton

Working in partnership with the local authorities and South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service we have cleared huge amounts of the invasive Himalayan Balsam plant along the River Rother. As part of this project we have also mapped the tributaries of the river to ascertain the extent of the issue.

MILLAND VILLAGE, INSTALLATION OF KISSING GATES FOR EASY ACCESS



© SDNPA/Angela Ward

In early 2015 we installed a number of kissing gates around the village of Milland in West Sussex, as part of the 'Miles without Stiles' project which aims to improve access across all UK National Parks. A new circular walk leaflet starting from Liphook railway station and continuing through Milland village has been produced to promote walking in the area.

MILL HILL NATURE RESERVE MANAGEMENT



For the last five years we have been implementing the management plan for Mill Hill Local Nature Reserve in partnership with Adur and Worthing Councils (who own the land), Butterfly Conservation, West Sussex County Council and the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. This has involved 156 volunteer days, scrub clearance funded by Veolia Brighton Blues Project, Adur & Worthing District Councils and the South Downs National Park Authority, annual grazing of cattle, re-fencing of the northern boundary, upgrading the access trail to 'Access For All' specification, seed collecting in partnership with Wakehurst Place, re-building 120 steps, annual butterfly and moth surveys and habitat enhancement for reptiles in partnership with the Environment Agency (Mill Hill is a translocation site for their Adur Tidal Walls Project).

SAND MARTIN NESTING



Throughout 2014–15, Rangers and Volunteers helped Bury Parish clear vegetation from the quarry face of the old disused sand pit on the edge of Lord's Piece in West Sussex. Carried out as part of the Arun and Rother Connections Project, this work resulted in a large exposed sand cliff face that will encourage sand martins to nest in the area.

SOUTH POND RESTORATION.

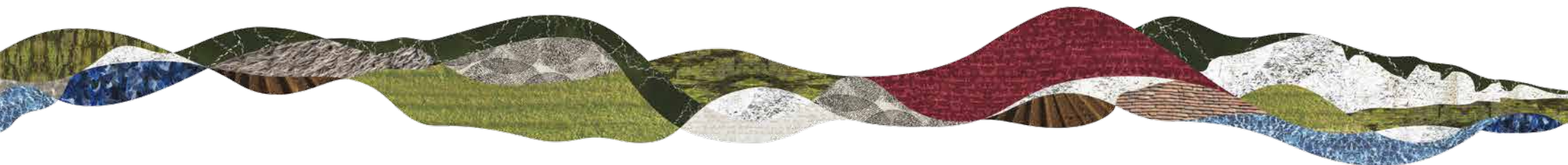


We have worked closely with the South Pond Group to create a wildlife haven in the centre of Midhurst, West Sussex. After consultation with a number of partners plans were made to dredge silt from the centre of the pond and place it around the inner edges, retained by a natural built wall, allowing sedge beds and a reed bed to be planted. Funding for this project came from a number of sources including our Sustainable Community Fund.

WILD FLOWER RESTORATION



Staff have worked with the local community and volunteers to recreate a wild flower rich sward around the 11th century St Hubert's church in East Hampshire. Not only does this improve the biodiversity and beauty of the site, the project area has the potential to be used as a seed harvesting site for further enhancement works.



WINCHESTER PARTNERSHIP

Restoring a swathe of wildlife-rich chalk grassland along the South Downs Way was always going to be ambitious. But through the combined effort and energy of a dedicated partnership we have made a really good start. The South Downs Way Ahead Nature Improvement Area (NIA) is a government-funded initiative which has restored hundreds of hectares of chalk grassland from Winchester to Eastbourne, reconnected people with this heritage and demonstrated the many benefits of grasslands which are better, bigger, more numerous and connected.

Around Winchester a partnership led by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has made excellent progress over the last year. Nature reserves such as St Catherine's Hill and Butterfly Conservation's Magdalen Hill Down are better reservoirs for rare butterflies and orchids, and are now a base for a grazing initiative deploying traditional breed cattle and sheep to neighbouring sites at risk of abandonment and loss of wildlife. We have achieved our target of improved quality of approximately 220 hectares of grassland habitat and improved connections for Duke of Burgundy butterfly populations.

The project has been ambitious but it has also demonstrated the power of partnership with each of the following playing a vital role in the project's success: the Butterfly Conservation, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre, Natural England, South Downs National Park Authority and Winchester City Council.

© Neil Hulme



SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS

We have recruited 189 volunteers to the Secrets of the High Woods project which looks to identify the heritage assets in the wooded central downs through a Lidar survey and community validation. Through partnership with the South Downs Volunteer Rangers we have delivered four introductory training days (total attendance of 85 volunteers), covering the background to volunteering with the National Park Authority in addition to more detailed information about the project and a practical exercise in landscape interpretation.

Following on from this we have delivered specific training days to 48 volunteers for field survey techniques and to 22 volunteers on archival research, including an introduction to the Wessex film archive for those interested in oral history. In addition, we also ran five full survey days for trained volunteers and held a Christmas get-together for our volunteers at which Helen Winton of the EH Aerial Survey team was our guest speaker.

We have also established a volunteer newsletter for this project with specific information regarding training and other events. Engaging with the community, training foresters and other people working in the woods, including volunteers who are working with our ranger teams, is important to ensure the wider public have an increased understanding of, and therefore respect for the heritage sites in the South Downs.

© SDNPA / Anne Purkiss



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

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

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO...	WHAT WE HAVE DONE...
Increase the number of volunteer days undertaken by the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (SDVRS)	Between April 2014 and March 2015 volunteers carried out 5,891 volunteer days – an increase of 72 days compared to the same period in 2013/14. Tasks included the clearance of encroaching scrub on chalk grassland and heathland, coppicing in woodlands, maintaining rights of ways by replacing gates and stiles, laying hedges, project work and administration at the National Park Authority offices and surveying invertebrates in streams. Volunteers work in partnership with a wide range of organisations including the National Trust, Natural England, Butterfly Conservation, County and District Councils and smaller local community groups.
Increase the proportion of visits to and within the South Downs National Park by sustainable modes of transport	Through programmes funded by government grants such as Cycling Ambition and Local Sustainable Transport Fund, we have delivered a wide range of initiatives aimed at increasing the proportion of visitors who access the South Downs National Park by sustainable modes including public transport. During 2014/15 we have completed three new cycle routes and a further seven schemes are underway and due for completion in 2015/16. See the Cycling Ambition case study on page 11 for more information.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO...	WHAT WE HAVE DONE...
Increase the number of local tourism businesses promoting the National Park and encouraging visitors to visit multiple venues	Between April and December 2014, the number of local tourism businesses promoting the National Park on the Our Land website increased from 150 to 167. Our aim is to achieve a minimum of 225 businesses promoting a range of activities in the National Park in 2015/16.
Undertake a range of projects to deliver Objective 2	Over the last year, 5 projects were started relating to Objective 2. Four of these are due to run for more than a year. The total investment made by the SDNPA and our partners to these projects is £151,574. These projects focus on a variety of areas including art, cycling, health and wellbeing, education, outdoor learning, sustainable transport, and geocaching.

OUR SOUTH DOWNS TEACHERS' CONFERENCE

This annual conference offers a forum for teachers from across the area to learn about the wealth of outdoor learning provision on their doorsteps. The event is part of our wider Our South Downs approach to delivering local, outdoor learning across the curriculum to over 730 schools in and around the National Park.

This year's event focused on local learning in partnership and saw 72 delegates from 61 schools attending, along with over 30 outdoor learning providers who showcased their wares in two busy market-places. 11 workshops covering a diverse selection of themes from Riveting Rivers to Poo and Paw prints, Landscapes Alive to Campfire Carbon Calculators were delivered by our local experts in the field.

Mark Sears, Director of the Wild Network was our key-note speaker encouraging the audience to take a closer look at the amount of #wildtime we are providing for children (and ourselves), drawing upon the ever-growing body of evidence that supports our drive to reconnect children to nature.

Support from senior staff within schools is crucial to being able to deliver a local, outdoor curriculum, and to that end we were delighted to have Jonathan Culley, Headteacher of Easebourne School, to deliver the second key-note address taking us on a journey of making connections with nature at the grass roots level, with great anecdotes and practical advice.

"Fantastic day, very well-organised and run. It's good to see such a fantastic National Park establishing firm links with education, which hopefully in turn will provide Outdoor Education opportunities and provisions. Thank you."





CYCLING AMBITION

The Cycling Ambition programme is changing the way visitors travel to and around the National Park. Our new and improved multi-user routes across the National Park connect communities in urban areas with the countryside and enable commuting and utility journeys between villages, transport gateways and employment centres. Making more journeys by sustainable modes and fewer by car is a step on our journey towards a modal shift amongst visitors and residents in the National Park.

Our Cycling Ambition schemes involve creating car-free access into the South Downs National Park via railway station 'Gateways', such as Barnham and Petersfield stations, as well as developing new recreational routes such as the riverside Egret's Way. Many of the routes are being delivered by our local authority partners. Three routes were completed in the period up to April 2015 and a further seven schemes are underway and due for completion in 2015/16. Examples of schemes include:

Ditchling Road multi user path an off road path along Ditchling Rd linking to cycle routes from Brighton station. This was completed in October 2014 *(Lead: Brighton and Hove City Council)*

Cycle path from **Barnham railway station into the South Downs National Park** – currently under construction and due to be completed by the end of 2015. *(Lead: West Sussex County Council)*

Cycle path from **Petersfield to Queen Elizabeth Country Park** – detailed design work has been completed and works are due to start and complete by the end of 2015. *(Lead: Hampshire County Council)*

Ringmer to Lewes segregated cycle path (an identified commuter route into Lewes) – work started in October 2014 and completed in April 2015. *(Lead: East Sussex County Council)*

Downs Link multi-user path crossing the A283 at Bramber – a new section provides an alternative and safe route to crossing the busy A283 via an underpass, providing a link to the South Downs Way National Trail. This work is due to be completed in summer 2015. *(Lead: West Sussex County Council)*

Meon Valley Trail multi-user Right of Way upgrade – the surface upgrade and route enhancement is underway and due to complete in the summer of 2015. *(Lead: Hampshire County Council)*

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

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

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO...	WHAT WE HAVE DONE...	WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO...	WHAT WE HAVE DONE...
Increase the number of stakeholders who are aware of and using our shared identity to raise the profile of the National Park in their venues or communities	We are working with three key partners on projects to showcase how the new National Park identity can be used across different organisations. We have also begun rolling out the identity via the new National Park website, our walk and ride leaflets, our annual free newspaper South Downs View and throughout the South Downs Centre reception buildings and offices.	Work towards setting up the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	This year we have had two key areas of focus – producing a charging schedule, and producing an infrastructure delivery plan listing projects across the National Park which we think could receive CIL funding. The CIL charging schedule is currently being developed and will be delivered during 2015/16 and published on the National Park website. The first draft of the infrastructure delivery plan will be ready by summer 2015 and will be published alongside the Local Plan preferred options.
Increase the number of the target audience reached by our sustainable behaviour campaigns	In 2014, 29,257 people viewed the Sussex Festival of Nature video and the Take the Lead film. In addition, 23 people volunteered themselves and their dogs as case studies on the back of the Take the Lead campaign and 512 tickets were redeemed for 2for1 travel to the Sussex Festival of Nature. 7,201 people bought either a family, child or adult 'Discovery' bus ticket – a major objective for the National Park.	Undertake a range of projects to deliver Objective 3	Over the last year, 11 projects were started relating to Objective 3. Nine of these are due to run for more than a year. The total investment made by the SDNPA and our partners to these projects is £132,649. These projects focused on a range of areas such as the reduction of sediment in rivers, green infrastructure, food and drink tourism, and increasing broadband coverage.

FOOD AND DRINK PORTAL

Food and drink businesses in the South Downs National Park are getting a free publicity boost through a new online directory and networking service to help promote their produce to local people and visitors.

Any food business within a ten-mile radius of the National Park – from country pubs and farm shops to farmers markets and wine tasting – can register their business at southdownsfood.org. The site will give visitors, residents and businesses quick access to accurate information about the food and drink available in the South Downs.

From artisan cheese, wild venison, micro-breweries and some of the best sparkling wines in the world, the South Downs should be recognized for high-quality, sustainable food alongside its spectacular beauty and tranquil spaces. By showcasing the wonderful produce available, this site will help support local businesses to work together to share and overcome their day-to-day challenges.



Over the last year we have been working in partnership with Southern Cooperative to develop the portal which is due to launch to the public in summer 2015. The process in delivering the portal has been guided by Natural Partnerships CIC, a not for profit partnership with extensive experience in the local food scene.

Southdownsfood.org promises to be more than just a food directory, it will also come with quarterly news releases, develop a programme of networking events and activities to help local businesses link-up and work together, and provide the basis of a joint marketing platform for local produce from the South Downs National Park and beyond to compete with national retail chains.



FAMILY WILD CLUB

In 2014/15 a total of **£224,156** was granted to 36 community led projects through the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF).

An excellent example of how this fund can give smaller projects a real boost is the Family Wild Club run by Project Grow in Hollingdean, Brighton. This new organisation was offered a £5,000 grant to develop a pilot project using the National Park to address a variety of issues relating to high levels of deprivation and low levels of social and economic wellbeing and community cohesion.

Family Wild Club aims to give families the confidence and skills to use the National Park and experience the positive impact it can have on their wellbeing. Working with the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Project Grow delivered a seven week programme for eight parent and child families at a local copse within the National Park. Programme content included bush-craft, green woodworking, nature identification, cooking and art with Forest School Level 1 qualifications being offered to three unemployed parents.

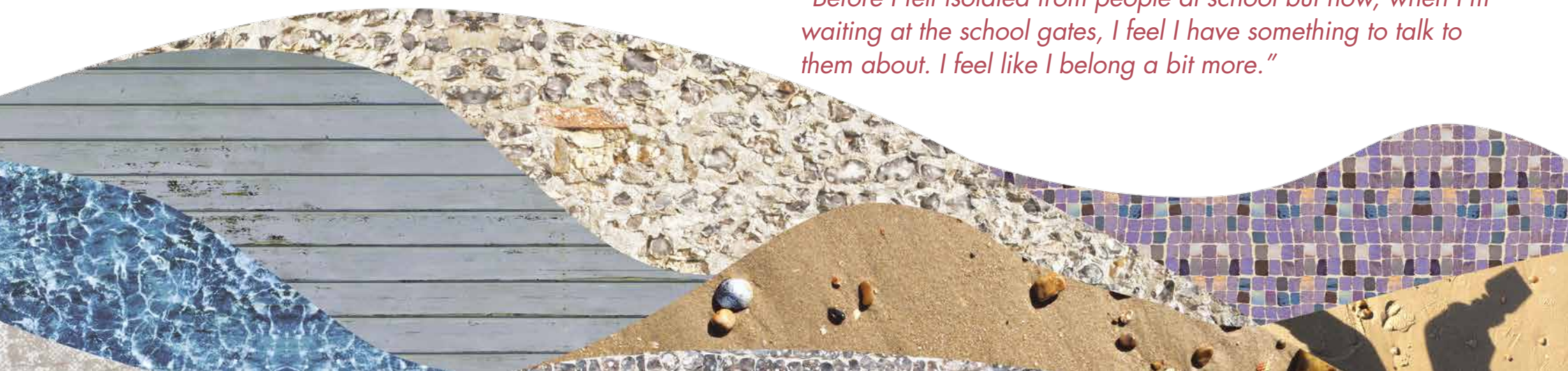


SDNPA staff supported the development of this project and encouraged partnership working whilst strong evaluation was carried out with support from Brighton University.

The success of this project has enabled Project Grow to work with our education partners Learning Through Landscapes to continue to deliver the project in different ways.

"I want to join the "friends of the woods" group so I can spend more time with my family outdoors."

"Before I felt isolated from people at school but now, when I'm waiting at the school gates, I feel I have something to talk to them about. I feel like I belong a bit more."



LOCAL PLAN – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The National Park Authority is working on the first ever Local Plan to cover all of the South Downs National Park from Winchester to Eastbourne. It will replace a myriad of joint core strategies and local plans that currently provide the planning policy framework for the National Park.

There was a public consultation in spring 2014 on Issues and Options for the Local Plan. The Authority has taken on board all the comments received and also held numerous parish workshops to get feedback on the Issues and Options.

The Local Plan takes an Ecosystem Services approach. Its foundation is the need to conserve the important processes or services the National Park provides that benefit people and the economy, ranging from food, access, timber and wildlife to people's experiences of the landscapes tranquillity in the National Park.

The Local Plan has three themes namely:

- A Thriving Living Landscape
- People Connected with Places
- Towards a Sustainable Future

These are the same themes that are set out in the Partnership Management Plan, which in turn are based on the Purposes and Duty which apply in all National Parks.

A comprehensive set of planning policies are set out under these headings ranging from those on dark night skies and tranquillity to sustainable economic development and housing. Land is allocated for housing and other uses on a small number of strategic and other sites.

Your views are vital. You can feed back on the emerging (Preferred Options stage) of the South Downs Local Plan between 2 September and 28 October. Submit your comments via the online consultation portal at southdowns.gov.uk/localplanconsultation or send your comments directly to the South Downs National Park offices in Midhurst. We will also be holding a number of roadshows across the National Park.

Once we have received all of the feedback we will produce another draft and there will be a final opportunity for you to input on this next year. We are hoping to have this first South Downs Local Plan in place by 2017.



HOW THE AUTHORITY IS FUNDED

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

In 2014–15 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) received a grant totalling just under £10million. This was the largest grant of any National Park Authority in England, reflecting the geographic spread and population of the South Downs and the size of our planning caseload.

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 2014–15 the SDNPA received income of over £1.1m through planning activities.

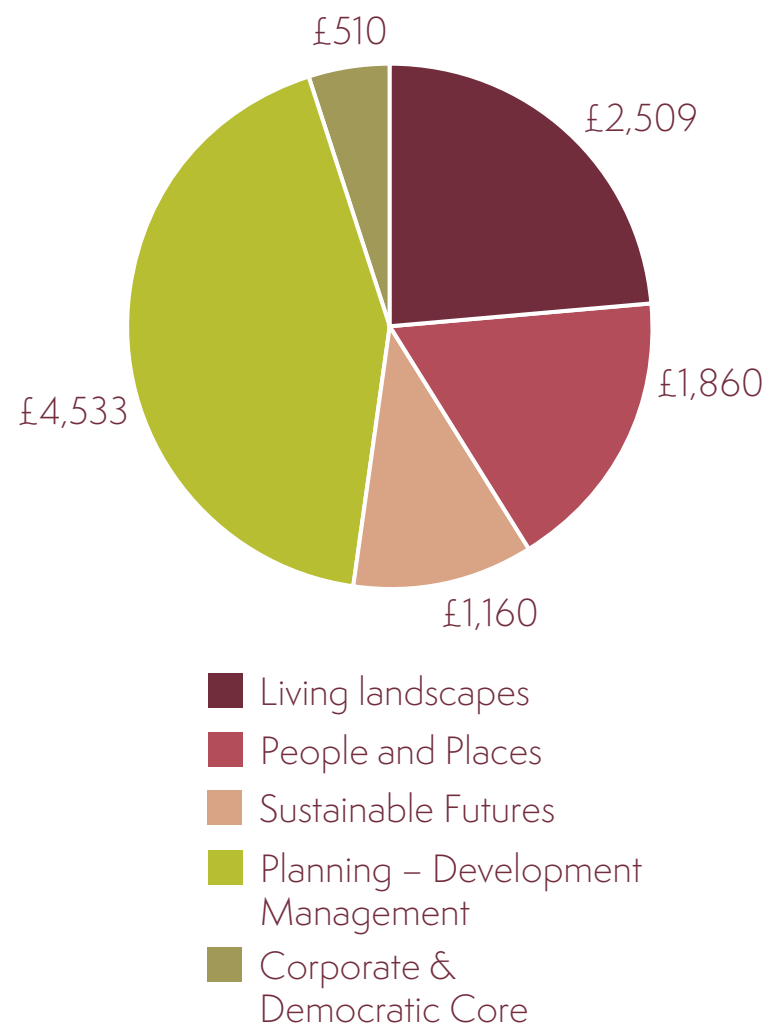
The SDNPA was also successful at attracting significant funding for projects to deliver the Partnership Management Plan. During 2014–15 the SDNPA received almost £1.4million of income through specific grants in addition to fund secured by other partners to deliver work in the National Park.

In total the income received by the South Downs National Park Authority in 2014–15 was just short of £12.5million.

HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT

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

SDNPA Spend 2014–15 (£000s)



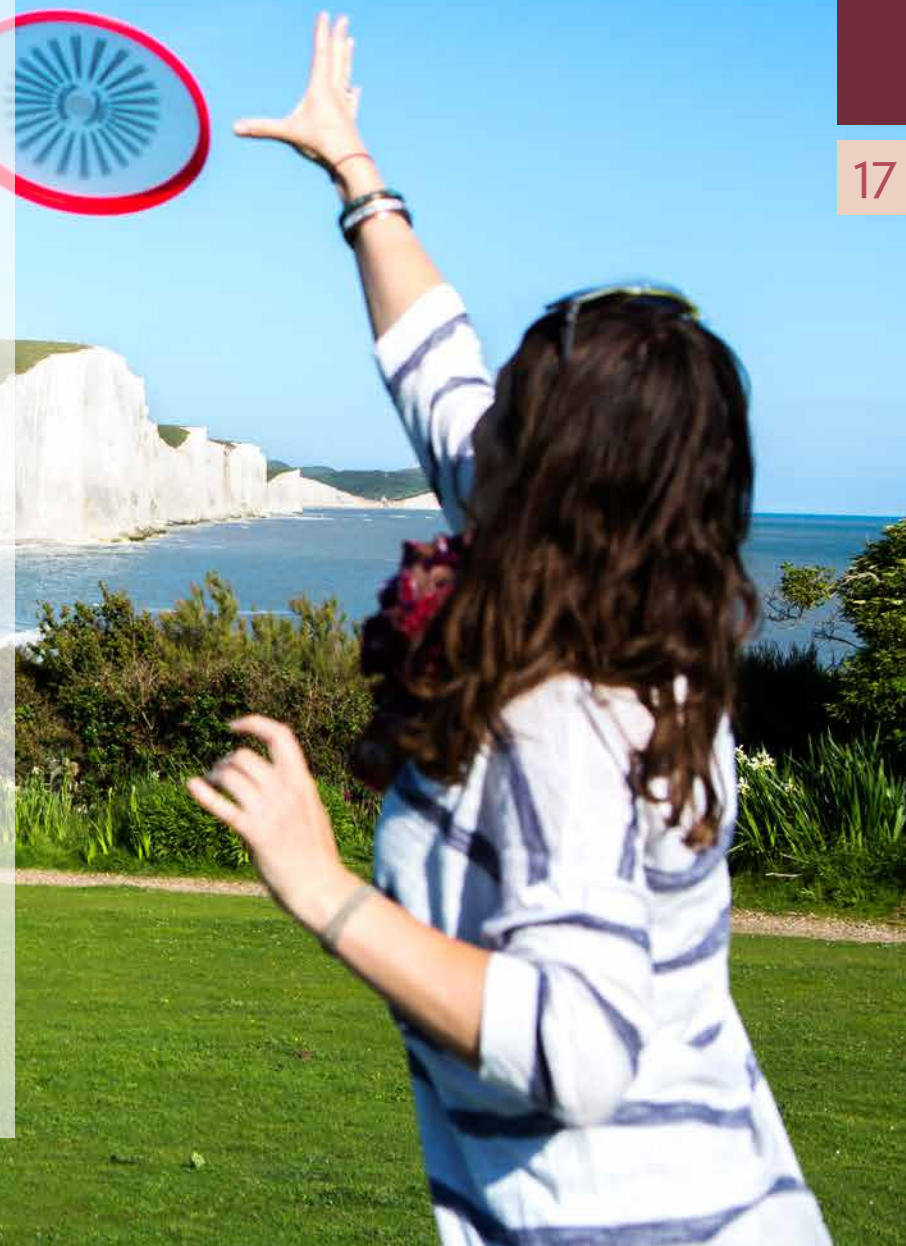
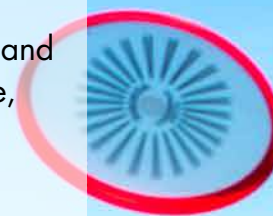
THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK VISION

By 2050 in the South Downs National Park:

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

For more information on how we and our partners are delivering this vision please have a look at the following documents:

- Partnership Management Plan 2014–19
- State of the National Park Report 2012
- Corporate Plan 2014–17





SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

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For your guide to everything there is to
see and do in the National Park visit
southdowns.gov.uk/discovery-map