

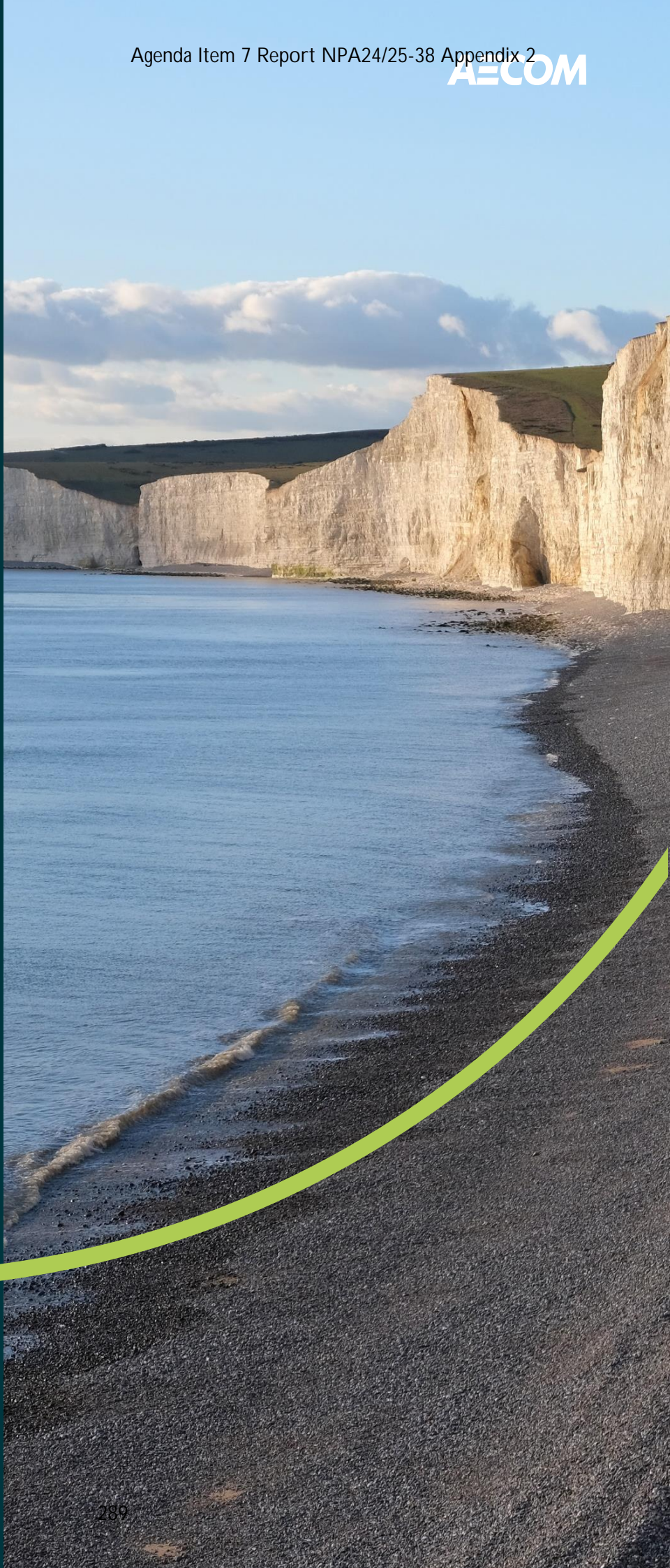
Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for the South Downs National Park Management Plan

IIA Report to Accompany the Draft Version of the PMP

South Downs National Park Authority

Project number: 60736597

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Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for
the South Downs National Park
Management Plan

Quality information

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Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) in support of the emerging South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan review (PMP).

The PMP is being developed in accordance with the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Environment Act 1995. It is also aligned with the local development framework for the South Downs National Park.

What is an Integrated Impact Assessment?

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is a mechanism for assessing and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives, with a view to achieving sustainable development. IIA fulfils the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and discharges the duties for Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

This IIA Report, which is the main output of the IIA process, accompanies the draft PMP for consultation in Summer 2025.

Overview of the Draft PMP

Every National Park authority in the UK is required under the Environment Act 1995 to produce a National Park Management Plan (NPMP), and update it every five years. This document should outline the vision, objectives, and actions necessary to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of a national park, focusing on sustainable management practices and addressing the needs of visitors and local communities.

The NPMP provides strategic guidance for the National Park authority and its partners. While the NPMP is not a statutory planning document, it is a key document for the National Park through setting out what the National Park authority and partners across the National Park will deliver together over the five-year period. The first South Downs National Park Management Plan was adopted by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) in 2013. The most recent version of the National Park Management Plan was adopted in 2019 to cover the period 2020-2025; therefore, the Plan is now being reviewed and updated to ensure it remains relevant, effective, and aligned with current priorities for the National Park.

Further information on the content and objectives of the draft PMP is discussed in **Chapter 2 and 4** of the main body in the IIA report.

Structure of this IIA Report / Non-Technical Summary

In line with the provisions of the SEA Regulations, this IIA Report has been structured as follows:

- **Chapter 3** presents an overview of the scoping process for the SEA.
- **Chapters 4** presents an assessment of two of alternative approaches relating to the key aspects of the PMP for which proposals have been developed. These have been assessed as reasonable alternatives.
- **Chapter 5** presents an assessment of the current policies and proposals, in terms of their likely significant environmental effects.
- **Chapter 6** presents the next steps for the PMP and a discussion on monitoring.

What is the Scope of the IIA?

A Scoping Report was prepared for the IIA in March 2025. The purpose of this report was to outline the 'scope' of the IIA through setting out the following information:

- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional, and local plans and strategies relevant to the PMP;
- Baseline data against which the PMP can be assessed;
- The key sustainability issues for the PMP; and
- An 'IIA Framework' of objectives against which the PMP can be assessed.

The SEA statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England) were consulted on the scope of the IIA in March 2025. Their comments have been incorporated into the latest version of the Report (see **Appendix A**).

The key environmental issues identified in the Scoping Report have been translated into an IIA 'Framework' of objectives and assessment questions. The IIA Framework provides a way in which the likely significant environmental effects of the draft PMP proposals and alternatives can be identified and subsequently analysed based on a structured and consistent approach.

The IIA Framework for the PMP and the assessment findings in this IIA Report have been presented under eleven overarching IIA themes. The IIA Framework is presented below (supporting questions can be found in **Chapter 3** of the main body in the IIA report).

IIA Theme	IIA Objective
Biodiversity and Nature Recovery	Protect and enhance the South Downs National Park's biodiversity and ecosystems, supporting nature recovery and resilience to environmental pressures.
Climate Change	(Mitigation) Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities in the National Park.
	(Adaptation) Support the resilience of the National Park to the potential effects of climate change, including flood risk.
Communities, Health & Wellbeing	Promote thriving communities that support health, wellbeing, and access to services for all.
Design Standards	Ensure that new development respects and enhances the distinctive character, appearance, and heritage of the South Downs National Park, while incorporating high-quality, sustainable, and climate-resilient design.
Employment and Economy	Support a resilient, diverse, and sustainable local economy that provides high-quality employment opportunities, enhances rural business, and fosters green growth.
Equalities and Inclusion	Promote equal and inclusive access to the National Park's natural, cultural, and community assets.
Historic and Cultural Heritage	Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the National Park.
Housing	Ensure that housing development are sustainable and meet the needs of local communities.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape of the South Downs.
Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources	Ensure the sustainable use and protection of natural resources.
Transport	Promote sustainable transport use, reduce car dependency, and improve accessibility throughout the National Park.

Approach to the Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives

The assessment of ‘reasonable alternatives’ is a key element of the IIA process to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations. The SEA Regulations state that the Environmental Report (which is the main output of the SEA process) should “*identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of – (a) implementing the plan or programme; and (b) reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme.*”

The SEA Regulations are not prescriptive as to what constitutes a reasonable alternative. However, the assessment undertaken through the IIA should focus on the key choices to be made through the PMP, whilst also recognising the broad character and scope of the PMP as a strategic-level plan.

Two key areas were identified and assessed as reasonable alternatives. Further details on the alternatives and how they were selected are provided in **Chapter 4** of the main body.

Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives for the Draft PMP

Options Relating to Trees/Woodland in the SDNP

In 2020, South Downs National Park Authority committed to becoming a Net Zero organisation by 2030 and achieving a ‘Net-Zero with Nature’ park by 2040, guided by an annually updated Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. As part of this, and in alignment with the PLTOF Target 8 to increase tree and woodland cover by 3% by 2050, the Authority is exploring approaches to enhance tree cover beyond national targets to support climate mitigation and adaptation.

The IIA has assessed the following two options as ‘reasonable alternatives’:

- Option TW1: Increase tree canopy and woodland cover across the National Park in line with PLTOF Target 8.
- Option TW2: Increase tree canopy and woodland cover across the National Park by an amount which exceeds the increase required to deliver PLTOF Target 8.

The assessment found that while Option TW2 offers a number of beneficial effects when compared to TW1 (such as increased carbon sequestration and climate resilience) it risks harming the National Park’s Special Qualities if afforestation exceeds PLTOF Target 8. To avoid undermining the Park’s conservation purpose, both options require careful planning of woodland creation to balance climate benefits with landscape and biodiversity impacts.

Options Relating to Water Resource Management and Flood Risk

Since the adoption of the 2020-2025 PMP, there has been increased focus on catchment management and flood risk, with six catchment partnerships now operating across the National Park. The PMP may consider expanding partnership-led approaches to water resource management and flood risk, with two options being explored to assess the sustainability benefits of this approach versus the current plan.

The IIA has assessed the following two options as ‘reasonable alternatives’:

- **Option CM1:** Deliver the current approach to water resources set out by the PMP 2020-2025, which recognises the interplays between soil and water by seeking to reduce soil erosion, improving carbon capture and filtration and reconnecting wetland habitats.
- **Option CM2:** Bring together a catchment management partnership approach to water resource and flood risk management across the National Park, building on the approach being taken forward by the current PMP.

The assessment found that both options support positive outcomes, but Option CM2 improves upon Option CM1 by providing additional environmental benefits, such as enhanced water quality, better resilience to climate change, and protection of archaeological heritage. Option CM2 offers a more comprehensive and effective approach, performing better across all IIA themes without significant negative effects.

Appraisal of the Draft PMP

The objectives and associated actions within the PMP are expected to lead to **significant, direct, long-term, beneficial effects across most IIA themes**, including Climate Change, Communities and Health, Employment and Economy, Equalities and Inclusion, Historic and Cultural Heritage, Housing, Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources, and Transport.

Moderate, medium-term benefits are expected for **Design Standards**, while **mixed effects** are anticipated for **Biodiversity and Nature Recovery** and **Landscape**, with both beneficial outcomes (conservation and engagement) and some very limited potential adverse impacts (environmental degradation and new infrastructure).

No significant adverse effects are considered likely in implementation of the PMP.

The IIA puts forward the following recommendations for consideration by plan makers to inform policy development:

- Objective 1.1 may be strengthened by referencing the National Park's Special Qualities, to ensure that the conservation of these qualities is directly linked to habitat and nature management. For example, the objective could be reworded to: *"To improve, expand, connect and increase the resilience of wildlife-rich habitats and land managed for nature, **in ways that conserve and enhance the National Park's Special Qualities**, ensuring we are on track to reach 60% managed for nature by 2060"*.
- Objective 5.1 may be strengthened with a greater emphasis on impact management, helping to balance accessibility with the protection of the National Park's most sensitive features. For example, the objective could be reworded to: *"To improve the accessibility of the National Park to enable everyone to actively travel and connect with nature, **while managing visitor pressure to protect sensitive habitats and landscapes**"*.

Monitoring

The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.

It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the PMP will be undertaken collectively by South Downs National Park Authority and its partners, drawing on their respective monitoring processes. This may include data from relevant local council's Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs), as well as other relevant reporting undertaken by statutory agencies, land managers, and community organisations. No significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the PMP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken.

Next Steps

Following consultation on the draft PMP, responses will be considered in finalising the PMP and the accompanying IIA. The final version of the PMP and supporting evidence will then be published. Unlike Local Plans, the PMP is not subject to Independent Examination or a legal test of soundness but must demonstrate alignment with national policy and relevant statutory purposes for National Parks.

Once finalised, the PMP will be adopted by the South Downs National Park Authority. Upon adoption, it will guide the management of the National Park, setting strategic priorities for conservation and sustainable development within the National Park.

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The SEA Regulations require that a 'statement' be made available to accompany the final PMP, as soon as possible after its adoption. The purpose of this IIA Adoption Statement will be to outline how the IIA process has influenced and informed the PMP's development process and demonstrate how consultation on the SEA has been considered.

To meet these requirements, an IIA Adoption Statement will be published with the final PMP. The IIA Adoption Statement will set out: the reasons for choosing the preferred policies and proposals in light of other reasonable alternatives; how environmental considerations were integrated into the policies and proposals' development process; how consultation responses were considered; and the measures decided for monitoring the significant effects of the policies and proposals.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) in support of the emerging South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan review (PMP).
- 1.1.2. The PMP is being developed in accordance with the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Environment Act 1995. It is also aligned with the local development framework for the South Downs National Park.
- 1.1.3. The South Downs National Park is England's newest national park, having been designated in 2010. Its boundary is depicted in **Figure 1-1**.

1.2. What is a National Park Management Plan?

- 1.2.1. Every National Park authority in the UK is required under the Environment Act 1995 to produce a National Park Management Plan (NPMP), and update it every five years. This document should outline the vision, objectives, and actions necessary to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of a national park, focusing on sustainable management practices and addressing the needs of visitors and local communities.
- 1.2.2. The NPMP provides strategic guidance for the National Park authority and its partners. While the NPMP is not a statutory planning document, it is a key document for the National Park through setting out what the National Park authority and partners across the National Park will deliver together over the five-year period. The first South Downs National Park Management Plan was adopted by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) in 2013.
- 1.2.3. In addition to a NPMP, each National Park authority is responsible for preparing a Local Plan. A Local Plan is a statutory document developed under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.¹ It sets out detailed policies for land use, housing, infrastructure, economic development, and environmental protection within the National Park. Planning decisions must align with the Local Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, ensuring that development is managed in a sustainable and coordinated manner.

¹ UK Government (2004). '*Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*' can be accessed through [this link](#).

Table 1-1: Key Facts Relating to the PMP

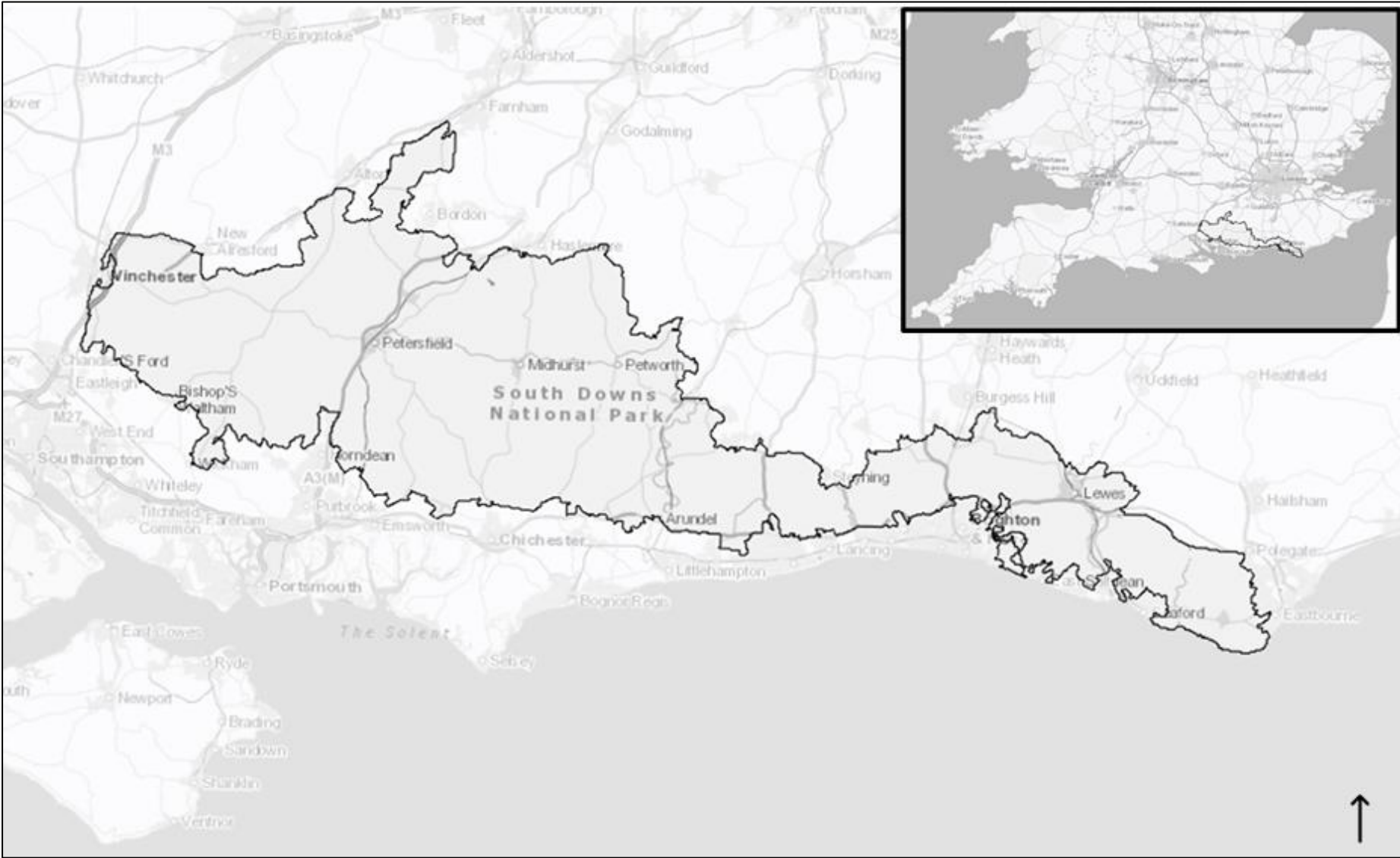
Name of Responsible Authority	South Downs National Park Authority
Title of Plan	South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2026-31 (PMP)
Subject	National Park Management Plan
Purpose	The PMP is being prepared as a management plan under the in accordance with the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Environment Act 1995. Each National Park Authority is required under these provisions to develop and monitor a Partnership Management Plan for the landscape it oversees. The PMP will be used to guide the conservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of the National Park, ensuring the protection of natural and cultural resources while balancing the needs of visitors and local communities.
Timescale	2025 to 2030
Planning context	The local planning policy framework for the National Park consists of the South Downs Local Plan ² , county-level minerals and waste plans ³ and neighbourhood plans. The PMP will be a material consideration in planning decisions and the Local Plan and other spatial plans will be a means of delivering aspects of it.
Area covered by the plan	The South Downs National Park is located in the south-east of England. Counties (and districts) that overlap with the National Park designation include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Hampshire (Winchester; East Hampshire) – West Sussex (Chichester; Arun; Adur; Horsham; Worthing; Mid Sussex) – East Sussex (Lewes; Wealden; Eastbourne). The unitary authority of Brighton and Hove also overlaps with the National Park.
Summary of content	The PMP will set out a vision, strategy, and range of outcomes for the National Park. The vision, aims and objectives are discussed in Chapter 2 below.

² South Downs National Park (no date). 'South Downs Local Plan and Policies Map 2014-2033' can be accessed through [this link](#).

³ South Downs National Park (no date). 'Minerals & Waste Plans' can be accessed through [this link](#).

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for the
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Figure 1-1: Area covered by the South Downs National Park⁴



1.3. IIA Explained

- 1.3.1. Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is a mechanism for assessing and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives, with a view to achieving sustainable development. IIA fulfils the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and discharges the duties for Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Health Impact Assessment (HIA). For more detail see the Scoping Report for the PMP (attached as **Appendix A**).
- 1.3.2. The aim of the IIA is to inform plan-making both directly (i.e. through structured, systematic and evidence-based analysis), and indirectly (through providing stakeholders with information on potential plan impacts and so facilitating effective consultation).
- 1.3.3. The use of an IIA approach helps ensure consistency in the development and evaluation of the PMP and is considered best practice.
- 1.3.4. Undertaken through an SEA-led methodology, the IIA incorporates an HIA and EqIA. In addition, a parallel Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process has been undertaken to support the development of the PMP and is reported on separately.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 1.3.5. SEA is undertaken to address the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('the SEA Regulations'). It also widens the scope of the assessment from focusing on environmental issues to further consider social and economic issues. The SEA Regulations only formally apply to plans and programmes for which there is a statutory requirement; national park management plans fall within this definition.
- 1.3.6. Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
- When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues; and
 - A report (the 'Environmental Report') is published for consultation alongside the draft plan for consultation that presents an assessment of the draft plan (i.e. discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

- 1.3.7. As a public sector organisation, South Downs National Park Authority has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 and the associated Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to ensure that the objectives and policy options within the District eliminate unlawful discrimination (direct and indirect), as well as advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between those with a protected characteristics and all others. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is often used by public sector organisations to demonstrate how this duty has been met.
- 1.3.8. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination both in the workplace and in wider society. It replaces previous anti-discrimination laws which include the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Act ensures that individuals with certain 'protected characteristics' are not indirectly or directly discriminated against. The protected characteristics include:
- **Age:** this refers to persons defined by either a particular age or a range of ages;
 - **Disability:** a disabled person is defined as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities;
 - **Gender reassignment:** this refers to people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process for the purpose of reassigning their gender identity;
 - **Marriage and civil partnership:** marriage can be between a man and a woman or between two people of the same sex. Same-sex couples can also have a civil partnership. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples;
 - **Pregnancy and maternity:** pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth;
 - **Race:** the Equality Act 2010 defines race as encompassing colour, nationality (including citizenship) and ethnic or national origins;
 - **Religion or belief:** religion means any religion a person follows. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief, and includes those people who have no formal religion or belief;

- **Gender:** this refers to a man or to a woman or a group of people of the same sex, while gender refers to the wider social roles and relationships that structure men's and women's, boys' and girls' lives;
- **Sexual orientation:** a person's sexual orientation relates to their emotional, physical and/or sexual attraction and the expression of that attraction.
- **Socio-economic status:** a person's socio-economic status referring to combined economic and sociological measure of a person's work experience and economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

- 1.3.9. There are numerous links between planning and health highlighted throughout the NPPF. For example, Paragraph 96 of the NPPF states that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities and the NPPG states that Local Planning Authorities should ensure that health and wellbeing, and health infrastructure are considered in plans and in planning decision-making. Health Impact Assessment (HIA), therefore, is a process which seeks to ensure that the effect of proposals on both health, and health inequalities, are considered and responded to during a plan's development process. It helps to identify the positive impacts, and minimise the negative impacts, of a project or plan, with a view to informing decision making.
- 1.3.10. In the context of this PMP, an HIA provides a means of considering how policies and actions may support the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors. This reflects the role of National Parks in promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Special Qualities of the area, and in contributing to wider public health outcomes.

1.4. This IIA Report

- 1.4.1. It is a requirement that the IIA process is undertaken in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, 'the SEA Regulations'.
- 1.4.2. The SEA Regulations stipulate that a report (the IIA Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that '*identifies, describes, and evaluates*' the likely significant effects of implementing '*the plan, and*

*reasonable alternative*⁵ The report must then be considered when finalising the plan.

1.4.3. This report is the IIA Report for the PMP. It is published alongside the draft version of the PMP, which will undergo consultation in Summer 2025.

1.5. Structure of this IIA Report

1.5.1. This IIA Report incorporates the information required for Environmental Reports by the SEA Regulations. The information presented in this IIA Report is outlined in **Table 1-2**.

Table 1-2: Questions that must be answered by the IIA Report to meet the regulatory⁶ requirements

IIA Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ⁷
What is the plan seeking to achieve?	An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan.
What is the sustainability 'context'?	Relationship with other relevant plans and programmes. The relevant environmental protection objectives , established at international or national level. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.
What is the sustainability 'baseline'?	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance.

⁵ Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

⁶ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

⁷ NB this column does not quote directly from Schedule II of the Regulations. Rather, it reflects a degree of interpretation.

IIA Report question	In line with the SEA Regulations, the report must include... ⁷
What are the key issues and objectives?	Key problems/issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
What has plan-making/SEA involved up to this point?	Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with. The likely significant effects associated with alternatives . Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives appraisal/a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft version of the plan.
What are the assessment findings at this stage?	The likely significant effects associated with the draft version of the plan . The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft version of the plan .
What happens next?	The next steps for the plan making / SEA process.

2. Vision, Aims and Objectives of the PMP

2.1. Vision

2.1.1. The vision for the PMP captures the community's views and aspirations for the national park. It forms the basis on which the PMP's priorities for the next five years have been formulated.

2.1.2. The 2060 vision is as follows:

“The South Downs National Park is a vibrant home for nature and people where wildlife flourishes, clean water flows and the dark night skies are filled with stars. The landscape engages positively with climate change and sits at the heart of thriving communities and a green rural economy. Shaped by stories old and new, this place inspires everyone to connect, care and belong.”

2.2. Aims and Objectives

2.2.1. The PMP includes seven aims and 15 objectives that sit under two key, intertwined themes (Nature & Climate and People & Place). The PMP's aims and objectives are as follows:

- Aim 1: Nature Recovery: The National Park is a nature-rich, resilient working landscape where wildlife flourishes.
 - Objective 1.1: To improve, expand, connect and increase the resilience of wildlife-rich habitats and land managed for nature to ensure we are on track to reach 60% managed for nature by 2060.
 - Objective 1.2: To support land-based businesses to thrive as economically viable, nature-friendly, climate positive food and drink producers.
 - Objective 1.3: Improve and manage existing nature-rich sites – protected sites and priority habitats.
- Aim 2: Climate Action: The South Downs National Park is on track to become net zero by 2040 by mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.
 - Objective 2:1 To support businesses and local communities to take positive climate action to ensure they are adapted and resilient to climate change.

- Objective 2.2: To support land managers, farmers, foresters and landowners in their aspirations to deliver nature recovery and climate action on their land.
- Aim 3: Clean Water: Clean, abundant water supports nature and communities in the South Downs and beyond.
 - Objective 3.1: To support catchment-based partnership approaches to water management so that nature and communities can thrive, and flood risk is reduced.
 - Objective 3.2: To improve the condition of the water environment to ensure enough clean water for nature and people, and water habitats are restored
- Aim 4: Young People: Young people will have opportunities to access training and skills to enable them to take action to care for and enhance the National Park.
 - Objective 4.1: To provide opportunities for young people to take positive action for nature, climate and heritage.
 - Objective 4.2: To support young people on the pathway to green careers.
- Aim 5: Welcome and Access: A valued South Downs is welcoming and accessible to all.
 - Objective 5.1: To improve the accessibility of the National Park to enable everyone to actively travel and connect with nature.
 - Objective 5.2: To maintain our International Dark Sky Reserve status to support nature recovery and improve understanding of and access to dark skies for all.
- Aim 6: Arts and Heritage: Cultural Heritage is conserved, understood, valued, created and passed on for future generations.
 - Objective 6.1: To enhance the cultural heritage of the National Park and tell its diverse stories as a dynamic and ever-changing landscape.
 - Objective 6.2: To support partnerships that enable people to connect to the landscape and its special qualities through creative arts and heritage.
- Aim 7: A thriving, greener place: A thriving rural economy and local communities sit at the heart of the National Park.
 - Objective 7.1: To support the growth of a greener economy across the National Park while providing outstanding visitor experiences that benefit our communities and landscape.

- Objective 7.2: To support the needs of local communities through affordable, accessible and low-carbon housing.

3. What is the Scope of the IIA?

3.1. Summary of IIA Scoping

- 3.1.1. A Scoping Report was prepared for the IIA in March 2025. The purpose of this report was to outline the ‘scope’ of the IIA through setting out the following information:
- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional, and local plans and strategies relevant to the PMP;
 - Baseline data against which the PMP can be assessed;
 - The key sustainability issues for the PMP; and
 - An ‘IIA Framework’ of objectives against which the PMP can be assessed.
- 3.1.2. Baseline information (including the context review and environmental baseline) is available to view in the IIA Scoping Report (see **Appendix A**).
- 3.1.3. The SEA Regulations require that: *“When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”*. In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England.⁸ These authorities were consulted on the scope of the IIA in March 2025.
- 3.1.4. Responses received on the Scoping Report, and how they were addressed, have been summarised in **Table 3-1**. The Scoping Report attached as **Appendix A** has been amended based on the consultation responses.

IIA Framework

- 3.1.5. The IIA Framework provides a way in which environmental effects can be defined and subsequently analysed based on standard ‘tests’. Each proposal within the current version (i.e., the draft version) of the PMP will be assessed consistently using the framework.
- 3.1.6. The updated IIA Framework (including amendments following statutory consultation) is presented in **Table 3-2**.

⁸ In-line with Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected because ‘by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programme’.

Table 3-1: Consultation responses received on the IIA Scoping Report

Consultation Response	How the Response was Considered and Addressed
Historic England	
A.B., Historic Places Adviser (response received on 21 March 2025)	
<p><i>‘...We are content that the IIA scoping report for South Downs Partnership Management Plan incorporating requirements the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) adequately covers the issues that may arise in respect of the potential effects of proposed development sites on heritage assets.’</i></p>	Comment noted.
Natural England	
J.D., Higher Officer - Sustainable Development, Sussex and Kent Area Team (response received on 21 March 2025)	
<p>Overall we welcome the overarching sustainability themes and issues identified within the report, as they cover most of the natural environment issues and areas within our remit. However, there are a further sustainability issues (constraints and/or objectives) within each theme that should be considered within the IIA, or given added clarity. We include comments on these further areas for consideration with the IIA Framework below.</p>	Comment noted.
<p>1. Internationally designated sites – We note that the Biodiversity and Nature Recovery theme highlights nationally and locally designated sites, but not internationally designated sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites). We advise that the supporting question is amended to include consideration of internationally designated sites.</p>	Noted. Supporting question amended.
<p>2. Ancient woodland – We note that several threats to woodland habitat have been identified in the key sustainability issues section, but that there is no specific reference to ancient woodland, and other irreplaceable habitats. As noted in the Environmental Baseline report, the SDNP hosts a significant amount of ancient woodland. A suitable supporting question should added ensuring the protection and enhancement of ancient woodland and other irreplaceable habitats.</p>	Noted. Supporting question added.

Consultation Response

**How the Response was
 Considered and Addressed**

<p>3. Ecological networks – In some situations, there is a risk that development on land of limited biodiversity value in its own right can lead to the creation of islands of biodiversity, which are permanently severed from other areas. We thus suggest adding the following supporting question: <i>‘Ensure current ecological networks are not compromised, and future improvements in habitat connectivity are not prejudiced?’</i>.</p>	<p>Noted. Supporting question added.</p>
<p>4. Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) – The emerging LNRS should identify the priorities for nature recovery in an area and propose actions, such as the creation of wetlands or planting of trees. We therefore advise that a supporting question should be added/amended that ensures the draft PMP seeks to secure the opportunities for nature recovery identified by the emerging LNRS.</p>	<p>Noted. Supporting question added.</p>
<p>5. Best and most versatile agricultural land – Though we note that soil degradation is considered a key sustainability issues under the Resources theme, there is no specific reference to the loss of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land. We advise that a relevant supporting question be added that ensures the protection of BMV agricultural land.</p>	<p>Noted. Supporting question added.</p>
<p>6. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) – We advise that the opportunity to utilise SuDS, incorporated as part of green infrastructure, in order to decrease flood risk and as a climate adaptation measure is a key issue, and a supporting question should be added to reflect this.</p>	<p>Noted. Supporting question added.</p>
<p>7. Public rights of way – We welcome the identification of access to nature as a key sustainability issue, but note that there is no reference to Public Rights of Way, which are key to ensuring access to nature. We advise that this a supporting question should be added that assesses the protection and enhancement of Public Rights of Way.</p>	<p>Noted. Supporting question amended.</p>
<p>8. National Trails – We further note that there is no reference to the South Downs Way and King Charles III England Coast Path National Trails, nationally designated walking, cycling and horse riding routes. We advise that the protection and enhancement of these national trails is a</p>	<p>Noted. Supporting question added.</p>

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Consultation Response

**How the Response was
 Considered and Addressed**

key issue, and that a relevant supporting question should be added that reflects this. The National Trails website www.nationaltrail.co.uk provides further information.

9. Transport and the Natural Environment – Airborne pollutants from transport, such as nitrogen oxides, can adversely affect vulnerable natural habitats. Further to this, transport infrastructure networks can lead to habitat fragmentation and biodiversity decline. We advise that a supporting question be added to “Transport” theme that assesses the impacts of transport on the natural environment.

Noted. Supporting question added.

Review of Relevant Plans, Programmes and Sustainability Objectives

Natural England has not reviewed the plans listed. However, we advise that the following types of plans relating to the natural environment should be considered where applicable to the NP area;

- Local Plans
- Green infrastructure strategies
- Biodiversity plans
- Rights of Way Improvement Plans
- Shoreline management plans
- Coastal access plans
- River basin management plans
- Relevant landscape plans and strategies
- Emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

These plans will be considered in the appraisal of reasonable alternatives, and the appraisal of the PMP.

Environment Agency

No response.

N/a.

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Table 3-2: IIA Framework for the PMP

IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
Biodiversity and Nature Recovery	Protect and enhance the South Downs National Park’s biodiversity and ecosystems, supporting nature recovery and resilience to environmental pressures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance internationally, nationally, and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites? • Improve the management and connectivity of priority habitats, supporting nature recovery within and beyond designated site boundaries? • Ensure current ecological networks are not compromised, and future improvements in habitat connectivity are not prejudiced? • Secure the opportunities for nature recovery identified by the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy? • Mitigate the impacts of human activity on wildlife, including disturbance from recreation, urban expansion, and land-use changes? • Support sustainable land management practices that benefit biodiversity, such as sensitive grazing regimes, woodland management, and habitat restoration? • Protect and restore declining species, particularly key bird populations? • Increase urban greenness in settlements within the Park? • Enhance woodland coverage and resilience by promoting sustainable forestry, natural regeneration, and disease-resistant tree species? • Ensure the protection and enhancement of ancient woodland and other irreplaceable habitats? • Balance public access with conservation to prevent habitat damage? • Improve biodiversity monitoring and data collection for informed decision-making?

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IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
Climate Change	(Mitigation) Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities in the National Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of journeys made by polluting vehicles? • Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? • Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Improve energy efficiency in buildings and infrastructure? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources in appropriate locations? • Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? • Support the transition to electric vehicles? • Enhance carbon sequestration? • Support community-led carbon reduction initiatives and behaviour change programs? • Promote sustainable agricultural and land management practices?
	(Adaptation) Support the resilience of the National Park to the potential effects of climate change, including flood risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the National Park? • Sustainably manage water runoff? • Utilise Sustainable Drainage Systems, incorporated as part of green infrastructure? • Increase the resilience of the local built and natural environment? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are duly considered in the design of new development in the National Park?

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IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
Communities, Health & Wellbeing	Promote thriving communities that support health, wellbeing, and access to services for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance natural river and coastal processes to adapt to sea level rise and increased erosion? • Reduce wildfire risk? • Support water conservation measures? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the retention and viability of local services and facilities? • Address the challenges of an ageing population by ensuring access to appropriate housing, healthcare, and social support? • Encourage participation in community and conservation activities? • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing and future residents? • Reduce social isolation among vulnerable groups, including older residents and young people? • Support safer communities by reducing rural crime and anti-social behaviour? • Address health inequalities, particularly in more deprived areas adjacent to the National Park?
Design Standards	Ensure that new development respects and enhances the distinctive character, appearance, and heritage of the South Downs National Park, while incorporating high-quality, sustainable, and climate-resilient design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use local and traditional materials to protect settlement character? • Balance traditional styles with modern, sustainable design? • Encourage development that is sensitive to the surrounding landscape? • Support biodiversity and green infrastructure? • Encourage community involvement in shaping design? • Strengthen heritage protection for historic sites and their setting? • Promote climate-resilient, sustainable construction?

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IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
Employment and Economy	Support a resilient, diverse, and sustainable local economy that provides high-quality employment opportunities, enhances rural business, and fosters green growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce out-commuting and strengthen the local economy? • Improve digital infrastructure and connectivity? • Enhance agricultural resilience and diversification? • Promote sustainable and year-round tourism? • Support the development of nature-based income streams? • Increase economic resilience to climate change? • Facilitate business growth through workspace provision?
Equalities and Inclusion	Promote equal and inclusive access to the National Park’s natural, cultural, and community assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to the countryside for people with disabilities and underrepresented groups? • Encourage participation in outdoor learning and volunteering opportunities? • Facilitate opportunities for growing and consuming healthy food? • Promote active lifestyles and social inclusion? • Ensure safe and inclusive access to key services, cultural sites, and recreational areas for those without private transport?
Historic and Cultural Heritage	Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the National Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? • Reduce the number of heritage assets at risk by supporting appropriate conservation, repair, and reuse? • Improve the resilience of heritage assets to climate change impacts? • Ensure new development is sensitive to the historic character and setting of the National Park? • Promote research, survey work, and data collection to improve understanding and management of the Park’s historic environment?

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IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
Housing	Ensure that housing development are sustainable and meet the needs of local communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? • Improve public access to, and appreciation of, the Park’s historic environment and cultural heritage? • Encourage the use of traditional building materials in new development to reflect local character? • Promote the retention and development of heritage skills to ensure the long-term maintenance and repair of historic structures? • Ensure that visitor management strategies protect historic sites from over-crowding and physical damage? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality and affordable housing? • Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people’s changing needs? • Provide suitable housing options for an ageing population, including specialist housing? • Address housing affordability and support access to housing for younger and local residents? • Reduce the impact of second homes and holiday lets on the availability of housing for local residents? • Meet the need for additional gypsy and traveller pitches and plots for travelling showpeople? • Provide accommodation for rural workers to support local economies? • Consider the capacity of local infrastructure (e.g., transport, schools, healthcare) when planning new housing?

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IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape of the South Downs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and/ or enhance local landscape character and quality of place? • Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character? • Identify and protect important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? • Protect and extend / enhance green infrastructure corridors? • Protect visual amenity? • Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the rural setting, including trees and hedgerows? • Minimise the impact of small-scale changes that could erode the Park’s overall character? • Safeguard the open downland and rural character from urban expansion and coastal development pressures? • Protect the Park’s tranquillity and dark skies from developments, excessive lighting, and traffic?
Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources	Ensure the sustainable use and protection of natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address increasing water demand in areas of serious water stress? • Prevent over-abstraction from aquifers and rivers, especially in protected areas like the Arun Valley? • Mitigate risks of water shortages, hosepipe bans, and restrictions during drier summers? • Protect water quality by reducing pollution and managing contamination risks to both surface and groundwater? • Improve water efficiency standards? • Support the restoration and improvement of rare chalk streams?

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IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
Transport	Promote sustainable transport use, reduce car dependency, and improve accessibility throughout the National Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects the national park’s Best and Most Versatile agricultural land? • Prevent soil degradation and mitigate nutrient runoff? • Promote agricultural practices that improve water management, soil quality, and biodiversity, such as regenerative methods? • Maintain air quality by addressing concerns regarding nitrogen dioxide emissions, especially in AQMA areas? • Manage operational sites for mineral and aggregate extraction to minimise environmental impact? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve public transport infrastructure to reduce reliance on cars? • Alleviate road congestion and its negative impact on tranquillity, air quality, and landscape protection? • Encourage the uptake of active travel opportunities? • Protect, extend and improve active travel networks (including National Trails, Public Rights of Way and cycleways)? • Provide transport options for vulnerable groups to reduce social exclusion? • Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles? • Improve road safety? • Improve parking facilities? • Improve electric vehicle charging infrastructure? • Support integrated sustainable tourism approaches to balance transport, accommodation, and resource use? • Ensure any new transport infrastructure does not lead to habitat fragmentation and biodiversity decline?

4. Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives Through the IIA

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. In accordance with the SEA Regulations the IIA Report must include...

- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
- The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraised.

4.1.2. This part of the IIA Report therefore discusses the reasonable alternatives that have been considered through the IIA process, and findings of the appraisal.

4.2. Defining Reasonable Alternatives

4.2.1. The assessment of 'reasonable alternatives' is a key element of the IIA process to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations. The SEA Regulations state that the Environmental Report (which is the main output of the SEA process) should "*identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of – (a) implementing the plan or programme; and (b) reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme.*"

4.2.2. The SEA Regulations are not prescriptive as to what constitutes a reasonable alternative. However, the assessment undertaken through the IIA should focus on the key choices to be made through the PMP, whilst also recognising the broad character and scope of the PMP as a strategic-level plan.

4.2.3. With regards to the overall aims and objectives of the PMP, the scope to consider reasonable alternatives through the IIA is shaped by a number of factors.

4.2.4. The first factor is the need for the PMP to seek to further the two purposes for the National Park, in line with the duty introduced by Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. The social and economic wellbeing of local communities must also be considered when delivering the two purposes, consistent with the National Parks' statutory framework. It also recognises that the Sandford Principle should apply when there is a

conflict between the two purposes. This means that the proposals set out in the PMP are shaped by the need to: conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Special Qualities of the National Park by the public, with a view to fostering the economic and social wellbeing of local communities. In addition, there is a need to reflect the Government's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF), which established targets for National Parks and National Landscapes with a view to supporting Protected Landscapes in meeting their potential for nature, climate, people and place.

- 4.2.5. Secondly, there is a need to recognise that the new PMP is an update of the Partnership Management Plan 2020 – 2025. As such, the approaches taken forward for the Plan in many respects are a maturity of the approaches applied through the earlier PMP, rather than a definition of new ones. There will also be a need for the new PMP to reflect changes in national legislation and policy since the previous PMP was prepared, such as the Environment Act 2021, which introduced a stronger focus on nature recovery, biodiversity, and climate resilience, all of which are relevant to the work of National Parks.
- 4.2.6. Thirdly, the PMP has been developed through extensive engagement and collaboration with stakeholders with an interest in the National Park. In this respect the development of the PMP has been led by this engagement, with the shaping of the aims, objectives, targets and actions of the PMP being informed by the input key stakeholders.
- 4.2.7. Given the aims, objectives and actions set out in the PMP are largely defined by the above three factors, this restricts in many respects the potential to consider reasonable alternatives through the IIA process. In addition, a 'do nothing' approach is not a reasonable alternative given the requirements for National Park authorities to prepare and update a National Park Management Plan.
- 4.2.8. Notwithstanding this, there are a limited number of areas for which reasonable alternatives can be usefully considered through the IIA process. These are discussed below.

Reasonable Alternatives Considered Through the IIA

4.2.9. The PMP is presented through seven Aims, as follows:

- Aim 1: Nature Recovery
- Aim 2: Climate Action
- Aim 3: Clean Water

- Aim 4: Young People
- Aim 5: Welcome and Access
- Aim 6: Arts and Heritage
- Aim 7: A Thriving, Greener Place

4.2.10. Whilst for five of these Aims, no reasonable alternatives have been identified which are appropriate to assess through the IIA, two aspects relating to Aim 2: Climate Action and Aim 3: Clean Water have been considered through the reasonable alternatives assessment. These reflect two specific areas where additional or new approaches are being considered through the development of the latest PMP; these are where alternatives can be usefully considered through the IIA.

4.2.11. A discussion of the alternatives considered under these Aims is presented below.

Options Relating to Trees/Woodland in the SDNP (Associated with Aim 2: Climate Action)

4.2.12. In 2020 the South Downs National Park Authority committed to tackling the climate and nature emergency by:

- Setting a target for the National Park Authority to become a 'Net Zero' Organisation by 2030;
- Working with the constituent Local Authorities and other partners, in particular local communities and landowners, to deliver actions that respond effectively to the climate and nature emergency; and
- Working towards the South Downs National Park becoming 'Net-Zero with Nature' by 2040.

4.2.13. A Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan was subsequently prepared and adopted; this is updated every year.

4.2.14. In light of these actions, the SDNPA has been exploring the different approaches that can be taken to tackling the climate emergency, with a view to implementing them through the PMP. A key consideration relates to trees and woodlands in the National Park, and specifically their role in mitigating climate change (including through supporting carbon sequestration) and their part in helping to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

4.2.15. 16% percent of the South Downs National Park is currently covered by woodland, making it the most wooded English National Park (State of the

National Park 2024). The PLTOF's Target 8 seeks to increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline). In this respect there is scope to consider the implications of taking different approaches to increasing tree cover in the National Park, including in terms of potentially increasing tree coverage beyond that set out through the PLTOF.

4.2.16. To explore these aspects further, the IIA has considered two alternative approaches relating to tree coverage in the National Park, as follows.

- **Option TW1:** Increase tree canopy and woodland cover across the National Park in line with PLTOF Target 8.
- **Option TW2:** Increase tree canopy and woodland cover across the National Park by an amount which exceeds the increase required to deliver PLTOF Target 8.

Options Relating to Water Resource Management and Flood Risk (Associated with Aim 3: Clean Water)

4.2.17. An area where approaches have evolved since the adoption of the Partnership Management Plan 2020 – 2025 relates to water resource management and flood risk. This includes an increasing focus on catchment management; currently there are six catchment partnerships across the National Park. In response to this there is scope for the PMP to consider an additional focus on developing National Park-wide partnership approaches to managing water resources and flood risk.

4.2.18. To help explore this possibility, the IIA has considered two options, set out below. These seek to explore the relative sustainability merits of taking an increased partnership-led approach to catchment management across the National Park versus the approach set out by the existing PMP 2020-2025.

- **Option CM1:** Deliver the current approach to water resources set out by the PMP 2020-2025, which recognises the interplays between soil and water by seeking to reduce soil erosion, improving carbon capture and filtration and reconnecting wetland habitats.
- **Option CM2:** Bring together a catchment management partnership approach to water resource and flood risk management across the National Park, building on the approach being taken forward by the current PMP.

Appraisal Findings

4.2.19. Utilising the IIA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the process, the appraisal has been presented through 11 IIA themes, as follows:

- Biodiversity and Nature Recovery;
- Climatic Change;
- Communities, Health & Wellbeing;
- Design Standards;
- Employment and Economy;
- Equalities and Inclusion;
- Historic and Cultural Heritage;
- Housing;
- Landscape;
- Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources; and
- Transport.

4.2.20. The appraisal considers the relative sustainability merits of each of the options considered. To support the appraisal findings, the options have been ranked in terms of their sustainability performance against the relevant IIA theme. It is anticipated that this will provide the reader with a likely indication of the relative performance of the options in relation to each theme considered.

4.2.21. **Table 4-1** and **Table 4-2** below present the findings of the appraisal of the two sets of options for each of the IIA themes.

Table 4-1: Assessment of options relating to trees/woodland in the South Downs National Park

Option TW1: Increase tree canopy and woodland cover across the National Park in line with PLTOF Target 8.

Option TW2: Increase tree canopy and woodland cover across the National Park by an amount which exceeds the increase required to deliver PLTOF Target 8.

IIA theme	Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options	Ranking in relation to topic	
		TW1	TW2
Biodiversity and Nature Recovery	<p>Woodland habitats can support a range of habitats and species, supporting ecosystems with a rich biodiversity resource. However, an increased level of tree planting does not necessarily lead to enhanced biodiversity value. In this respect tree planting in inappropriate locations may lead to the loss of key ecosystems, and the habitats and species they support. For example, chalk grasslands in the South Downs are home to rare plants and butterflies, farmland and flower-rich meadows offer habitats for rare birds and plants while heathlands support native British reptiles and amphibians. As such, establishing new woodlands in these locations can have significant adverse effects on plants and animals adapted to open ecosystems on grassland or heathland habitats in the South Downs. The loss of these and other types of priority habitats has the potential to have significant implications for biodiversity through leading to adverse impacts on sensitive habitats and species. This would undermine the meeting of local and National Park-wide biodiversity targets.</p> <p>In addition, when seen in the historic context of parts of the South Downs, the planting of significant numbers of trees would not necessarily comprise reforestation (i.e., the planting trees on deforested land) but would comprise afforestation (i.e., planting forests where they did not historically occur). In this respect afforestation causes fundamental changes in ecosystem structure and functioning, including changes in shading, the micro-climate, production, nutrient cycling and the water balance, all of which may affect biodiversity. In light of this, whilst larger scale tree planting through Option TW2 may lead to some benefits for biodiversity, such an approach has the potential to lead to a range of significant</p>	1	2

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negative impacts on habitats and species. This depends though on the location and design of woodland creation. In response to these issues there is a need for tree planting activities to fully recognise the biodiversity value of different habitats in the SDNP, and the need to ensure that key non-woodland habitats are not lost. In addition, there is a need to support the biodiversity value of new (and existing) woodland through the delivery of a good diversity of tree species and facilitating the active management of woodland assets.

Climate Change	<p>In terms of climate change mitigation, trees provide a carbon capture and storage role. In this respect additional woodland creation delivered through Option TW2 has the potential to support the increased removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere.</p> <p>Tree planting may however not always comprise an appropriate approach in terms of climate change mitigation. Grasslands for example can store as much carbon in some circumstances, and in some unsuitable locations a larger proportion of trees planted may not survive, limiting their role in carbon sequestration. Effective management would therefore need to accompany tree planting, involving the use of an appropriate range of species, which are suited to the local environmental conditions. As such, Option TW2 has increased potential of the options to support climate change mitigation, but only if tree planting is well designed and appropriate to the local context.</p> <p>In terms of adaptation to the effects of climate change, well managed tree-planting in appropriate locations can help protect soil resources and create microclimates that increase local resilience against climate change. Tree cover helps cool surrounding areas through transpiration and through shading. In this respect the shading provided by trees reduces temperatures in built-up areas and trees can also help manage the effects of extreme rainfall events, through soaking up water during and after storms. As such, Option TW2 may help create the conditions which support the natural resilience of the landscape to the extremes in weather likely to take place as a result of climate change.</p>	2	1
Communities, Health & Wellbeing	<p>Increased tree planting offers a number of positive benefits for health and wellbeing for those living in built up areas through managing temperatures at the neighbourhood and micro-scale through cooling surrounding areas via transpiration and shading. Tree planting can also</p>	2	1

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support the quality of neighbourhoods through helping to manage air and noise pollution and improving the setting of the built environment. In this respect Option TW2 has the potential to deliver additional benefits over Option TW1 with regards to health and wellbeing, if appropriate tree planting schemes are implemented within and adjacent to built up areas.

Design Standards	Tree planting offers opportunities for supporting the quality of neighbourhoods through contributing to high quality design and layout. Whilst an increased level of woodland creation through Option TW2 has the potential to deliver additional benefits, this depends on the location and design of tree planting schemes, including in conjunction with new development areas.	2	1
Employment and Economy	<p>An increased focus on tree planting, through providing additional provisioning ecosystem services, has the potential support the production of building materials, fuel wood and other uses for wood. Increased tree planting therefore has the potential to support rural community livelihoods associated with forestry and similar activities.</p> <p>Tree planting can promote ecosystem services which support soils resources, including through soil formation, flood and erosion protection, erosion management, water quality regulation and enabling enhanced nutrient and water cycling. In this respect Option TW2, through delivering larger scale woodland creation, has additional potential to deliver a range of positive effects relating to soils resources in the National Park.</p> <p>Whilst support for soils resources will benefit agricultural practices, changes in ecosystems from woodland creation may directly and indirectly impact on traditional agricultural practices which have evolved in a different environmental and ecological context as agricultural practices may be undermined by the changes in ecosystems likely to be seen from Option TW2. A further element to note is that woodland creation often requires large amounts of land to be effective. Given trees will need to be planted in the most appropriate locations, the option may lead to reductions in agricultural land, including in those locations which have traditionally been best suited to agriculture. In addition, increases in tree planting on farmland through Option TW2 may undermine agricultural activities. In this respect, whilst targeted tree planting can play a role in supporting soils and water resources, and by</p>	1	2

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extension agricultural practices, inappropriate large-scale tree planting programmes have the potential to have direct and indirect negative effects.

More broadly, impacts from tree planting on elements such as water supply, landscape and townscape character, the setting of the historic environment and changes to ecosystems may impact on the tourism offer which capitalises on its distinct physical and cultural offer. This depends on whether new woodland creation takes place in appropriate locations and is designed appropriately to reflect local conditions and distinctiveness.

Equalities and Inclusion	Increased tree planting offers a number of positive benefits for health and wellbeing for those living in built up areas through managing temperatures at the neighbourhood and micro-scale through cooling surrounding areas via transpiration and shading. Tree planting can also support the quality of neighbourhoods through helping to manage air and noise pollution and improving the setting of the built environment. In this respect Option TW2 has the potential to deliver additional benefits over Option TW1 with regards to the health and wellbeing of groups with protected characteristics, if appropriate tree planting schemes are implemented within and adjacent to built up areas.	2	1
Historic and Cultural Heritage	Both options, through supporting woodland creation, have the potential to facilitate enhancements to landscape character in some parts of the South Downs, which may support the setting of the historic environment. However, given the historic context of the landscape in many parts of the SDNP, which may not historically have seen significant tree cover, may not be an appropriate approach which effectively engages with the special qualities of the National Park, including its historic environment. In addition, woodland creation of the 'wrong' types of trees may bear little resemblance to the historic context of landscapes in the area. It is also recognised that a number of habitats are important for archaeological remains. For example lowland heathlands provide an important role for the protection of archaeological remains, and chalk downs are important locations for neolithic, bronze age and iron age remains. These can be damaged during woodland restoration and re-creation activities	1	2

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In this respect, Option TW1, through taking a more considered approach to woodland creation, is more likely to deliver approaches to planting which effectively replicates the historic conditions of the landscapes of the National Park, and facilitates development which more closely engages with the historic context of the area. The option may have less potential for tree planting to poorly reflect the historic significance of features and areas of cultural heritage interest in the locality. This though depends on whether new woodland creation takes place in appropriate locations and is designed appropriately to reflect local conditions and distinctiveness.

Housing	The options are unlikely to significantly affect or differ in terms of the delivery of housing across the National Park.	N/A	N/A
Landscape	Both options, through supporting woodland creation, have the potential to facilitate enhancements to landscape character in some parts of the South Downs. However, given the historic context of the landscape in many parts of the South Downs, which may not historically have seen significant tree cover, woodland creation may not be an appropriate approach which effectively engages with the special qualities of the National Park. In addition, woodland creation of the ‘wrong’ types of trees may bear little resemblance to the historic context of landscapes in the area. In this respect, Option TW1, through taking a more considered approach to woodland creation, is more likely to deliver approaches to planting which effectively replicates the historic conditions of the landscapes of the National Park, and facilitates development which more closely engages with the historic landscape context of the area. This though depends on whether new woodland creation takes place in appropriate locations and is designed appropriately to reflect local conditions and distinctiveness.	1	2
Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources	A key benefit of woodland creation is the management of surface water run-off. In this respect trees can help manage the effects of extreme rainfall events through soaking up water during and after storms. Whilst in many environments, trees provide an important regulating and provisioning ecosystem service in terms of water supply and quality, evidence suggests that woodland	2	1

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creation in some environments can cause a reduction in water yield at the watershed scale. This is because afforested land can remove significantly more water from soil to atmosphere than other habitats (including, for example, grassland). This includes from an increase of water consumption due to evapotranspiration from newly established woodland. However, given the climatic conditions of the National Park, these potential impacts are likely to be outweighed by the benefits for water resources.

Tree planting can promote ecosystem services which support soils resources, including through soil formation, flood and erosion protection, erosion management, water quality regulation and enabling enhanced nutrient and water cycling. In this respect Option TW2, through delivering larger scale woodland creation, has additional potential to deliver a range of positive effects relating to soils resources in the National Park.

Overall, whilst targeted tree planting can play an important role in supporting soils and water resources, inappropriate large-scale tree planting programmes can have the potential to have direct and indirect negative effects.

Transport	The options are unlikely to significantly differ in terms of supporting sustainable transport use and accessibility.	N/A	N/A
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Table 4-2: Assessment of options relating to water resource management and flood risk

Option CM1: Deliver the current approach to water resources set out by the PMP 2020-2025, which recognises the interplays between soil and water by seeking to reduce soil erosion, improving carbon capture and filtration and reconnecting wetland habitats.

Option CM2: Bring together a catchment management partnership approach to water resource and flood risk management across the National Park.

IIA theme	Discussion of potential effects and relative merits of options	Ranking in relation to topic	
		CM1	CM2
Biodiversity and Nature Recovery	<p>Many of the SDNP’s habitats and species are highly sensitive to changes in hydrology; for example, wetland ecosystems are frequently adapted to continual or frequent high water levels. In this respect a number of the designated wetland sites throughout the National Park occur in locations projected to be at risk of drought. While many wetland habitats and species are resilient to short term or low-level droughts, more frequent and/or more prolonged periods of water scarcity may result in long-term negative consequences, which could also reduce the ability of wetlands to fulfil their usual ecosystem functions. Water scarcity also impacts on non-wetland ecosystems; for example, a moisture deficit in soils from water scarcity and drought has the potential to lead to moisture stress for sensitive species, including woodland species. In this respect, through supporting a catchment management partnership approach for the long-term proactive management of the National Park’s freshwater resources, Option CM2 has increased potential to help limit the potential impacts of water scarcity and drought on key habitats and species, and do more to support the reconnection of wetland habitats.</p> <p>Poor water quality has significant effects on habitats, species and ecosystems. In this regard poor water quality creates conditions for a small minority of plants and organisms to thrive, and</p>	2	1

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others to suffer sustained loss in both abundance and diversity. This affects invertebrates, plants, animals and fish, and in turn threatens the structure and stability of the food chain. Through supporting a catchment-based approach, Option CM2 therefore has the potential to do more to limit the potential impacts of poor water quality on biodiversity from nutrient pollution and eutrophication and associated impacts from factors such as oxygen depletion and algal blooms. This will support habitats and species and the effective functioning of ecosystems.

In this respect whilst the current approach taken forward through Option CM1 would continue to offer benefits for biodiversity in the National Park, Option CM2 will help build on these approaches through supporting the proactive long-term management of the National Park's freshwater resources.

Climate Change	<p>The latest climate projections (UKCP18) indicate increasingly variable weather, including: altered spatial and temporal precipitation patterns; higher probability of drier and warmer summers; and increased rates of loss of surface water through greater evapotranspiration (from plants and ground surfaces) and evaporation from water bodies. Future projections suggest that these patterns will intensify, with hotter, drier summers becoming more common by the mid-21st century, leading to more frequent and severe droughts. In terms of adaptation to climate change, Option CM2, through bringing together a catchment management partnership approach to water resource management, will help do more than Option CM2 to manage the likely increased pressures on water availability and quality from climate change.</p> <p>The option will also support innovative solutions which benefit flood risk management. For example, nature-based solutions such as natural wetland creation, river re-meandering to slow water flow or tree planting can reduce uncontrolled flooding, run-off and loss of topsoil, and help absorb excess water. In this respect, whilst Option CM1 will also have beneficial effects in this respect, Option CM2 offers additional scope to support the delivery of innovative multi-catchment approaches to land management, such as nature-based solutions, which support flood risk management.</p>	2	1
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In addition, through doing more to support the resilience of habitats and species (discussed under 'Biodiversity and Nature Recovery' above), Option CM2 will support regulating ecosystem services which will support flood risk management. This will also support climate change mitigation through potentially increasing the role of key habitats in sequestration and as a carbon store. Option CM2 therefore provides additional opportunities to support climate change mitigation through enhancing the role of these key ecosystems in this regard.

As such, Option CM2 will help build on the approaches associated with the current approach (Option CM1) relating to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Communities, Health & Wellbeing	<p>Option CM2 has the potential to support environmental enhancements through promoting partnership approaches to the management of the multiple catchments in the SDNP. Through supporting a joined up approach to water resources management, this has the potential to support the health of local communities through supporting targeted improvements to water quality across multiple catchments.</p> <p>Similarly, a partnership catchment management approach to flood risk will also help limit the potential impacts of flood risk (including associated with the impacts of climate change) on local communities. This is discussed further under the 'Climate Change' IIA theme.</p> <p>In these respects, Option CM2 will also do more to help achieve community engagement and 'buy in' to approaches to water resource and flood risk management in the National Park.</p>	2	1
Design Standards	<p>Option CM2 will build on Option CM1 through delivering a catchment management partnership approach. This has the potential to indirectly support high quality design of neighbourhoods through promoting innovative solutions to water resource and flood risk management.</p>	2	1
Employment and Economy	<p>Option CM2, through supporting a catchment management approach to water resources will indirectly promote economic vitality through additional supporting a number of key economic</p>	2	1

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sectors which are dependent or benefit from the availability of clean water, such food and drink production, or tourism.

Equalities and Inclusion	<p>Option CM2 will do more to support environmental enhancements through promoting partnership approaches to catchment management. Through supporting a joined up approach to water resources management, this has the potential to support the health of local communities through supporting targeted improvements to water quality across multiple catchments.</p> <p>Similarly, a partnership catchment management approach to flood risk will also help limit the potential impacts of flood risk (including associated with the impacts of climate change) on the local community.</p> <p>These additional benefits of Option CM2 will have benefits for all groups in the National Park.</p>	2	1
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Historic and Cultural Heritage	<p>The significance of heritage assets is closely related to their setting. In this regard elements of the setting of a heritage asset, including its landscape setting have a strong contribution to its integrity. These aspects are discussed in more detail under the 'Landscape' IIA theme below.</p> <p>In terms of archaeological remains, wetland and lowland heathland habitats can be rich in archaeological remains. In this regard there is the potential for a partnership catchment management approach to support the archaeological resource of these habitats.</p>	2	1
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Housing	<p>The options are unlikely to significantly affect or differ in terms of the delivery of housing across the National Park.</p>	N/A	N/A
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Landscape	<p>A catchment management partnership approach through Option CM2 offers additional scope over Option CM1 to support the delivery of innovative approaches to water resource and flood risk management, such as nature-based solutions. Similar landscape-scale approaches have</p>	2	1
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the potential to enhance local character, supporting the special qualities for which the National Park has been designated for.

Given different ecosystems underpin landscape character, the aspects set out under the 'Biodiversity and Nature Recovery' IIA theme are relevant here. In this respect many habitats and species which underpin local character are highly sensitive to changes in water availability and quality, and linked to this, water quantity and quality issues have contributed to pressures on landscape character. In this regard Option CM2 has the potential to go further than Option CM1 to support the habitats, species and ecosystems which underpin landscape character.

Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources	<p>Taking forward the current approach through Option CM1 will support water and soil availability and quality through seeking to reduce soil erosion, reconnecting wetland habitats and supporting filtration. In this respect Option CM1 will continue to bring benefits for water and soil quality through supporting regulating and provisioning ecosystem services provided by healthy water and soil resources.</p> <p>A partnership approach to catchment management promoted by Option CM2 will build on this through helping to implement an approach in which risks and opportunities associated with catchments can be clearly visualised, allow for gaps to identified and measures to be prioritised. In this this regard Option CM2 offers the scope to support the delivery of innovative approaches to land and water management, such as nature-based solutions. This will help initiate approaches that will support soil quality, reduce soil erosion and promote their role in underpinning ecosystem multifunctionality and resilience. This will support both water and soil quality.</p> <p>Through building on the current approach taken forward by Option CM1, a catchment management partnership approach through Option CM2 also has the potential to support increased awareness and understanding of the benefits that can arise from innovative approaches to land and water management, such as nature-based solutions. This will support the protection and sustainable use of resources.</p>	2	1
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Transport	The options are unlikely to significantly differ in terms of supporting sustainable transport use and accessibility.	N/A	N/A
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Summary of Appraisal Findings

4.2.22.

- 4.2.23. **Table 4-3** summarises the rankings of the options with regard to their performance in relation to each IIA theme.
- 4.2.24. With regard to the appraisal presented in **Table 4-1** (the ‘tree/woodland’ alternatives), while Option TW2 demonstrates a number of beneficial effects when compared to Option TW1 (such as enhanced carbon sequestration, landscape-scale resilience to the effects of climate change), it also poses a notable risk to the integrity of the National Park’s Special Qualities. Specifically, afforestation at a rate above the PLTOF Target 8 could significantly alter open landscapes and views that contribute to the National Park’s unique character, have adverse impacts on the Park’s historic environment and economy, and also have significant adverse effects on key habitats and species in the National Park. This has the potential to undermine its conservation purpose. For both options therefore, the potential tensions between afforestation benefits and impacts on landscape and biodiversity would need to be carefully considered through the location and design of woodland creation schemes to ensure that the National Park’s Special Qualities are reinforced and its Purposes and Duty are met.
- 4.2.25. With regard to the appraisal presented in **Table 4-2** (the ‘water’ alternatives), both alternatives are likely to support a wide range of positive outcomes. However, Option CM2 is shown to improve upon the existing strategy (Option CM1) by offering additional environmental benefits. These include, but are not limited to, supporting local habitats and biodiversity through improved water quality, greater resilience to the impacts of climate change, and the protection of archaeological heritage resources. Option therefore CM2 builds on the current approach and adds value without significant adverse effects, thereby presenting a well-rounded and enhanced approach that performs more favourably than Option CM1 across all of the IIA themes.

Table 4-3: Summary of Appraisal Findings

IIA theme		Options relating to trees/woodland		Options relating to water resource management	
		Option TW1	Option TW2	Option CM1	Option CM2
Biodiversity and Nature Recovery	Rank	1	2	2	1
Climate Change	Rank	2	1	2	1
Communities, Health & Wellbeing	Rank	2	1	2	1
Design Standards	Rank	2	1	2	1
Employment and Economy	Rank	1	2	2	1
Equalities and Inclusion	Rank	2	1	2	1
Historic and Cultural Heritage	Rank	1	2	2	1
Housing	Rank	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Landscape	Rank	1	2	2	1
Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources	Rank	2	1	2	1
Transport	Rank	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

5. Appraisal of the Draft Version of the PMP

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. The aim of this chapter is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the draft version of the PMP. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version (i.e., the draft version) of the PMP under the 11 IIA theme headings;
- Consideration of potential cumulative effects; and
- The overall conclusions at this current stage.

5.2. PMP Objectives and Targets

5.2.1. To support the implementation of the vision statement for the PMP, the draft version of the PMP puts forward 15 Objectives (along with supporting Targets) under the Aims (outlined in Chapter 4) to guide future projects within the National Park. These are outlined in **Table 5-1**.

Table 5-1: Objectives and Targets in the PMP

Objectives	Targets
Aim 1: Nature Recovery	
Objective 1.1: To improve, expand, connect and increase the resilience of wildlife-rich habitats and land managed for nature to ensure we are on track to reach 60% managed for nature by 2060.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target 1.1a: Restore or create more than 3,260ha hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within the South Downs National Park, outside protected sites by 2031 (PLTOF Target 1) • Target 1.1b: 60% of the South Downs National Park is managed for Nature by 2060 • Target 1.1c: By 2031, long term monitoring data for South Downs priority species shows a stable or increasing trend at sites where habitat management or creation is
Objective 1.2: To support land-based businesses to thrive as economically viable, nature-friendly, climate positive food and drink producers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target 1.2a: Offer advisory support to farmers, foresters and landowners aiming to increase the proportion of farms with any diversified activity across the National Park by 7.5% by 2031.
Objective 1.3: Improve and manage existing nature-rich sites – protected sites and priority habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target 1.3a: Bring 80% of SSSIs within the National Park into favourable condition by 2042 (PLTOF Target 2). • Target 1.3b: For 60% of SSSIs within the National Park assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028 (PLTOF Target 3). • Target 1.3c: Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042 (PLTOF Target 4).

Objectives

Targets

Aim 2: Climate Action

Objective 2.1: To support businesses and local communities to take positive climate action to ensure they are adapted and resilient to climate change.

- Target 2.1a: Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2040 relative to 1990 levels (This goes beyond PLTOF Target 6 which aims to reach net zero by 2050)
 - Target 2.1b: By 2031, community groups from each parish in the National Park to have signed up to a nature and climate pledge (e.g. establish a repair café, community orchard)
 - Target 2.1c By 2031, businesses from each parish in the National Park signed up to a nature and climate pledge
 - Target 2.1d: By 2031, community groups from each parish in the National Park to be registered and utilising the climate action knowledge hub (accessing resources about retrofit / rain gardens / flood mitigation, community energy plans)
-

Objective 2.2: To support land managers, farmers, foresters and landowners in their aspirations to deliver nature recovery and climate action on their land.

- Target 2.2a: Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030 (PLTOF Target 5)
- Target 2.2b: Support farmers and landowners to implement regenerative farming practices across 8,000 hectares of the National Park by 2031.
- Target 2.2c: Increase tree canopy and woodland cover across the National Park by 888ha by 2031 (PLTOF Target 8)
- Target 2.2d: By 2031, collaborate with partners to help farms and landowners create carbon literacy and climate resilience plans -covering soil health and flood management - for 100 farms and landowners throughout the National Park

Objectives

Targets

Section 3: Clean Water

Objective 3.1: To support catchment-based partnership approaches to water management so that nature and communities can thrive, and flood risk is reduced.

- Target 3.1a: By 2031, all catchment partnerships to have the resources to develop a pipeline of deliverable projects.

Objective 3.2: To improve the condition of the water environment to ensure enough clean water for nature and people, and water habitats are restored.

- Target 3.2a: Work in partnership to complete 3 chalk stream restoration projects in the National Park by 2031
 - Target 3.2b: Work in partnership to assess the condition and provide management advice for 100 ponds in the National Park by 2031.
-

Section 4: Young People

Objective 4.1: To provide opportunities for young people to take positive action for nature, climate and heritage.

- Target 4.1a: Number of schools engaged (primary and secondary) both inside and outside the National Park boundary per year (PLTOF Access for All metrics)
 - Target 4.1b: Work in partnership to deliver 125 youth action days taking positive action for nature, climate and heritage in the National Park by 2031
-

Objective 4.2: To support young people on the pathway to green careers.

- Target 4.2a: Work with partners to increase the number of “green” career engagement sessions, work experience, apprenticeships and work placements within the National Park.

Objectives

Targets

Aim 5: Welcome and Access

Objective 5.1: To improve the accessibility of the National Park to enable everyone to actively travel and connect with nature.

- Target 5.1a: Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all (PLTOF Target 9)
- Target 5.1b: By 2031, deliver 25 kilometres of accessible path
- Target 5.1c: Increase the number of accessible toilets and rest stops across the National Park
- Target 5.1d: Increase the number of disability accessible parking spaces across the National Park
- Target 5.2e: By 2031, ensure 50 gates/styles have been made more accessible
- Target 5.2f: 2,500 visits to the National Park facilitated by funded equipment by 2031
- Target 5.2g: By 2031, 5 easy access routes for which wayfinding has been newly created or improved
- Target 5.2h: By 2031, key partners to have considered or adopted the active travel plan.

Objective 5.2: To maintain our International Dark Sky Reserve status to support nature recovery and improve understanding of and access to dark skies for all.

- Target 5.2a: By 2031 – maintain the percentage of the National Park with the highest quality skies of E0 and E1a standard (20 magnitude per arcsecond² and above) as defined by International Dark Sky Reserve guidelines
 - Target 5.2b: Work in partnership to reach 1 million people through online and 10,000 people through in-person dark night skies engagement activities by 2031
-

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Objectives

Targets

Aim 6: Arts and Heritage

Objective 6.1: To enhance the cultural heritage of the National Park and tell its diverse stories as a dynamic and ever-changing landscape.

- Target 6.1a: Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes (PLTOF Target 10).
- Target 6.1b: 115 scheduled monuments to have enhanced records by 2031.
- Target 6.1c: By 2031, to have increased the number of heritage assets covered by agri-environment schemes.

Objective 6.2: To support partnerships that enable people to connect to the landscape and its special qualities through creative arts and heritage.

- Target 6.2a: Work in partnership to support X number of participants through creative arts/heritage mechanisms in the National Park by 2031 (set baseline based on previous 5 years of delivery)
- Target 6.2b: Provide advisory input into xx creative arts and heritage Projects in the National Park by 2031

Aim 7: A Thriving, Greener Place

Objective 7.1: To support the growth of a greener economy across the National Park while providing outstanding visitor experiences that benefit our communities and landscape.

- Target 7.1a: X% Growth in Green Economy from 2024 baseline
- Target 7.1b: Support Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) to achieve Tourism GVA growth by increasing Tourism £GVA within the SDNP by 25% by 2030 from 2024 baseline.
- Target 7.1c: Visitor experience: 99% of visitors to rate their enjoyment of the National Park as “high” or “very high”
- Target 7.1d: Income from visitor giving to increase by 100% by 2031

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Targets

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target 7.1e: Promote and connect sustainable business through growing the Our South Downs business network to over 700 members • Target 7.1f: 50% increase in the number of B Corp. within the SDNP from 2024 baseline
Objective 7.2: To support the needs of local communities through affordable, accessible and low-carbon housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target 7.2a: 300 affordable dwellings to be completed by 2031 (60 per year) • Target 7.2b: Extant permission for 500 affordable dwellings granted by 2031 (100 per year) • Target 7.3c: Permission for 1, 000 accessible homes to be granted by 2031

5.3. Approach to the Appraisal

- 5.3.1. For each IIA theme, ‘significant’ effects of the PMP on the baseline are predicated and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations. For example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects as far as possible. These effect ‘characteristics’ will be described within the assessment, as appropriate.
- 5.3.2. Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the PMP. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects to ensure all assumptions are explained.
- 5.3.3. Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. For example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the PMP to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes, and projects. These effect ‘characteristics’ are described within the assessment as appropriate.

5.4. Appraisal

Biodiversity and Nature Recovery

- 5.4.1. As the National Park is home to internationally designated sites for biodiversity and geodiversity conservation, a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)⁹ process has been completed for the PMP. Providing any recommendations within the HRA are incorporated into the submission version of the PMP, it is anticipated that there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of these sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.
- 5.4.2. Under the ‘Nature Recovery’ aim, three objectives directly support the Biodiversity and Nature Recovery IIA theme: Objectives 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3. Objective 1.1 sets out the ambition to increase the area of the National Park covered by wildlife-rich habitats, while Objective 1.3 focusses on improving their quality. Objective 5.2 also contributes to this theme by seeking to

⁹ AECOM (2025) – HRA Report. The HRA contributes to the evidence base for the PMP, available to view alongside the additional consultation documents.

maintain the International Dark Sky Reserve, sustaining benefits for nocturnal species within the National Park. Water-based habitats (including the Park's nationally important chalk streams) will be protected and enhanced through improved water management and restoration projects delivered through Objectives 3.1 and 3.2. The National Park's woodland cover and tree canopy are expected to increase in line with PLTOF Target 8, as a result of Objective 2.2. As noted in the assessment of reasonable alternatives, it is important that new woodland creation is appropriately located and designed to support the Park's Special Qualities, including its landscape and biodiversity. Although specific locations for woodland planting projects are not identified, the PMP's Planning Principle 3 emphasises the need for woodland to consist of "...*appropriate species, be on a suitable scale, and be located in the right places*". Following this Principle would help mitigate any potential adverse impacts of woodland planting. Overall, all of these objectives are expected to enhance both the extent and condition of the National Park's distinctive biodiversity.

- 5.4.3. Objective 1.2 seeks to support diversified activity on farms through agri-environmental schemes, supporting local biodiversity through nature-friendly practices. This is complemented by Objectives 2.1, 4.1, 4.2, and 7.1, which also support local communities and businesses to deliver nature recovery and climate resilience across the National Park.
- 5.4.4. Objective 5.1, which aims to enhance accessibility within the National Park, could potentially lead to adverse impacts on the South Downs' sensitive habitats due to increased visitor disturbance. However, the likelihood of such adverse effects is considered low. In fact, the objective may yield positive outcomes if implementation includes effective visitor management strategies that steer footfall away from and manage access to ecologically sensitive areas.

Climate Change

- 5.4.5. The PMP includes a range of objectives (such as Objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 3.1 and 3.2) focussed on enhancing green infrastructure within the National Park. These objectives are expected to deliver significant beneficial effects for both climate change mitigation and adaptation at the local level. Actions such as improving and expanding wildlife-rich habitats, increasing woodland cover, and enhancing water management systems will strengthen the resilience of ecosystems and communities against climate impacts. In addition, promoting catchment-based partnership approaches to water management will help reduce flood risks, thereby safeguarding both biodiversity and local populations. Improving the condition of the water

environment will also help ensure the availability of clean water for both nature and people, further contributing to overall climate resilience.

- 5.4.6. Efforts to improve accessibility within the National Park (for example, through Objective 5.1) will encourage active travel, which is likely to contribute to a reduction in local carbon emissions. While minor short-term adverse effects may result from emissions associated with construction activities, these are expected to be outweighed over time by the long-term benefits of modal shift towards more sustainable travel choices.
- 5.4.7. Objectives 2.1, 2.2, 4.2, and 7.1, which promote a green economy within the National Park, alongside Objective 4.1, which emphasises community engagement in climate action, are also anticipated to result in beneficial effects for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Encouraging businesses and communities to take action on climate change will enhance local resilience to extreme weather events and reduce overall vulnerability. Supporting young people in pursuing green careers will help build a locally skilled workforce, equipped with sustainable practices to meet long-term climate challenges.
- 5.4.8. As highlighted in the design standards section, climate-sensitive design is embedded in Objective 7.2, which supports the provision of low-carbon housing. This approach will contribute to reducing emissions associated with the built environment and support the National Park's broader climate change mitigation objectives.

Communities, Health & Wellbeing

- 5.4.9. The PMP sets out several objectives aimed at enhancing the National Park's natural environment, which, in addition to its intrinsic value, delivers multiple benefits for local communities. For example, protecting and celebrating the National Park's cultural heritage (Objectives 6.1 and 6.2) helps strengthen community identity. Encouraging businesses and communities to engage in climate action (Objectives 2.1 and 2.2) supports local resilience to climate change, with positive implications for community health and wellbeing. Enhancing habitat quality and extent (Objectives 1.2 and 1.3) and maintaining International Dark Sky Reserve status (Objective 5.2) support nature recovery and providing opportunities for community engagement with the environment, promoting both mental and physical wellbeing.
- 5.4.10. Objectives relating to water management also deliver important community benefits. Objectives 3.1 and 3.2, which focus on improved water management, contribute significantly to health and wellbeing. Promoting catchment-based partnerships to manage water (Objective 3.1) helps reduce flood risks, protecting both nature and communities, while improving the

condition of the water environment (Objective 3.2) supports the availability of clean water for people and wildlife.

- 5.4.11. Objectives that promote community involvement, local employment, and economic sustainability (including Objectives 2.2, 4.1, 4.2, and 7.1) are also expected to deliver considerable benefits for health and wellbeing. Creating opportunities for young people to take positive action for nature, climate, and heritage fosters a sense of purpose, belonging, and emotional wellbeing. Supporting pathways into green careers not only improves employment prospects but also helps build a resilient and skilled local workforce.
- 5.4.12. Objective 5.1, which aims to improve accessibility across the National Park, is likely to yield substantial health and wellbeing benefits. By enabling more people to engage in active travel through the South Downs, this objective supports both physical activity and mental health.
- 5.4.13. Finally, Objective 7.2, which focuses on meeting local housing needs, will significantly benefit community health and wellbeing. Delivering affordable and accessible housing addresses critical social challenges, contributing to long-term social sustainability.

Design Standards

- 5.4.14. Ecologically sensitive design is promoted through Objective 1.1, which encourages habitat creation in suitable locations, ensuring that development contributes to, rather than fragments, ecological networks. Additionally, Objective 5.2 supports design approaches that minimise light pollution, helping to conserve the National Park's International Dark Sky Reserve status and protecting nocturnal wildlife.
- 5.4.15. Climate-sensitive design is embedded in Objective 7.2, which supports the development of low-carbon housing. This will reduce emissions from the built environment and contribute to the National Park's broader climate change mitigation objectives.
- 5.4.16. Objective 4.2 is also expected to deliver indirect benefits to design standards by promoting the upskilling of the local workforce in traditional crafts. This will help ensure that high-quality, context-sensitive design can be delivered using locally available skills, supporting the preservation of the Park's historic and architectural character.

Employment and Economy

- 5.4.17. The PMP outlines several objectives that support employment within the National Park by fostering a resilient and sustainable green economy. Objectives 1.2, 2.1, and 2.2 promote the transformation of land-based

businesses into nature-friendly and climate-positive operations, which will help create green jobs and stimulate the local economy. Encouraging businesses and communities to take proactive climate action will also strengthen the National Park's resilience to climate change, reducing vulnerability to extreme weather events and the financial burden of associated damage. Furthermore, Objective 4.2 supports young people in pursuing green careers, thereby expanding employment opportunities and building a locally skilled workforce.

- 5.4.18. Objectives 5.1 and 7.2, which aim to make the National Park more accessible and attractive to visitors, are also expected to generate significant economic and employment benefits. Enhancing access to and within the National Park and improving the quality of visitor experiences will likely increase tourism, providing a boost to local businesses. Additionally, maintaining the National Park's International Dark Sky Reserve status (Objective 5.2) will continue to attract visitors, supporting a vital component of the local tourism economy.
- 5.4.19. Several PMP objectives are also expected to have indirect positive impacts on employment and the economy. For instance, Objective 3.1, which supports catchment-based partnership approaches to water management, will help reduce flood risks. This not only protects local communities and ecosystems but also safeguards businesses from the economic disruptions and recovery costs associated with flood events.

Equalities and Inclusion

- 5.4.20. The PMP includes several objectives that directly support equalities and inclusion across the National Park. In particular, Objectives 4.1 and 4.2 focus on supporting young people through youth programmes and work experience opportunities. These initiatives can help reduce barriers faced by underrepresented groups (such as those from low-income backgrounds or experiencing rural isolation) by building skills, confidence, and a meaningful connection with nature and heritage.
- 5.4.21. Objectives 5.1 and 5.2, which aim to improve travel and access throughout the National Park, are expected to provide significant benefits for individuals with accessibility needs, including disabled people, older adults, and those without access to private vehicles. Enhancements to active travel routes, the development of inclusive infrastructure, and greater public awareness of the Park's International Dark Sky Reserve status all contribute to creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for a broader and more diverse range of visitors.

5.4.22. Objective 7.2 also carries important implications for inclusion through its support for the delivery of affordable, accessible, and low-carbon housing. Housing affordability is a major issue in the South Downs, disproportionately affecting young people, disabled residents, seasonal workers, and lower-income households. By addressing these challenges, the PMP can help ensure that local people are not displaced and can continue to live and thrive within the National Park. Integrating accessibility considerations into housing design will further strengthen the objective's positive impact on equality and inclusion.

Historic and Cultural Heritage

5.4.23. The South Downs National Park boasts a rich and diverse historic environment, including a variety of features and landscapes recognised for their local and national heritage significance. The PMP contains several objectives aimed at conserving and enhancing both designated and non-designated heritage assets, along with their wider settings.

5.4.24. Two principal objectives under the 'Heritage Old and New' aim (Objectives 6.1 and 6.2) provide direct support for the historic environment. These objectives focus on improving the understanding, management, and condition of heritage assets, including efforts to reduce the number of assets listed on the Heritage at Risk Register. They also aim to deepen public engagement with the Park's archaeology, museums, arts, and cultural heritage, contributing to increased appreciation and long-term protection of heritage resources.

5.4.25. Objective 4.2 supports the historic environment by addressing the decline in traditional craft skills across the National Park. Maintaining and revitalising these heritage-related skills is essential for the effective conservation of the Park's historic buildings and cultural landscapes.

5.4.26. Objective 5.1, which focuses on improving access across the National Park, is likely to deliver indirect benefits to the historic environment by enhancing public access to heritage sites for both residents and visitors.

5.4.27. Objectives addressing climate change (including Objectives 2.1, 2.2, and 3.1) may also offer indirect protection for the historic environment by mitigating the impacts of extreme weather events (such as flooding, drought, and heat stress) which increasingly threaten vulnerable heritage assets. Proactive adaptation will be key to safeguarding these sites from future climate-related risks.

5.4.28. Enhancing biodiversity and green infrastructure (for example, through Objectives 1.1 and 1.3) can provide additional benefits to the historic environment by improving the landscape setting and visual context of heritage features. This can enhance the character and quality of historic townscapes, villagescapes, and designed landscapes. However, care must be taken to ensure that ecological interventions, such as habitat restoration or creation, do not unintentionally harm the significance of heritage assets (particularly in archaeologically sensitive areas). These risks can be effectively mitigated through early, integrated planning that brings together ecological and heritage expertise.

Landscape

- 5.4.29. The PMP outlines several objectives (including Objectives 1.1, 1.3, 2.2, and 3.2) focussed on enhancing the quality and extent of habitats within the National Park. The actions associated with these objectives are expected to deliver significant benefits for local biodiversity and help preserve the National Park's distinctive rural character, both of which are significant aspects of its Special Qualities. The emphasis on locally important habitats, such as chalk grassland, lowland heath, and chalk streams, further amplifies these positive outcomes. Additionally, Objective 5.2 supports the maintenance of the National Park's International Dark Sky Reserve status, which contributes to the overall tranquillity and aesthetic value of the landscape.
- 5.4.30. Objectives 1.2, 2.1, and 7.1, which promote a green economy, also offer landscape benefits. Encouraging businesses and communities to engage in climate action will enhance resilience to extreme weather, thereby helping to protect the integrity of the landscape. These objectives will also encourage wider adoption of sustainable land management practices, delivering mutual benefits for nature, the landscape, and local communities.
- 5.4.31. Objectives 5.1 and 7.1, which seek to improve accessibility to natural areas, have direct implications for the landscape. Improved access can increase public engagement, foster a deeper connection to nature, and encourage greater stewardship of the landscape. However, increased visitor numbers and infrastructure development (such as new paths or facilities) may lead to environmental degradation or adversely affect sensitive habitats, scenic viewpoints, and the National Park's visual character. There will be a need for these potential impacts to be managed carefully through sensitive planning and effective visitor management strategies to safeguard landscape quality.

5.4.32. The South Downs' historic and cultural landscapes are also well-represented within the PMP through Objectives 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, and 6.2. These objectives support the protection and enhancement of the National Park's historic assets and their settings, while also aiming to strengthen public appreciation and engagement with its cultural heritage. This will support the protection and enhancement of landscape character in the SDNP.

Housing

5.4.33. Although the PMP does not seek to allocate land for housing development within the National Park (given this is the role of the Local Plan, for which it provides an overarching strategic framework), it is expected to support positive outcomes for the local housing stock. This will primarily be delivered through the actions for Objective 7.2, which seeks to address the acute housing needs of local communities (particularly the need for affordable and accessible homes) while ensuring that development remains consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes and its protected landscape setting.

Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources

5.4.34. Objectives 1.1 and 1.3 aim to enhance the quality, extent, and connectivity of habitats across the South Downs, with a particular focus on the effective management of designated sites. The actions associated with these objectives are expected to result in beneficial effects on the long-term condition of ecological networks and the stability of key ecosystem functions that underpin the quality of the National Park's natural resources, including soil, air, and water.

5.4.35. Several PMP objectives also support the sustainable use of natural resources by promoting environmentally responsible and economically viable land-based businesses. In particular, Objectives 1.2 and 2.2 encourage the adoption of nature-friendly and climate-positive practices, which may result in reduced reliance on pesticides and fertilisers. This, in turn, will help to protect soil and water quality, ensuring the long-term productivity and sustainability of the landscape.

5.4.36. Objectives 3.1 and 3.2 specifically focus on safeguarding the National Park's water environment. Objective 3.1 promotes catchment-based approaches to water management, which are vital for addressing diffuse pollution, erosion, and habitat fragmentation. Complementing this, Objective 3.2 seeks to improve water quality and restore aquatic habitats, contributing to the delivery of a clean, resilient, and sustainable water supply.

Transport

- 5.4.37. Objective 5.1 is the most directly relevant objective within the PMP concerning transport. It aims to improve accessibility and engagement with the landscape through various measures that support both vehicular and pedestrian access. Key actions include the creation of additional accessible pathways, the introduction of more rest stops, expanded disabled parking facilities, and upgrades to gates and stiles to ensure ease of access.
- 5.4.38. Objective 7.2 also contributes to sustainable transport by ensuring that new housing is located in accessible areas. This approach aims to reduce the reliance on private vehicles by making public transport and active travel options more convenient and attractive for residents.

Cumulative Effects

- 5.4.39. The PMP provides a strategic framework to protect and enhance the National Park's natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage, while supporting sustainable communities, a green economy, and improved visitor experiences. As identified in the appraisals, the majority of the actions in the PMP are environmentally positive or neutral on their own. It is also considered that, due to the nature of the PMP, any cumulative and in-combination effects with the provisions of other plans are likely to be positive. This is given the measures in the Plan will lead and support activities set out in other plans and programmes associated with the National Park, and help limit the potential negative effects associated with aspects such as tourism, the economy of housing/employment provision. It will also reinforce opportunities for cross-plan environmental and socio-economic improvements. As such, no significant negative cumulative effects are anticipated in terms of the implementation of the policies and proposals.
- 5.4.40. It is also worth noting that many cumulative effects may be gradual, hard to detect, or only appear over time. This is especially true for effects linked to climate adaptation, visitor trends or long-term land management. To manage this, the PMP should be coordinated with local and regional monitoring to capture and respond to cross-boundary issues. Using shared data and working collaboratively with other bodies can help identify and reduce these effects early, ensuring the PMP supports long-term environmental improvement.

5.5. Conclusions

- 5.5.1. The objectives and associated actions within the PMP are expected to lead to **significant, direct, long-term, beneficial effects across most IIA themes**, including Climate Change, Communities and Health, Employment and Economy, Equalities and Inclusion, Historic and Cultural Heritage, Housing, Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources, and Transport.
- 5.5.2. **Moderate, medium-term benefits** are expected for Design Standards, while **mixed effects** are anticipated for Biodiversity and Nature Recovery and Landscape, with both beneficial outcomes (conservation and engagement) and some very limited potential adverse impacts (environmental degradation and new infrastructure).
- 5.5.3. **No significant adverse effects** are considered likely in implementation of the PMP.
- 5.5.4. The IIA puts forward the following recommendations for consideration by plan makers to inform policy development:
- Objective 1.1 may be strengthened by referencing the National Park’s Special Qualities, to ensure that the conservation of these qualities is directly linked to habitat and nature management. For example, the objective could be reworded to: *“To improve, expand, connect and increase the resilience of wildlife-rich habitats and land managed for nature, **in ways that conserve and enhance the National Park’s Special Qualities**, ensuring we are on track to reach 60% managed for nature by 2060”*.
 - Objective 5.1 may be strengthened with a greater emphasis on impact management, helping to balance accessibility with the protection of the National Park’s most sensitive features. For example, the objective could be reworded to: *“To improve the accessibility of the National Park to enable everyone to actively travel and connect with nature, **while managing visitor pressure to protect sensitive habitats and landscapes”**”*.

6. Next Steps

6.1. Plan Finalisation

- 6.1.1. Following consultation on the draft PMP, responses will be considered in finalising the PMP and the accompanying IIA. The final version of the PMP and supporting evidence will then be published. Unlike Local Plans, the PMP is not subject to Independent Examination or a legal test of soundness but must demonstrate alignment with national policy and relevant statutory purposes for National Parks.
- 6.1.2. Once finalised, the PMP will be adopted by the South Downs National Park Authority. Upon adoption, it will guide the management of the National Park, setting strategic priorities for conservation and sustainable development within the National Park.
- 6.1.3. The SEA Regulations require that a ‘statement’ be made available to accompany the final PMP, as soon as possible after its adoption. The purpose of this IIA Adoption Statement will be to outline how the IIA process has influenced and informed the PMP’s development process and demonstrate how consultation on the SEA has been considered.
- 6.1.4. To meet these requirements, an IIA Adoption Statement will be published with the final PMP. The IIA Adoption Statement will set out: the reasons for choosing the preferred policies and proposals in light of other reasonable alternatives; how environmental considerations were integrated into the policies and proposals’ development process; how consultation responses were considered; and the measures decided for monitoring the significant effects of the policies and proposals.

6.2. Monitoring

- 6.2.1. The SEA regulations require ‘*measures envisaged concerning monitoring*’ to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.
- 6.2.2. It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the PMP will be undertaken collectively by South Downs National Park Authority and its partners, drawing on their respective monitoring processes. This may include data from relevant local council’s Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs), as well as other relevant reporting undertaken by statutory agencies, land managers, and community organisations. No significant negative effects are considered

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likely in the implementation of the PMP that would warrant more stringent monitoring over and above that already undertaken.

Appendix A : Scoping Report

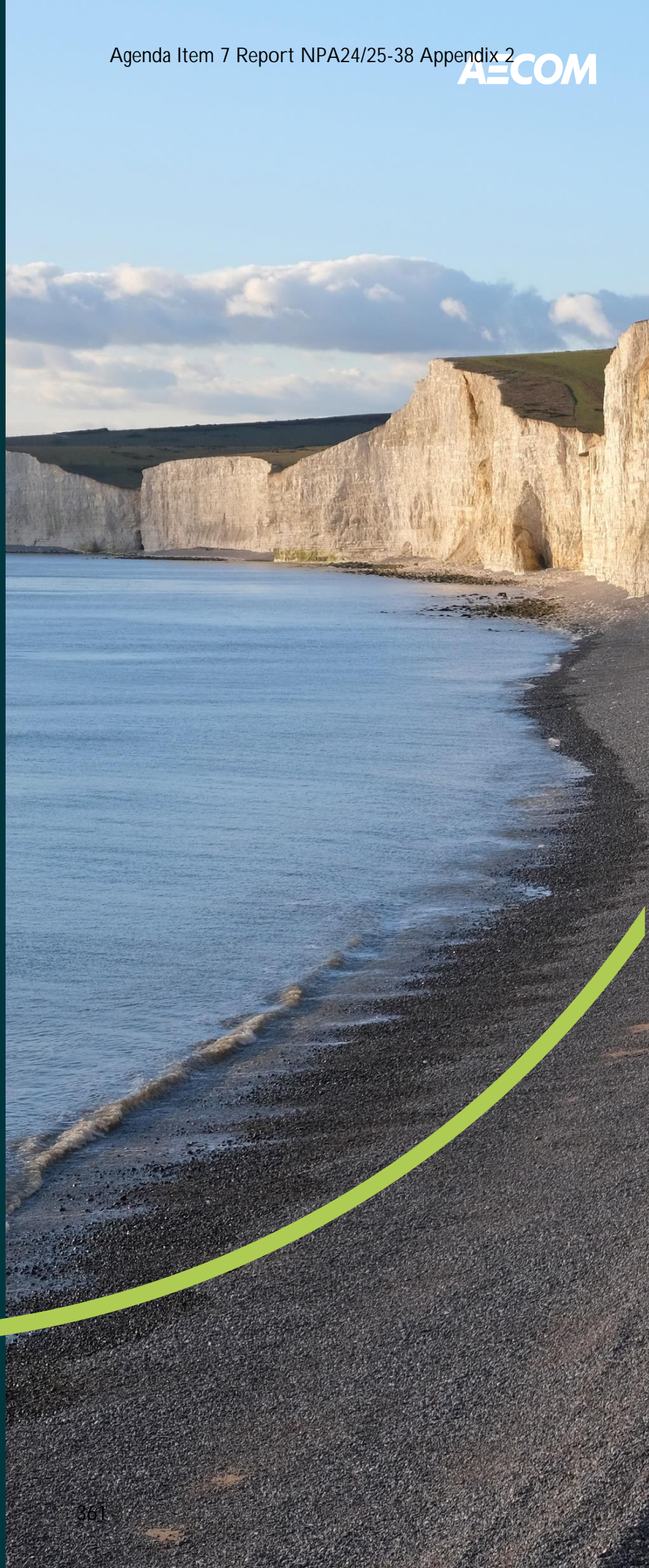
Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) for the South Downs National Park Management Plan

IIA Scoping Report

South Downs National Park Authority

Project number: 60736597

May 2025



Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
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Cover Image: Seven Sisters

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) in support of the emerging South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan review (PMP).
- 1.1.2. The PMP is being developed in accordance with the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949¹ and the Environment Act 1995². It is also aligned with the local development framework for the South Downs National Park.
- 1.1.3. The South Downs National Park is England's newest national park, having been designated in 2010. The National Park boundary is depicted in **Figure 1**.

1.2. What is a National Park Management Plan?

- 1.2.1. Every national park in the UK is required to produce a National Park Management Plan (NPMP), and update it every five years, under the Environment Act 1995. This document should outline the vision, objectives, and actions necessary to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of a national park, focusing on sustainable management practices and addressing the needs of visitors and local communities. While the NPMP is not a statutory planning document, it provides strategic guidance for the National Park Authority and its partners. The first South Downs National Park Management Plan was adopted by the in 2013.
- 1.2.2. In addition to a NPMP, each National Park Authority is responsible for preparing a Local Plan. A Local Plan is a statutory document developed under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.³ It sets out detailed policies for land use, housing, infrastructure, economic development, and environmental protection within the National Park. Planning decisions must align with the Local Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, ensuring that development is managed in a sustainable and coordinated manner.

¹ UK Government (1949). 'National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949' can be accessed through [this link](#).

² UK Government (1995). 'Environment Act 1995' can be accessed through [this link](#).

³ UK Government (2004). 'Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004' can be accessed through [this link](#)

Table 1: Key information relating to the South Downs National Park Management Plan

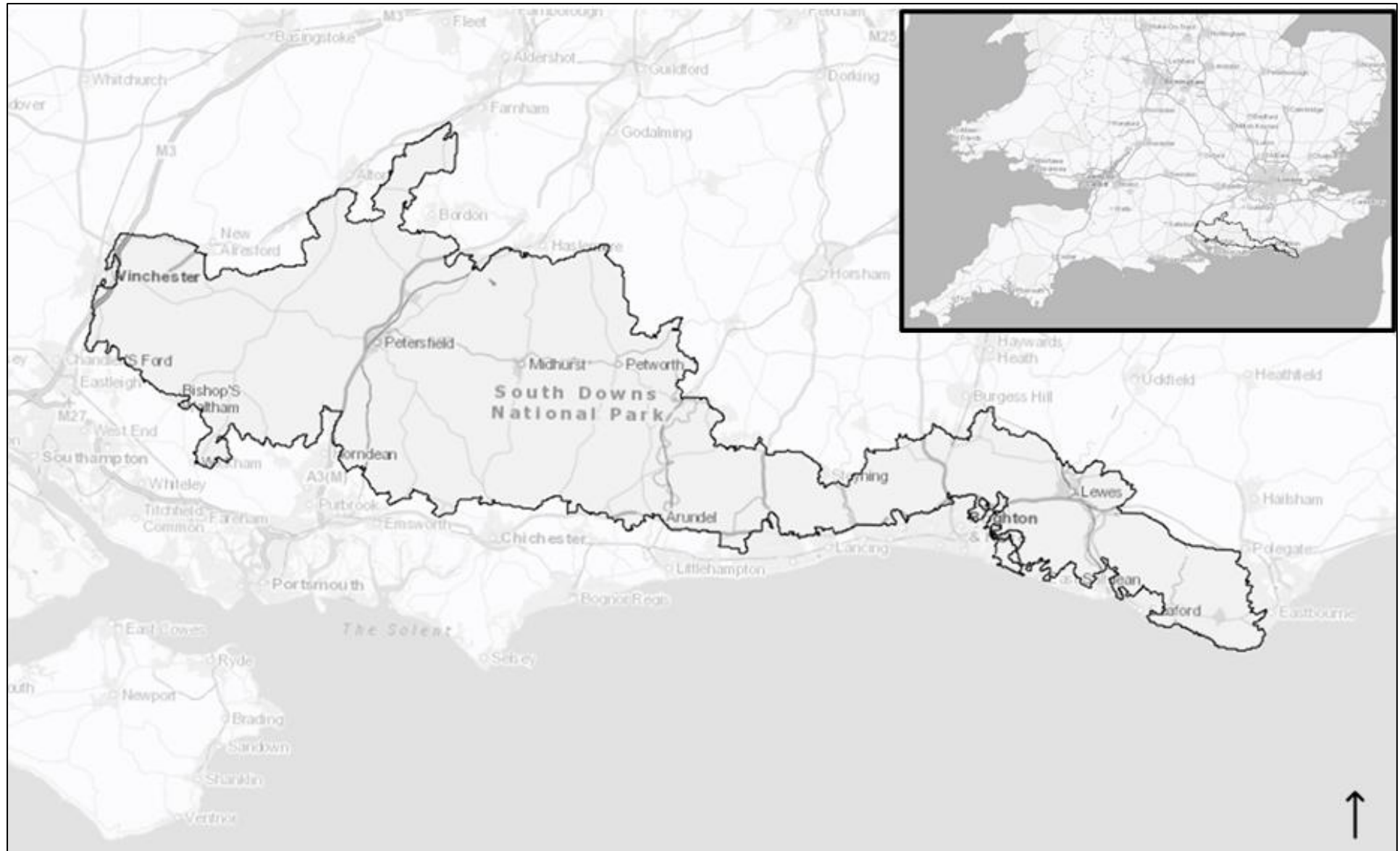
Name of Responsible Authority	South Downs National Park Authority
Title of Plan	South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan
Subject	National park management plan
Purpose	<p>The South Downs National Park Management Plan is being prepared as a management plan under the in accordance with the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Environment Act 1995. It is also aligned with the local development framework for the South Downs National Park, as well as the overlapping district development frameworks. Due regard is also given to relevant local plan updates, including the South Downs Local Plan Review.</p> <p>The South Downs National Park Management Plan will be used to guide the conservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of the National Park, ensuring the protection of natural and cultural resources while balancing the needs of visitors and local communities.</p>
Timescale	2025 to 2030
Planning context	The local planning policy framework for the National Park consists of the South Downs Local Plan ⁴ , made neighbourhood plans ⁵ , and county-level minerals and waste plans ⁶ .
Area covered by the plan	<p>The South Downs National Park is located in the south-east of England.</p> <p>Counties (and districts) that overlap with the National Park designation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hampshire (Winchester; East Hampshire) • West Sussex (Chichester; Arun; Adur; Horsham; Worthing; Mid Sussex) • East Sussex (Lewes; Wealden; Eastbourne). <p>The unitary authority of Brighton and Hove also overlaps with the National Park.</p>
Summary of content	The South Downs National Park Management Plan will set out a vision, strategy, and range of outcomes for the National Park.
Plan contact point	Rebecca Glasby, Performance & Learning Officer. Email: Rebecca.Glasby@southdowns.gov.uk

⁴ South Downs National Park (no date). 'South Downs Local Plan and Policies Map 2014-2033' can be accessed through [this link](#).

⁵ South Downs National Park (no date). 'Community Planning' can be accessed through [this link](#)

⁶ South Downs National Park (no date). 'Minerals & Waste Plans' can be accessed through [this link](#).

Figure 1: South Downs National Park Area⁷



⁷ South Downs National Park Authority mapping, available through [this link](#)

1.3. IIA Explained

- 1.3.1. Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is a mechanism for assessing and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives, with a view to achieving sustainable development. IIA fulfils the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and discharges the duties for Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Health Impact Assessment (HIA).
- 1.3.2. The aim of the IIA will be to inform plan-making both directly (i.e. through structured, systematic and evidence-based analysis), and indirectly (through providing stakeholders with information on potential plan impacts and so facilitating effective consultation).
- 1.3.3. The use of an IIA approach will help ensure consistency in the development and evaluation of the PMP and is considered best practice.
- 1.3.4. Undertaken through an SEA-led methodology, the IIA will incorporate an HIA and EqIA. In addition, a parallel Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process will be undertaken to support the development of the PMP and reported on separately.
- 1.3.5. A discussion of the different elements to be integrated within the IIA process is presented below.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- 1.3.6. SEA is undertaken to address the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('the SEA Regulations').⁸ It also widens the scope of the assessment from focusing on environmental issues to further consider social and economic issues. The SEA Regulations only formally apply to plans and programmes for which there is a statutory requirement; national park management plans fall within this definition.
- 1.3.7. Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
 - When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues; and
 - A report (the 'Environmental Report') is published for consultation alongside the draft plan for consultation that presents an assessment of the draft plan (i.e. discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.

⁸ UK Government (2004). 'The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004' can be accessed through [this link](#).

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

- 1.3.8. As a public sector organisation, South Downs National Park Authority has a duty under the Equality Act 2010⁹ and the associated Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to ensure that the objectives and policy options within the District eliminate unlawful discrimination (direct and indirect), as well as advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between those with a protected characteristics¹⁰ and all others. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is often used by public sector organisations to demonstrate how this duty has been met.
- 1.3.9. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination both in the workplace and in wider society. It replaces previous anti-discrimination laws which include the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Act ensures that individuals with certain 'protected characteristics' are not indirectly or directly discriminated against. The protected characteristics include:
- **Age:** this refers to persons defined by either a particular age or a range of ages;
 - **Disability:** a disabled person is defined as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities;
 - **Gender reassignment:** this refers to people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process for the purpose of reassigning their gender identity;
 - **Marriage and civil partnership:** marriage can be between a man and a woman or between two people of the same sex. Same-sex couples can also have a civil partnership. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples;
 - **Pregnancy and maternity:** pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth;
 - **Race:** the Equality Act 2010 defines race as encompassing colour, nationality (including citizenship) and ethnic or national origins;
 - **Religion or belief:** religion means any religion a person follows. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief, and includes those people who have no formal religion or belief;

⁹ UK Government (2010). 'Equality Act 2010' can be accessed through [this link](#).

¹⁰ Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 include age, sex, marital status, disability, gender reassignment, ethnicity, religion, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation and deprived/disadvantaged groups.

- **Gender:** this refers to a man or to a woman or a group of people of the same sex, while gender refers to the wider social roles and relationships that structure men's and women's, boys' and girls' lives;
- **Sexual orientation:** a person's sexual orientation relates to their emotional, physical and/or sexual attraction and the expression of that attraction.
- **Socio-economic status:** a person's socio-economic status referring to combined economic and sociological measure of a person's work experience and economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

- 1.3.10. There are numerous links between planning and health highlighted throughout the NPPF.¹¹ For example, Paragraph 96 of the NPPF states that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities and the NPPG states that Local Planning Authorities should ensure that health and wellbeing, and health infrastructure are considered in plans and in planning decision-making.¹² In this context, Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a process which seeks to ensure that the effect of proposals on both health and health inequalities are considered and responded to during the plan's development process.
- 1.3.11. An HIA identifies the positive impacts, and minimise the negative impacts, of a project or plan, with a view to informing decision making.

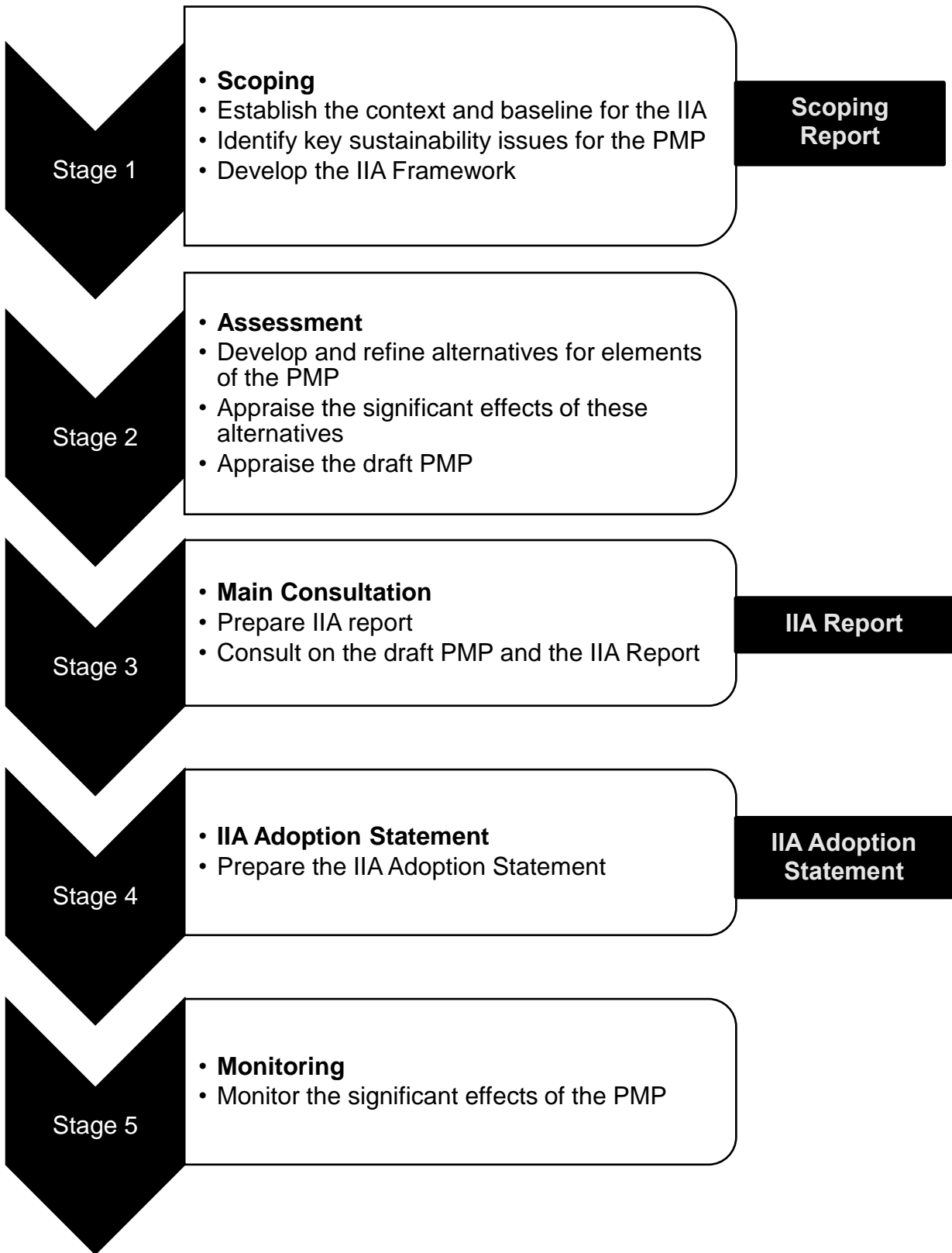
Integrated Impact Assessment

- 1.3.12. As previously explained, the IIA seeks to fulfil the requirement for SEA and addresses the duty to undertake an EqlA and HIA. The approach is to fully integrate these to provide a single assessment process to inform the development of the PMP. This reflects the process undertaken for the IIA for the South Downs Local Plan.
- 1.3.13. **Figure 2** highlights the stages of the IIA.

¹¹ UK Government (2024). 'National Planning Policy Framework' can be accessed through [this link](#).

¹² UK Government (2022). 'Healthy and safe communities' can be accessed through [this link](#).

Figure 2: Stages of the IIA Process



Screening

- 1.3.14. SEA screening is the process for determining whether a plan or programme is likely to require an SEA process. The screening process is based upon consideration of standard criteria¹³ to determine whether the PMP is likely to have 'significant environmental effects', and subsequently whether there is a need for SEA. The SEA regulations do not specify whether these significant effects must be beneficial or adverse, allowing for both types of impacts to be considered in the assessment.
- 1.3.15. In this respect, the PMP has been 'screened in' by the National Park Authority as requiring an SEA process due to the potential for significant environmental effects arising from the PMP. This relates to the significant environmental sensitivities present within and around the National Park, including its landscape, biodiversity, and historic environment. The comprehensive policy proposals within the PMP have the potential to impact these sensitive assets, and it is important to consider the full range of these values to ensure their protection and sustainable management.
- 1.3.16. In addition, initial screening has suggested that an HRA process is required due to the presence of sensitive European sites designated for their nature conservation interest present in the vicinity of National Park.
- 1.3.17. The HRA process is being undertaken alongside the IIA process and will be reported separately. However, the conclusions of the HRA will be taken into account in the IIA process.

IIA Scoping Explained

- 1.3.18. This Scoping Report seeks to establish a suggested scope for the IIA (Stage 3 in **Figure 2**). A key procedural requirement of the SEA Regulations is to present this scope for the IIA, so that the designated authorities (Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency) can provide timely comment.
- 1.3.19. Developing the draft scope for the IIA as presented in this report has involved the following steps:
- Exploring the policy context for the PMP and IIA to summarise the key messages arising;
 - Establishing the baseline for the IIA (i.e., the current and future situation in the area in the absence of the PMP) to help identify the Plan's likely significant effects;
 - Identifying particular problems or opportunities ('issues') that should be a particular focus of the IIA; and

¹³ These criteria include potential impacts on biodiversity, flora, and fauna; population and human health; soil, water, and air quality; climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage; landscape; and the interrelationships between these factors.

- Considering this information, developing an IIA framework comprising IIA Objectives and assessment questions, which can then be used as a guiding framework for the subsequent assessment.

1.3.20. The revision of the PMP is being conducted concurrently with the revision of the South Downs Local Plan, which is also undergoing its own IIA. In alignment with the revised Local Plan's IIA, the scope of this PMP IIA will be explored and presented under the same 11 key IIA themes.

1.3.21. These themes are as follows:

- Biodiversity and Nature Recovery;
- Climate Change;
- Communities, Health & Wellbeing;
- Design Standards;
- Employment and Economy;
- Equalities and Inclusion;
- Historic and Cultural Heritage;
- Housing;
- Landscape;
- Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources; and
- Transport.

1.3.22. The selected IIA themes incorporate the 'SEA topics' suggested by Schedule 2(6) of the SEA Regulations.¹⁴

¹⁴ UK Government (2004). 'The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004' can be accessed through [this link](#).

2. Policy Context and Environmental Baseline

2.1. Policy Context

- 2.1.1. The IIA must take into account the relationships between the PMP and other relevant policies, plans, programmes (PPPs) and environmental objectives. In this context, the contents of the PMP will be partially influenced by, and will also have some influence over, objectives presented within other plans/programmes that are produced for the South Downs (including its component local authorities), sub regionally and nationally.
- 2.1.2. The table in Appendix A of the South Downs Local Plan Review IIA Scoping Report¹⁵ provides an overview of the most relevant PPPs that are under consideration as part of the IIA process for the Local Plan review. These PPPs are also relevant to the PMP IIA. For reference, the table is replicated at the end of this document as **Table A1**.

2.2. Environmental Baseline

- 2.2.1. An important step in the IIA process is to establish an environmental baseline, which summarises the current state of the environment within the South Downs National Park. This will be used as a foundation for assessing the potential effects of the emerging PMP.
- 2.2.2. An environmental baseline for the South Downs is available in the recently published State of the Park Report (2025), which presents key data and trends across a range of environmental factors, including, but not limited to, biodiversity, cultural heritage, and landscape. The information is drawn from a variety of sources, including national datasets, local monitoring reports, and relevant policies.
- 2.2.3. The report will be available as an experience map on the South Downs National Park Authority website in early 2025. A text version of the report is attached as **Appendix B**.

¹⁵ South Downs National Park Authority (2024). 'Local Plan Review Integrated Impact Assessment Scoping Report' can be accessed through [this link](#).

3. Key Sustainability Issues

Introduction

- 3.1.1. Using the information in the baseline review, this section presents the key sustainability issues associated with the PMP, presented by IIA theme.
- 3.1.2. These issues reflect the key pressures, trends, and opportunities within South Downs and will inform the development of the IIA Framework.

Biodiversity and Nature Recovery

- 3.1.3. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Biodiversity and Nature Recovery:
 - The South Downs National Park's unique geology and microclimates support diverse wildlife across chalk downlands, woodlands, heathlands, farmland, rivers, and coastal cliffs. As a result, the Park contains many designated biodiversity conservation sites, some of international importance.
 - Human activity, including its nature, scale, timing, and duration, can significantly disturb species, affecting their behaviour and long-term population viability. In this regard, the Park's high population density, compared to other national parks, places unique pressures on its habitats and species.
 - There are conflicts between public access and biodiversity conservation, as recreational use can lead to habitat damage, erosion, and species disturbance.
 - Urban greenness in most settlements within the Park declined between 2018 and 2024.
 - Protected sites often require management beyond their boundaries.
 - As of 2020, 96% of the Park's Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are either in favourable condition or being managed towards it.
 - Between 2012 and 2024, Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) under active management declined by 3%, and the condition of 44% remains unknown.
 - The area covered by priority habitat in the Park has increased by 0.8% since 2020.
 - Woodland covers 16% of the Park, with 70% under sustainable management; however, threats such as ash dieback, Dutch elm disease, deer browsing, and climate change are concerns.

- Grazing and scrub encroachment threaten grassland and heathland habitats.
- Certain protected bird species, including lapwings, buzzards, wheatears, linnets, and yellowhammers, are in decline.
- Climate change is expected to have significant impacts on species, habitats, and natural assets, including shifts in species composition, habitat changes, and coastal squeeze.

Climate Change

3.1.4. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Climate Change:

- In 2020, the South Downs National Park Authority acknowledged the Climate Emergency and have committed to a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
- Climate Change Adaptation Challenges:
 - Coastal erosion, accelerated by climate change, is likely to cause significant changes to the Park's coastline, with more frequent and unpredictable cliff falls.
 - Sea level rise may disrupt the natural functioning of tidal rivers and estuaries.
 - Increased risk of flooding, particularly in river valleys and low-lying areas, affecting properties and agricultural land.
 - More frequent cycles of drought and flooding are projected.
 - Hotter, drier summers may increase fire risk on lowland heath.
 - Wetter winters and extreme rainfall events are expected to become more frequent, leading to increased flooding.
- Climate Change Mitigation:
 - Renewable electricity generation is increasing in the South East.
 - There is significant potential to expand the use of wood fuel for home heating.
 - Opportunities exist to reduce carbon emissions in the National Park through behaviour change and renewable energy generation.

Communities, Health & Wellbeing

3.1.5. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Communities, Health & Wellbeing:

- The South Downs National Park is the most populated National Park in the UK. However, significantly more people live in the surrounding urban areas and villages than within the Park itself.
- The Park has an ageing population, with over a quarter of residents aged 65 and over (significantly higher than regional and national averages) while the working-age population is underrepresented. This demographic shift impacts access to and provision of health and social care services.
- Around a third of visitors use the Park for health and wellbeing benefits, with research highlighting improved fitness, mental wellbeing through green exercise, and stronger community connections.
- The Park provides opportunities for people to connect with the landscape through accessible walks, creative activities, and conservation tasks.
- Rich learning experiences are available through museums, historic sites, outdoor education, and wildlife reserves. The park also supports lifelong learning, with over 200 outdoor learning providers.
- Access to Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) is strong, with 90% of households within the park boundary located within 2 km of a 20 ha ANG site.
- Maintaining viable local facilities and services (such as shops, pubs, and primary schools) is a challenge. Their closure affects community structure and increases social isolation, particularly for older and younger age groups.
- Climate change poses risks to health and wellbeing. Increased summer temperatures could lead to higher mortality and morbidity among elderly and vulnerable groups, while flooding events threaten life, property, social cohesion, and essential services.
- Although general deprivation levels are low within the Park, higher deprivation exists in some adjacent urban areas.
- Rural crime is a concern, including wildlife crime (poaching, hare coursing), anti-social behaviour (fly-tipping, littering, illegal land use), and farm crime (metal, fuel, and equipment theft, as well as sheep worrying).

Design Standards

3.1.6. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Design Standards:

- The character and appearance of settlements throughout the National Park derives in large part from the distinctive local building materials.
- New developments should align with local character, particularly in traditional design and materials, to preserve the area's unique identity. The ongoing trend of converting historic farm buildings into residential and commercial properties highlights the need for good design that conserves and enhances local environments. At the same time, modern developments must balance traditional styles with the need for contemporary living standards and sustainability.
- New buildings and schemes should respond sensitively to the South Downs' chalk landscapes, wooded areas, and river valleys, ensuring they enhance rather than detract from the natural setting. Developments should also incorporate biodiversity and green infrastructure features (such as green roofs, wildlife corridors, and sustainable drainage systems) to support climate resilience.
- Community involvement plays a vital role in shaping design standards, ensuring developments reflect local identity and needs.
- Strong heritage protection is important for the preservation of the character and setting of the historic environment.
- Design that promotes high-quality, sustainable buildings and developments are needed to enhance resilience to climate change in the National Park.

Employment and Economy

3.1.7. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Employment and Economy:

- The South Downs National Park faces significant out-commuting, with around 14,000 residents travelling to surrounding towns and cities, limiting local economic growth and creating wage disparities.
- Poor broadband access remains a barrier to business competitiveness, with some areas still lacking reliable superfast coverage, despite national efforts to improve connectivity.
- The agricultural sector is financially unstable, impacted by reduced EU payments, low food prices, high input costs, and extreme weather events. Farmers are diversifying into tourism and nature-based markets to secure alternative income streams.

- Tourism plays a key role in the local economy, but faces seasonal peaks, a reliance on car travel, and the need for sustainable, year-round accommodation and visitor services.
- Green tourism is emerging as an opportunity, with growing consumer demand for eco-friendly travel options.
- The Park's economy is constrained by planning challenges, including complex application processes, and the need to support Net Zero goals and renewable energy projects.
- Nature markets, offering ecosystem services like biodiversity credits, present new income opportunities for landowners but require significant upfront investment.
- Climate change poses a significant risk to the economy, particularly in agriculture, with increased frequency of extreme weather events like floods and droughts impacting crop yields and livestock, further straining the financial stability of land-based businesses.
- With a high number of micro-businesses, there is a need for more industrial and office space to support future growth.

Equalities and Inclusion

3.1.8. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Equalities and Inclusion:

- Inequalities exist in physical and educational access to the countryside and cultural facilities, particularly among different racial, ethnic, and social groups, as well as between genders and people with disabilities.
- Inequalities persist in experiencing the health benefits of physical activity, access to nature, and opportunities for growing and consuming healthy food.
- Expanding and improving public and active transport networks would improve access for residents and visitors who do not use private vehicles.
- The South Downs National Park has good provision for Learning Outside the Classroom and volunteering, with nearly 60% of schools engaging in outdoor learning opportunities.
- The loss of community facilities weakens social interaction, community cohesion, and the sense of place these facilities provide.
- The ageing population in the South Downs increases the demand for suitable housing.

- The lack of affordable housing significantly affects those with modest incomes, often forcing them to relocate and leave behind their support systems and employment opportunities.

Historic and Cultural Heritage

3.1.9. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Historic and Cultural Heritage:

- The South Downs National Park boasts a rich historic environment, with significant clusters of designated assets in many areas. However, there are 69 listed buildings at risk, with buildings of limited or no economic value becoming more prominent among those at risk.
- Around 40% of Scheduled Monuments in the South Downs National Park were identified as vulnerable.
- The lack of detailed knowledge and management of the Park's heritage may result in further degradation and loss of archaeological features and other heritage assets. Climate change exacerbates this threat, with coastal erosion likely to cause the permanent loss of coastal heritage features. Furthermore, historic assets, particularly barrows, hill forts, and buried archaeology, are vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, such as increased rainfall, erosion, and vegetation encroachment.
- Limited access to and understanding of the historic environment hampers efforts to safeguard the Park's historic assets.
- Increased urbanisation threatens the local distinctiveness, character, and integrity of both the built environment and its setting.
- The pressure of development, especially in rural areas, can erode historic features and compromise the landscape's heritage value.
- There is a need to address heritage crafts and skills in terms of the future workforce, in order to manage and maintain the built character of protected landscapes.
- The impact of tourism on heritage sites, including potential damage from over-crowding, also poses a growing concern.

Housing

3.1.10. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Housing:

- The South Downs National Park has an ageing population, with a potential need for additional specialist housing to support this demographic.

- Housing affordability and price pressures are increasing, with property prices making it difficult for many to access housing, particularly younger and local residents.
- The prevalence of second homes and holiday lets reduces the availability of housing for permanent local residents, exacerbating affordability issues.
- There is also a need for additional gypsy and traveller pitches, as well as plots for travelling showpeople.
- Accommodation for rural workers is another identified need.
- Meeting local housing needs is essential to maintaining the sustainability and vitality of communities within the Park.
- The capacity of local infrastructure, such as transport, schools, and healthcare, must be considered when planning new housing developments, especially in rural areas.

Landscape

3.1.11. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Landscape:

- Degradation of landscape character results from agricultural specialisation, land-use changes, and the loss of traditional grazing, leading to an altered rural landscape.
- Urbanisation, small-scale developments, and housing pressures have the potential to erode local distinctiveness, threatening the historic built environment and its setting.
- Incremental, small-scale changes in the landscape have the potential to gradually diminish the Park's character.
- The open downland is particularly vulnerable to urban expansion and pressures from coastal development, threatening the Park's rural character.
- Major infrastructure projects, including roads and railways, have the potential for adverse effects on the landscape, damaging views, and disrupting tranquillity.
- Renewable energy development has the potential to compromise the South Downs' nationally important landscape character, requiring careful consideration of technology and location.
- Climate change is adversely altering landscape character, impacting open views, historic landscapes, and traditional features such as field boundaries and veteran trees.

- Green infrastructure solutions, such as natural flood management, can enhance ecosystem functions but may also alter the landscape character, requiring careful integration with conservation goals.
- Tranquillity and dark skies are threatened by poorly sited developments, excessive lighting, and increasing traffic, impacting the Park's sense of remoteness and its Dark Sky Reserve status.

Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources

3.1.12. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources:

- Development proposals in the Sussex North Water Resource Zone must demonstrate 'water neutrality,' ensuring that total water use after development does not exceed pre-development levels.
- The South Downs lies within water company areas classified as under 'serious water stress', with increasing demand for both domestic and agricultural water threatening sustainability.
- Over-abstraction from aquifers and rivers, particularly in chalk and lower greensand aquifers, is impacting water quality and contributing to ecological decline, especially in protected areas like the Arun Valley.
- Increasing water demand and drier summers raises the risk of water shortages, hosepipe bans, and restrictions, impacting both domestic and agricultural use.
- The quality of both surface and groundwater is vulnerable to pollution, and ongoing efforts are required to manage water resources and mitigate contamination risks.
- Population growth and increasing development within and around the National Park will place additional pressure on water resources, necessitating stricter water efficiency standards.
- The South Downs is home to rare chalk streams, many of which are in poor condition due to pollution and habitat degradation, requiring continued efforts to improve their ecological health.
- Soil degradation, including increased erosion and nutrient runoff, poses a risk to water quality, particularly during cycles of drought and heavy rainfall, which are being more frequent due to climate change.
- Changing agricultural practices, such as de-intensification or adoption of regenerative methods, could help improve water management, soil quality, and biodiversity.

- In general, air quality in the National Park is good. However, there are concerns about the levels of nitrogen dioxide emissions in certain areas (including an AQMA).
- Existing operational sites for mineral extraction must be carefully managed to meet the need for regional mineral supply while minimising environmental impact, particularly in sensitive areas of the National Park.
- There is a need for additional soft sand extraction sites within the South Downs to ensure a steady regional supply, with some sites also producing recycled and secondary aggregates.

Transport

3.1.13. Considering the policy context and baseline information, the following key issues (constraints and / or opportunities) are identified in relation to Transport:

- Public transport infrastructure within the South Downs National Park is poor, with many areas lacking sufficient bus services. This results in high dependence on cars, leading to congestion and parking problems, especially at peak times and in popular destinations.
- Poor public transport, combined with growing visitor numbers, exacerbates road congestion, negatively affecting tranquillity, air quality, and landscape protection.
- The lack of public transport options contributes to social exclusion, particularly for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled, and young people, leaving them without access to essential services and opportunities.
- Managing visitor access points, improving sustainable transport options, and planning for electric vehicle charging infrastructure are important to mitigating congestion and enhancing sustainable tourism in the Park.
- The reduction of rural bus services over recent years, due to funding cuts, has increased isolation, particularly among those without access to a car. This is particularly affecting young people's ability to access education and employment and is exacerbating isolation for elderly or disabled residents (also see the Equalities and Inclusion key issues).
- Enhancing public transport and promoting active transport, like walking and cycling, is important to support the recreational opportunities within the Park, reduce car dependency, and minimise environmental impacts.
- A more integrated approach to sustainable tourism, including transport, accommodation, and resource management, is needed to ensure that the increasing number of visitors does not adversely affect the Park's natural and cultural assets.

4. Proposed IIA Framework

- 4.1.1. The IIA framework has been established through the identification of key issues and environmental objectives as part of the scoping exercise. This draws upon the baseline position, policy context, and key sustainability issues that has been prepared for the IIA themes.
- 4.1.2. The framework consists of a set of headline objectives and supporting assessment questions, which will be used to appraise the environmental effects of the draft PMP (and reasonable alternatives).
- 4.1.3. **Table 2** below outlines the proposed IIA framework.

Table 2: Proposed IIA Framework for the PMP

IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
Biodiversity and Nature Recovery	Protect and enhance the South Downs National Park’s biodiversity and ecosystems, supporting nature recovery and resilience to environmental pressures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance internationally, nationally, and locally designated sites, including supporting habitats and mobile species that are important to the integrity of these sites? • Improve the management and connectivity of priority habitats, supporting nature recovery within and beyond designated site boundaries? • Ensure current ecological networks are not compromised, and future improvements in habitat connectivity are not prejudiced? • Secure the opportunities for nature recovery identified by the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy? • Mitigate the impacts of human activity on wildlife, including disturbance from recreation, urban expansion, and land-use changes? • Support sustainable land management practices that benefit biodiversity, such as sensitive grazing regimes, woodland management, and habitat restoration? • Protect and restore declining species, particularly key bird populations? • Increase urban greenness in settlements within the Park? • Enhance woodland coverage and resilience by promoting sustainable forestry, natural regeneration, and disease-resistant tree species? • Ensure the protection and enhancement of ancient woodland and other irreplaceable habitats? • Balance public access with conservation to prevent habitat damage? • Improve biodiversity monitoring and data collection for informed decision-making?
Climate Change	(Mitigation) Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities in the National Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of journeys made by polluting vehicles? • Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport?

IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Improve energy efficiency in buildings and infrastructure? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources in appropriate locations? • Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources? • Support the transition to electric vehicles? • Enhance carbon sequestration? • Support community-led carbon reduction initiatives and behaviour change programs? • Promote sustainable agricultural and land management practices?
	(Adaptation) Support the resilience of the National Park to the potential effects of climate change, including flood risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the National Park? • Sustainably manage water runoff? • Utilise Sustainable Drainage Systems, incorporated as part of green infrastructure? • Increase the resilience of the local built and natural environment? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are duly considered in the design of new development in the National Park? • Protect and enhance natural river and coastal processes to adapt to sea level rise and increased erosion? • Reduce wildfire risk? • Support water conservation measures?
Communities, Health & Wellbeing	Promote thriving communities that support health, wellbeing, and access to services for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the retention and viability of local services and facilities? • Address the challenges of an ageing population by ensuring access to appropriate housing, healthcare, and social support? • Encourage participation in community and conservation activities?

IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing and future residents? • Reduce social isolation among vulnerable groups, including older residents and young people? • Support safer communities by reducing rural crime and anti-social behaviour? • Address health inequalities, particularly in more deprived areas adjacent to the National Park?
Design Standards	Ensure that new development respects and enhances the distinctive character, appearance, and heritage of the South Downs National Park, while incorporating high-quality, sustainable, and climate-resilient design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use local and traditional materials to protect settlement character? • Balance traditional styles with modern, sustainable design? • Encourage development that is sensitive to the surrounding landscape? • Support biodiversity and green infrastructure? • Encourage community involvement in shaping design? • Strengthen heritage protection for historic sites and their setting? • Promote climate-resilient, sustainable construction?
Employment and Economy	Support a resilient, diverse, and sustainable local economy that provides high-quality employment opportunities, enhances rural business, and fosters green growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce out-commuting and strengthen the local economy? • Improve digital infrastructure and connectivity? • Enhance agricultural resilience and diversification? • Promote sustainable and year-round tourism? • Support the development of nature-based income streams? • Increase economic resilience to climate change? • Facilitate business growth through workspace provision?
Equalities and Inclusion	Promote equal and inclusive access to the National Park’s natural, cultural, and community assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to the countryside for people with disabilities and underrepresented groups? • Encourage participation in outdoor learning and volunteering opportunities? • Facilitate opportunities for growing and consuming healthy food? • Promote active lifestyles and social inclusion?

IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
Historic and Cultural Heritage	Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the National Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure safe and inclusive access to key services, cultural sites, and recreational areas for those without private transport? • Conserve and enhance buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their settings? • Reduce the number of heritage assets at risk by supporting appropriate conservation, repair, and reuse? • Improve the resilience of heritage assets to climate change impacts? • Ensure new development is sensitive to the historic character and setting of the National Park? • Promote research, survey work, and data collection to improve understanding and management of the Park’s historic environment? • Support the undertaking of early archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies? • Improve public access to, and appreciation of, the Park’s historic environment and cultural heritage? • Encourage the use of traditional building materials in new development to reflect local character? • Promote the retention and development of heritage skills to ensure the long-term maintenance and repair of historic structures? • Ensure that visitor management strategies protect historic sites from over-crowding and physical damage?
Housing	Ensure that housing development are sustainable and meet the needs of local communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality and affordable housing? • Provide flexible and adaptable homes that meet people’s changing needs? • Provide suitable housing options for an ageing population, including specialist housing? • Address housing affordability and support access to housing for younger and local residents?

IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the impact of second homes and holiday lets on the availability of housing for local residents? • Meet the need for additional gypsy and traveller pitches and plots for travelling showpeople? • Provide accommodation for rural workers to support local economies? • Consider the capacity of local infrastructure (e.g., transport, schools, healthcare) when planning new housing?
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape of the South Downs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and/ or enhance local landscape character and quality of place? • Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character? • Identify and protect important viewpoints which contribute to character and sense of place? • Protect and extend / enhance green infrastructure corridors? • Protect visual amenity? • Retain and enhance landscape features that contribute to the rural setting, including trees and hedgerows? • Minimise the impact of small-scale changes that could erode the Park’s overall character? • Safeguard the open downland and rural character from urban expansion and coastal development pressures? • Protect the Park’s tranquillity and dark skies from developments, excessive lighting, and traffic?
Protection and Sustainable Use of Resources	Ensure the sustainable use and protection of natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address increasing water demand in areas of serious water stress? • Prevent over-abstraction from aquifers and rivers, especially in protected areas like the Arun Valley? • Mitigate risks of water shortages, hosepipe bans, and restrictions during drier summers? • Protect water quality by reducing pollution and managing contamination risks to both surface and groundwater?

IIA Theme	IIA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the PMP Help to...)
Transport	Promote sustainable transport use, reduce car dependency, and improve accessibility throughout the National Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve water efficiency standards? • Support the restoration and improvement of rare chalk streams? • Protects the national park’s Best and Most Versatile agricultural land? • Prevent soil degradation and mitigate nutrient runoff? • Promote agricultural practices that improve water management, soil quality, and biodiversity, such as regenerative methods? • Maintain air quality by addressing concerns regarding nitrogen dioxide emissions, especially in AQMA areas? • Manage operational sites for mineral and aggregate extraction to minimise environmental impact? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve public transport infrastructure to reduce reliance on cars? • Alleviate road congestion and its negative impact on tranquillity, air quality, and landscape protection? • Encourage the uptake of active travel opportunities? • Protect, extend and improve active travel networks (including National Trails, Public Rights of Way and cycleways)? • Provide transport options for vulnerable groups to reduce social exclusion? • Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles? • Improve road safety? • Improve parking facilities? • Improve electric vehicle charging infrastructure? • Support integrated sustainable tourism approaches to balance transport, accommodation, and resource use? • Ensure any new transport infrastructure does not lead to habitat fragmentation and biodiversity decline?

5. Next Steps

5.1. IIA Stages

- 5.1.1. Scoping (the current stage) is the second stage of the IIA process:
- Screening;
 - Scoping;
 - Assess reasonable alternatives (to inform preparation of the draft PMP);
 - Prepare the Environmental Report (to inform consultation and plan finalisation); and
 - Prepare the SEA Adoption Statement.
- 5.1.2. The next stage will involve appraising reasonable alternatives for the PMP. The findings of the appraisal of these alternatives will be fed back to the South Downs National Park Authority so that they might be considered when preparing the draft PMP.
- 5.1.3. Once the draft PMP has been prepared by the Authority, it will be subjected to IIA and the Environmental Report prepared for consultation alongside it.
- 5.1.4. Following consultation on the draft PMP and the Environmental Report, the PMP will be finalised. Any changes made to the PMP following consultation will be assessed through the IIA. At adoption of the PMP, an IIA Adoption Statement will be prepared, which will set out the information required by 16.3(c)(iii) and 16.4 of the SEA Regulations.

5.2. Consultation on the Scoping Report

- 5.2.1. Public involvement through consultation is a key element of the IIA process. At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public.
- 5.2.2. The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. This Scoping Report has been released to these three statutory consultees.
- 5.2.3. Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this scoping report, particularly the evidence base for the IIA, the identified key issues, and the proposed IIA Framework.
- 5.2.4. The consultation period runs from 14 February 2025 to 21 March 2025. Comments on the scoping report should be sent to:
Antonio Vinti, AECOM. Email address: antonio.vinti@aecom.com
- 5.2.5. All comments received on the scoping report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the IIA where appropriate.

Appendix A : Review of Relevant Plans, Programmes and Sustainability Objectives

Table A1: Relevant Plans, Programmes and Sustainability Objectives to the South Downs National Park Management Plan

Key Themes	Document Name and Web Link	Summary
<i>Landscape and Environment</i>	<u>Vision and Circular on English National Parks and the Broads (2010)</u>	Provides guidance to national park authorities on how to achieve their purposes and duty. The purpose of this circular, which applies only in England, is to provide updated policy guidance on the English National Parks and the Broads (“the Park”). The current Local Plan already meets the requirements of the policy but will be checked as the review Local Plan is produced.
	<u>The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006</u>	The act created Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities, and, amongst other measures, it extended the biodiversity duty set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act to public bodies and statutory undertakers to ensure due regard to the conservation of biodiversity
	<u>Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000</u>	The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) normally gives a public right of access to land mapped as ‘open country’ (mountain, moor, heath and down) or registered common land. These areas are known as ‘open access land’.
	<u>DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan 2018</u>	A plan to improve the UK’s air and water quality and protect threatened plants, trees and wildlife species. It establishes an extensive set of targets and objectives.
	<u>South Downs Local Plan 2011-2034 (adopted 2019)</u>	The South Downs Local Plan is the first Local Plan to cover the whole of the South Downs National Park. It sets out strategic and non-strategic policies (including site allocation policies) which form part of the statutory development plan for the area. It is a landscape led plan that reflects the national parks’

statutory purposes and duty, and which seeks to capture the principles of ‘ecosystem services’

South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2020– 2025

The South Downs Local Plan builds on the framework of the South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP). The PMP sets out the overarching five-year strategy for the management of the South Downs National Park. It is a plan that sets out to shape the future of your South Downs National Park.

The Corporate Plan for the South Downs National Park Authority 2022-2023

The Corporate Plan for the South Downs National Park Authority shows how the organisation sets its own priorities and delivers the outcomes in the Partnership Management Plan. The latest Corporate Plan 2022-23 is used in parallel with the Partnership Management Plan, which sets out the over-arching management of the South Downs National Park. Using the Corporate Plan, priorities are set out annually over five years to deliver the outcomes of the Partnership Management Plan. This version sets out priorities for Year 3

South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis – The ‘Viewshed’ 2015

South Downs National Park Authority commissioned LUC in 2014 to prepare a View Characterisation and Analysis Study comprising a mapping and analysis of views to, from and within the National Park. The existing South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (SDILCA 2011) is the foundation of the evidence base for landscape for the SDNP. This study will sit alongside the SDILCA to provide evidence on views, as well as providing a visual ‘way into’ understanding the SDILCA.

South Downs Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) 2020 Technical Papers

This report updates the Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (ILCA) for the South Downs National Park, which was first written in 2005 (before the National Park had been confirmed) and updated in 2011 to incorporate areas within the then newly designated National Park. The aim of this update is to provide a more practical tool in a more accessible and interactive form, which can be used to inform and guide positive landscape change, supporting a ‘landscape led’ approach to planning and design within the National Park

<u>Tranquillity Study 2017</u>	‘Tranquil and unspoilt places’ are one of seven special qualities of the National Park. They are the key characteristics that help make this place special. The tranquillity mapping project is intended as evidence work for adopted Local Plan
<u>Dark Skies Technical Advice Note 2021</u>	The Dark Skies Technical Advice Note (TAN) was first approved for publication in April 2018. The new document was updated in May 2021. The TAN sets out the South Downs National Park Authority’s (SDNPA) approach to lighting design and the protection and enhancement of dark skies.
<u>SDNPA Historic Landscape Characterisation for Hampshire 2017</u>	HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION (HLC) is an archaeological method used to define and map the historic and archaeological dimension of the present-day landscape. This report accompanies the Historic Landscape Characterisation GIS dataset for the Hampshire area of the South Downs National Park
<u>SDNPA Viewshed Study 2015</u>	The Viewshed Study Report of the South Downs National Park takes 120 of the most widely known views and landmarks in the National Park and maps them using computer modelling to a 35 kilometre distance. These plots of views are called Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTVs). These are used to help assess and understand the impact of visible change in the views.
<i>Biodiversity and Nature Recovery</i>	<u>Strategic Environmental Assessment-- SEA (Directive 2001/42/EC)</u>
	The Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment augments the Espoo Convention by ensuring that individual Parties integrate environmental assessment into their plans and programmes at the earliest stages, and thus help in laying down the groundwork for sustainable development. This Directive is met through Sustainability Appraisals
	<u>Natural Capital Investment Strategy for Sussex 2019--2024 by Sussex Local Nature Partnership</u>
	In October 2019, Sussex Local Nature Partnership produced a comprehensive ‘Natural Capital Investment Strategy’ to guide its approach to directing investment in nature, across the terrestrial, coastal and marine environments, for the next 5 year period and beyond.
	<u>The Environment Act 2021</u>
	The Environment Act operates as the UK’s new framework of environmental protection. Given that the UK has left the EU, new laws that relate to nature protection, water quality, clean air, as well as additional environmental protections. The Environment Act allows the UK to enshrine some environmental

protection into law. It offers new powers to set new binding targets, including for air quality, water, biodiversity, and waste reduction

UK Biodiversity Action Plan 1992-2012

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was published in 1994 and was the UK Government’s response to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which the UK signed up to in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. The CBD called for the development and enforcement of national strategies and associated action plans to identify, conserve and protect existing biological diversity, and to enhance it wherever possible.

While no longer active policy, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1992–2012) remains relevant as its species and habitat classifications continue to inform conservation efforts and local biodiversity strategies.

UK Biodiversity Framework 2024

The latest version of the Framework updates the nation's strategy for biodiversity conservation in response to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It outlines shared objectives and a governance structure for collaboration among the UK's four countries to meet international biodiversity commitments.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) is a law that was passed by Parliament and received Royal Assent on October 26, 2023. The Act includes a number of measures that aim to:

Speed up the planning system.

Hold developers to account.

Cut bureaucracy.

Encourage more councils to plan for new homes.

Reduce geographical disparities.

Introduce a new Infrastructure Levy.

Create a new form of devolved local government: The Act creates a new form of devolved local government called a County Combined Authority

South Downs Habitats Regulations Assessment 2018 of the South Downs Local Plan

The objective of the assessment is to identify any aspects of the Local Plan that would cause an adverse effect on the integrity of International Sites, also known as Natura 2000 sites or European sites (Special Areas of Conservation / Special Protection Areas) and Ramsar sites, either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects; and, to advise on appropriate policy mechanisms for delivering mitigation where such effects are identified

Mapping Hampshire Ecological Network 2020

The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) was contracted by Natural England in 2015 to produce a detailed Ecological Network Map for Hampshire on behalf of the Local Nature Partnership (LNP).

SDNPA People and Nature Network 2020

Formally called the Green Infrastructure Framework, the People And Nature Network (PANN), will help the South Downs National Park Authority and its partners ensure nature is able to function effectively so that all action is coordinated and contributes to a strategic approach. This document called the People and Nature Network (PANN) sets out how a wide range of partners can work together to plan positively for nature and natural services within and surrounding the protected landscapes of the southeast.

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework Guidance 2022

Natural England Action Plan 2022-2023

The Green Infrastructure (GI) Framework is a commitment in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. It supports the greening of our towns and cities and connections with the surrounding landscape. Natural England is central to delivering the Framework. The GI Framework will be fully available in autumn 2022. Additional elements will include the core GI Standards, from which local authorities can set their own local standards, for example on accessible natural green space or urban greening.

Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment Programme

Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) is a science innovation and transformation programme, which spans across land and water environments. It has been set up to collect data on the extent, condition and change over time of England's ecosystems and natural capital, and the benefits to society.

Biodiversity Metric 4.0

Biodiversity Metric 4.0 is a biodiversity accounting tool that can be used for the purposes of calculating biodiversity net gain. This page includes published

information about Biodiversity Metric 4.0, an update to the previously published biodiversity metric 3.1 (April 2022).

Biodiversity Metric 4.0 can be used or specified by any development project, consenting body or landowner that needs to calculate biodiversity losses and gains for terrestrial and/or intertidal habitats

Biodiversity Areas/Designated sites

Various internet searches will provide information on protected and designated nature conservation sites. Natural Capital Investment Strategy for Sussex 2019–2024 by Sussex Local Nature Partnership

Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note (TAN)

This technical advice note supports South Downs Local Plan Policy SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity. It provides interim guidance on how Biodiversity Net Gain is to be achieved in the South Downs National Park now in accordance with existing South Downs Local Plan Policy. It also provides guidance on how Biodiversity Net Gain is expected to make a meaningful contribution to nature recovery

People and Nature Network Plan Evidence and Action Report 2020

The People and Nature Network (PANN) aims to deliver benefits not only to the environment but also to the development of better places to live, work and invest.

Habitats Regulations Technical Advice Note 2021

This Technical Advice Note (TAN) has been produced to provide guidance on how to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment for development proposals in the South Downs National Park.

Ecosystems Services Technical Advice Notes

These technical advice notes support South Downs Local Plan Policy SD2: Ecosystem Services. They explain what ecosystem services are, and how they apply to development proposals.

Seaford to Eastbourne Nature Recovery Project

Around 12,000 hectares of land from Seaford to Eastbourne, in East Sussex, will benefit from government funding for nature recovery work.

The focus of the project, led by Natural England, will be across several locations, including the Cuckmere River, Seven Sisters cliffs and chalk reefs in the Beachy Head Marine Conservation Zones.

<p>Historic environment, Heritage Assets and Cultural Heritage</p>	<p><u>Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990</u></p>	<p>The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act is a UK Act of Parliament introduced in 1990 that changed laws relating to the granting of planning permission for building works, with a particular focus on listed buildings and conservation areas. It created special controls for the demolition, alteration or extension of buildings, objects or structures of architectural or historic interest, as well as conservation areas.</p>
	<p><u>Conservation Area Appraisals</u></p>	<p>A Conservation Area Appraisal is an objective analysis of the elements which together define the area’s special architectural or historic interest. These elements will be largely physical, both man-made and natural, but will also include more ephemeral considerations, such as spaces, views, uses, and sounds.</p> <p>The appraisal seeks to describe and map these elements to inform everyone involved in the planning process. Appraisals also consider those elements and issues which currently are neutral or detrimental to the special character of the conservation area.</p> <p>The normal lifespan for an appraisal is 10 years, after which they should be reviewed.</p>
	<p><u>National Planning Policy Framework NPPF 2024</u></p>	<p>The National Planning Policy Framework was revised in September 2024 sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The planning practice guidance to support the framework is published online.</p>
	<p><u>Archaeology on the Edge 2019</u></p>	<p>Heritage Coasts were established to protect and conserve the best stretches of undeveloped coast in England. The Sussex Heritage Coast was the first to be defined. The report outlined heritage assets at risk by anticipated timescales for coastal erosion impact specified as short term (0-20 years); medium term (0-50 years); and long term (50-100 years), and whether a heritage asset would be lost wholly or in part using estimated percentages against anticipated erosion rates.</p>
	<p><u>Historic England– Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings 2018</u></p>	<p>This guidance is for anyone who wishes to improve energy efficiency in an historic building. There are many reasons to do this. Improving energy efficiency will lower carbon emissions and fuel bills and often increase comfort.</p>

Historic England– Energy Efficiency and Traditional Homes 2020

This advice note considers energy efficiency improvements to those traditional homes which are described as heritage assets within the planning system. It outlines a ‘whole building’ approach that can help in meeting the combined objectives of increasing energy efficiency and sustaining significance in heritage assets

South Downs Scheduled Ancient Monuments Study (2021)

This study focusses on assessing the condition of Scheduled Monuments within the South Downs National Park and exploring the potential for a volunteer-led monitoring program. It involved data gathering, analysis of existing heritage management systems, and collaboration with key stakeholders such as Historic England, the National Trust, and the RSPB. The study evaluates current data sources, identifies gaps, and investigates how community engagement can contribute to the long-term preservation of these nationally significant heritage sites.

South Downs Beachy Head to the River Ouse Aerial Investigation and Mapping report 2013

This survey involved the interpretation, transcription and recording of all archaeological features seen on aerial photographs for part of the South Downs within East Sussex. The project area included the coast from Peacehaven to the western edge of Eastbourne, areas of downland and parts of the Ouse and Cuckmere river valleys. This report explores some of the key themes identified during the project.

South Downs Worthing to the Weald Area Investigation and Mapping Report 2008

This National Mapping Programme survey involved the interpretation, transcription and recording of all archaeological features seen on aerial photographs within this traditionally well researched landscape. It forms part of a programme of work by English Heritage designed to characterise the historic environment of the proposed South Downs National Park. The survey area includes the downland to the north of Worthing with a contextual area that encompasses part of the coastal plain, the Weald and the River Adur valley

The High Woods from Above National Mapping Programme 2016

The ‘High Woods’ area of West Sussex and eastern Hampshire is remarkable in terms of the range, extent and time depth of the archaeological earthworks preserved in the woodland. A key part of the project was an airborne laser scanning survey, commonly known as lidar, which provided a highly accurate 3D model of archaeological features surviving as earthworks or structures in open land and woodland. Analysis and mapping from the lidar data and aerial

photographs provided an interpretation of a complex and extensive archaeological landscape suitable for use by local communities, researchers and managers of the historic environment.

Hampshire South Downs National Mapping Programme 2011

The project consisted of an analytical survey of all archaeological features visible on aerial photographs within the Hampshire portion of the South Downs National Park and forms part of English Heritage’s National Mapping Programme (NMP).

West Sussex, East Sussex and Hampshire Historic Environment records

For each County— Historic Environment Records (HER) are sets of data linked to a geographical information system (GIS). It can be used to assist in the analysis of the landscape and, when combined with the Historic Landscape Characterisation, looks at the archaeological evidence as well as historic use to determine how the landscape has changed.

The HER contains a summary of known historic assets. Using GIS, the record can be viewed with additional layers of information, such as conservation areas and historic town characterisation. It also holds several electronic reports of archaeological investigations, usually carried out as part of the planning process, a summary of which is recorded in the HER

Climate Change and Flooding

The Paris Agreement 2016

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to preindustrial levels. To achieve this long-term temperature goal, countries aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible to achieve a climate neutral world by mid-century.

The Climate Change Act 2008

This introduced a statutory target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Initially a target was set of reducing carbon emissions by 80 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050 with an interim target of 34% by 2020. In June 2019 legislation was passed requiring the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 and in 2021, the government committed to reducing emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

UK Renewable Energy Strategy 2009

The UK Renewable Energy Strategy 2009 is a white paper outlining how the UK will meet its legally-binding target to ensure 15% of energy comes from renewable energy sources by 2020.

Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy for Education and Children’s Service 2022

DofE has an important role to play in all aspects of sustainability. While the policies set out here are focussed on the environmental aspect of sustainability, this is done with consideration for how those policies will interact with the social and economic aspects of sustainability.

It brings together short, medium and longer-term actions that will enable us to make progress towards achieving our 4 strategic aims and overarching vision. It is a strategy to 2030.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs

This agenda, including its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, was adopted on 25 September 2015 by Heads of State and Government at a special UN summit. The Agenda is a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by 2030 world-wide, ensuring that no one is left behind. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda was a landmark achievement, providing for a shared global vision towards sustainable development for all.

National biodiversity climate change vulnerability model

The National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability Model (NBCCVM) aims to provide a spatially explicit assessment of the relative vulnerability of priority habitats based on established climate change adaptation principles; suite of map-based-GIS outputs at a variety of scales which can be used (in conjunction with other relevant spatial data) to target action to build biodiversity resilience and a flexible, GIS based, decision support tool that allows the user to incorporate locally specific datasets and select how adaptation principles are combined to reflect local circumstances and priorities.

The Flood and Water Management Act 2010

The Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) aims to improve both flood risk management and the way water resources are managed (HM Government, 2010).

Schedule 3 of the Act has not been enacted in England, but this is expected to be implemented in 2024. The enactment of schedule 3 will have the following implications for the planning process:

- Designation of local authorities as SuDS Approval Bodies (SAB) which have a duty to adopt new drainage systems.
- Developers must ensure that drainage systems are built as per the approved drainage plan that complied with mandatory national standards as outlined in the NPPF and the PPG.
- The cessation of the automatic right for new developments to connect to the existing sewer system.

SDNPA Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan

The Strategy and Plan confirms the Authority’s commitment to address the climate and nature emergency by committing to the South Downs National Park Authority becoming a ‘Net-Zero’ Organisation by 2030, agreeing an action plan which includes a commitment to working with our constituent Local Authorities and other partners, and committing to working towards the South Downs National Park becoming ‘Net-Zero with Nature’ by 2040

Strategic Flood Risk 2015 and 2017

This report has been produced for the purpose of reporting the results of a combined Level 1 update and Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for the South Downs National Park. This study has been commissioned by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) as part of the evidence base for three local planning documents which are currently under preparation including the now adopted South Downs Local Plan

Small Scale Renewable Energy Technical Advice Note (TAN)

The Small Scale Renewable Energy Technical Advice Note (TAN) was approved for publication by Planning Committee on 10 February 2022.

Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document 2020

The SPD provides further guidance to support the implementation of the South Downs Local Plan policies, in particular Policy SD2: Ecosystem Services, Policy SD3 Major Development, Policy SD22: Parking Provision (where it relates to electric vehicle charging), Policy SD48 Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources.

In March 2020, the South Downs National Park Authority adopted a new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. The Strategy and Plan confirms the Authority’s commitment to address the climate and nature emergency by:

- Committing to the South Downs National Park Authority becoming a ‘Net-Zero’ Organisation by 2030
- Agreeing an action plan which includes a commitment to working with our constituent Local Authorities and other partners, in particular communities and landowners to deliver actions that respond effectively to the climate and nature emergency
- Committing to working towards the South Downs National Park becoming ‘Net-Zero with Nature’ by 2040

Local Flood Risk Management Strategies Hampshire, West Sussex, East Sussex, Brighton & Hove

Lead local flood authorities in England must develop local strategies for flood and coastal erosion risk management. These must be consistent with the national flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) strategy, take account of the current policy and reflect the aspirations and priorities of other partners with responsibilities for FCERM along with wider local interests in linked environmental or social outcomes.

Natural Flood Management Measures— A practical guide for farmers and landowners of the Solent and South Downs— 2020

In the UK our flood risk management systems include large-scale, hard engineered flood defences in and around major urban areas, small-scale engineered solutions for rural communities and farmland, and coastal sea defences. More recently, there has been a move to show how a naturalistic approach to management of water in the wider countryside can contribute to the UK’s flood risk management system. This is known as Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Working with Natural Processes (WwNP). NFM uses natural methods to reduce the downstream maximum water height of a flood (the flood peak) or to delay the arrival of the flood peak downstream.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Study 2013

In January 2012 the SDNPA commissioned a Low Carbon and Renewal Energy Study to support policy development for both the Management Plan and the Local Plan. This was a two part study: a Phase 1 Scoping Study that reviewed existing

policy; the available data and any key gaps in that data; characterised the key energy issues and identified topics for more detailed investigation in Phase 2.

A greenhouse gas emissions and target scenario for the South Downs National Park 2022

This report is designed to provide a robust and consistent evidence basis for climate action, matched to the unique characteristics and circumstances of each protected landscape, as we enter an era in which climate mitigation and sustainable land management become ever more central to all our lives, our work and to all policy decisions. It contains a consumption-based assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions attributable to residents and visitors, including travel to and from the landscape and a set of Paris aligned target recommendations for transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

Shoreline Management Plans

There several Shoreline Management Plans affecting the SDNPA area. These are:

South Foreland to Beachy Head

Beachy Head to Selsey Bill

Selsey Bill to Hurst Spit

National Coastal Erosion Risk Map

The coastal erosion map provides detail on the predicted erosion rates for the Short term (up to 2025), Medium term (up to 2055) and Long term (up to 2105).

Flood Risk Management Plans

Flood risk management plans (FRMPs) set out how organisations, stakeholders and communities will work together to manage flood risk in England.

South East River Basin

Thames River Basin

Water Resource Management Plans

Water Resource Management Plans which assess pressures on future water supplies. WRMPs are an essential evidence source for ascertaining water availability within the context of climate change

<u>The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (2022)</u>	The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (2022) outlines the UK government and devolved administrations’ position on the key climate change risks and opportunities that the UK faces today.
<u>The UK Climate Projections (UKCP18)</u> <u>What will Climate Change look like in your area?</u>	The UK Climate Projections (UKCP18) UK Climate Projections (UKCP) - Met Office provide a set of tools and data which cover all climate risks and impacts and provide authoritative advice on what to prepare for. A BBC and Met Office tool What will climate change look like in your area? - BBC News provides a postcode lookup to access UKCP18 projections for local places
<u>Living better with a changing climate</u>	The Environment Agency (EA) report, Living better with a changing climate, Living better with a changing climate (publishing.service.gov.uk) sets out the evidence on observed changes and expected future climate change impacts that we manage for the country (too much and too little water).
<u>Spatial Planning for climate resilience 2023</u>	The Climate Change Committee (CCC) commissioned the Centre for Sustainable Energy and the Town and Country Planning Association to conduct research into the barriers and opportunities to delivering climate mitigation and adaptation through the spatial planning system at the local authority level in England. The research examined the English planning system and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and draws this together with a survey of planning practitioners, local plan case studies and stakeholder roundtables.
<u>Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk (2021)</u>	The Climate Change Committee’s (CCC) Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk (2021) sets out the priority risks and opportunities for the UK
<u>Abstraction Licensing Strategies</u>	The Environment Agency controls how much water is taken with a permitting system. The Environment Agency regulate existing licences and grant new ones. To do this they use: the catchment abstraction management strategy (CAMS) process abstraction licensing strategies. The publication ‘managing water abstraction’ sets out the approach and regulatory framework within which we will manage water resources.

You need a water abstraction licence from the Environment Agency to remove more than 20 cubic metres of water a day from a watercourse or underground water reserve in England

<u>SE River Management Plan</u>	The Southeast river basin district (RBD) river basin management plan describes the challenges that threaten the water environment and how these challenges can be managed.
Community and the Economy	<p data-bbox="450 448 770 518"><u>South Downs Tourism Strategy 2015 - 2020</u></p> <p data-bbox="869 448 2018 595">The National Park has approximately 46 million visitor days per year, making it the most popular Protected Landscape in the country which generates an income of nearly £5 billion and supports some 12,000 jobs. The strategy establishes 7 sustainable tourism objectives which address the following:</p> <ul data-bbox="869 619 1951 818" style="list-style-type: none"> • the visitor experience and offer. • visitor pressures. • sustainable practice by tourism providers. • visitors means of access to the National Park and fostering custodianship; • visitors contribution to the local economy
<u>Equestrian Development Technical Advice Note (TAN) consultation draft</u> Sept 2022	This advice has been produced to guide horse owners, equestrian businesses and their agents when applying for planning permission for equestrian development. The TAN provides the information that is needed for equestrian development proposals; highlights relevant policies in the South Downs Local Plan and provides advice and guidance on what is needed to obtain planning permission
<u>Camping and Glamping Technical Advice Note 2021</u>	<p data-bbox="869 1098 2009 1209">The Camping and Glamping Technical Advice Note (TAN) has been produced to guide applicants and agents when applying for planning permission for camping and glamping tourist accommodation.</p> <p data-bbox="869 1230 1951 1297">The guidance covers pitch up camping, glamping style yurts and domes, eco pods, ‘luxury’ style canvas tents and treehouses.</p>
<u>Coastal West Sussex and Greater Brighton Local Strategic Statement -</u>	The Local Strategic Statement for Coastal West Sussex and Greater Brighton (LSS), is the main vehicle for taking forward the Board’s work on behalf of the LPAs. This sets out the long term Strategic Objectives and the Spatial Priorities

<u>Delivering Sustainable Growth 2015-31</u>	for delivering these in the short to medium term. The reflect the local planning authorities' clear aspirations for long term sustainable growth to meet the existing and future needs of the residents and workforce in the area.
<u>SDNPA 2018 Economic Profile and SDNPA 2020 updated Economic Profile</u>	The 2020 report contains an update of the key data in the South Downs Economic Profile 2018. The South Downs National Park (SDNP) has a relatively large and diverse business population comprising a range of industry sectors, in addition to the land-based industries and the visitor economy.
<u>Open space, sports and recreation evidence study 2017</u>	This paper outlines the basis upon which the open space, sports and recreation facilities standards of Policy SD46 in the Pre-Submission South Downs Local Plan have been formulated. It explains the context behind why the policy and standards are necessary to ensure that the Purposes and Duty of the National Park are met, briefly summarises national policy, and summarises the key evidence base studies which have fed into the policy.
<u>Retail evidence study 2016</u>	The purpose of the study is to inform the emerging town centre and retail policies of the South Downs Local Plan which will set out a broad development strategy over the period to 2032. This is the first local plan to be produced by the SDNPA since their National Park designation in 2011
<u>The State of the National Park 2012</u>	The first State of the National Park Report for the South Downs National Park. This report is structured around the special qualities, setting out the facts and figures that set out what condition they are in.
<u>The South Downs National Park Data Update. A comparison of the economy of the South Downs National Park with the National Parks in England</u>	The South Downs National Park Economic Profile 2018 and the South Downs National Park Economic Data Update 2020 analyse the economy of the South Downs National Park using as comparators the four Local Enterprise Partnerships whose boundaries it crosses and the Southeast region. A further question has arisen since the publication of the Economic Data Update 2020 as to what extent this economy differs from other rural economies. The South Downs National Park in contrast with other wilder, more remote National Parks such as Northumberland National Park, is not altogether rural and contains some major towns and is adjacent to significant urban centres as well as the M3 and A23 growth corridors. Therefore, some differences might be expected. This paper draws some initial conclusions in response to this question by comparing South
Supplementary paper August 2020	

Downs National Park’s business make up with that of the other National Parks in England.

Covid 19 Economic Recovery Strategy 2020

Research showed that the Covid-19 pandemic is already having severe, adverse economic effects in the South Downs National Park and the Strategy sets out how the SDNPA will work with partners to mitigate the impact.

Health Impact Assessments

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a tool to identify and optimise the health and wellbeing impacts of planning. This guide supports the use of HIA in the process of plan making (when developing policies in local plans) and planning applications (designing proposals for development projects).

East Sussex Public Health and Planning Memorandum of Understanding 2022

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets out how the Public Health Team within East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) will work together to deliver the County Council’s statutory public health responsibilities and LPAs duties to deliver relevant elements of the National Planning Policy Framework through the planning system. This MOU includes all LPAs within East Sussex which are Eastbourne Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Rother District Council, South Downs National Park Authority and Wealden District Council.

Active Design

Active Design aims to create places and spaces which encourage people to move more, with more opportunities for everyone to increase their activity levels and lead healthier lives (Sport England).

Public Health England Strategy 2020 - 2025

This strategy outlines the foremost priorities which PHE will focus on for the next five years to both protect people and help people to live longer in good health.

East Sussex Joint Assessment Needs

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is a resource containing a wide range of local and national information to inform plans and decisions to improve people's health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities

<u>Hampshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy</u>	The Strategy focuses on improving residents' health by prioritising healthy living, ageing well, and strong communities. It aims to reduce health inequalities, promote independence, and ensure access to support services.
<u>West Sussex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019 - 2024</u>	This document sets out the vision of the Health and Wellbeing Board, its goals and the ways in which it will work to improve the health and wellbeing for all residents in West Sussex.
<u>Joint Strategic Needs Assessment</u>	The Public Health and Social Research Unit is responsible for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): the evidence base that underpins strategic Public Health decision-making in West Sussex by West Sussex County Council and its partners.
<u>Improving Lives Together</u>	Sussex Health & Care Strategy - building on the Health and Wellbeing Strategies in place across Brighton and Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex that focus on the priorities across our local populations.
<u>Open Access Land</u>	Mapping for Open Access Land (under The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000)
<u>Green Infrastructure Mapping</u>	The England Green Infrastructure Mapping Database is designed to provide technical evidence on the Green Infrastructure of England – Natural England
<u>Green Infrastructure Framework</u>	Introduction to the Green Infrastructure Framework
<u>Accessible Green Spaces</u>	Accessible Natural Green Space Standards in Towns and Cities: A Review and Toolkit for their Implementation (ENRR526) Natural England
<u>People and Nature Survey</u>	The People and Nature Survey for England gathers evidence and trend data about people's access, understanding and enjoyment of nature, and how it contributes to wellbeing.

Viticulture Technical Advice Note 2021

The growing of grapes for wine, known as viticulture, and the processing of grapes to make wine is expanding rapidly in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) as it is in many other parts of the United Kingdom. The purpose of the TAN is to explain how to make successful planning applications for new viticulture, wine making and other related development that deliver multiple benefits for the National Park. The TAN is primarily written for existing and prospective vineyard owners, estate managers, planning agents, Members and planning case officers both at the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and local authorities.

Sussex Heritage Coast Strategy and Action Plan

The Sussex Heritage Coast stretches from Eastbourne, along the iconic chalk cliffs of Beachy Head and the Seven Sisters, past Cuckmere Haven and on to Splash Point at Seaford. The Heritage Coast group have published a joint strategy and action plan setting out how the area will be managed for wildlife, landscape, tourism, recreation, heritage and the local community from 2016-20.

Equalities and Inclusion

Equalities Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it's unlawful to treat someone.

The public sector Equality Duty came into force across Great Britain on 5 April 2011. It means that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It also requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

West Sussex County Council Equality and Inclusion Policy

The West Sussex Diversity and Inclusion policy statement sets out the County Council's commitment to deliver fair and inclusive services for all West Sussex communities.

WSCC Council Plan

The plan sets out the priorities for the council and the outcomes we want to achieve for people who live and work in West Sussex. The focus is on four priorities, all of which are underpinned by a cross-cutting theme of protecting the environment:

- Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations.
- A sustainable and prosperous economy.
- Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential.
- Making the best use of resources

East Sussex County Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commitment

East Sussex County Council recognises the diverse needs and strengths of our communities and is committed to promoting equality, recognising the benefits of diversity and ensuring inclusion in service delivery and employment. The County challenges discrimination and encourages respect, understanding and dignity for everyone living in, working in and visiting East Sussex. The County will do this through our direct practice in service delivery, in our recruitment and employment practices, and through our influence in the community, strategic planning and policy formation in employment and service delivery.

ESCC Action Plan

East Sussex County Council: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan (2024-25)

The first years of the action plan focused on increasing council-wide consistency, updating and aligning corporate statements, policies and objectives, and refreshing the governance and oversight of EDI. With these foundations renewed, many actions are now established as ‘business as usual’ and are listed below. These actions will continue to be supported and maintained through ongoing EDI officer support.

Brighton & Hove City Council Equality and Inclusion Strategy

This strategy sets out the City’s equality objective and areas of focus and action. It guides the work of all staff and elected members in the council as it delivers public services. By defining the priorities for the coming years, the City Council will enable a consistent corporate focus on achieving greater equality and inclusion in our city.

Hampshire County Council
Inclusion Strategy

The residents: 2021 to 2025 sets out the Council’s firm commitment to the people of the county, and the priorities, which include advancing social equality in Hampshire by tackling health and social inequalities, narrowing educational attainment gaps, and creating opportunity for all residents; enabling communities to be more resilient and connected, alongside promoting the development of communities that support and uphold equity, diversity and sustainability. The new, dedicated Inclusion Strategy for 2021-2024 is the blueprint for how HCC collectively realise these priorities for all of Hampshire’s residents.

South Downs National Park
commitment to Equality

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) will put equity at the centre of all the work, challenging and removing discrimination and barriers to participation wherever they may occur, creating a National Park where everyone can find opportunity and belonging.

As an employer, SDNPA will reflect the nation we serve, and our values of collaboration, innovation and respect will be at the heart of our inclusive culture.

As a planning authority, SDNPA will be accessible to all and ensure developments and policies are fully informed by the communities we support.

RTPI Strategic Priorities
Equality, Diversity and
Inclusion

A diverse and inclusive profession is central to the future of planning. To be an effective and sustainable profession, we must be genuinely representative of the society in which we work. This includes recognising and addressing the need for broader visibility of diversity at all levels of the profession, from entry to the most senior.

Equality, diversity, inclusion
and Equity Strategy Town
and County Planning
Association

Equality, diversity, inclusion and equity are critically important for the Association. Through the work today, the Association advocates for greater diversity and inclusion in the way that places are created. The TCPA seek to empower people to have real influence over decisions about their environments and to secure social justice within and between communities.

EqIA Guide - TCPA

Planning has a key role to play in achieving greater social and economic inclusion, promoting equality, and reducing poverty. Planning policies and decisions impact different people differently. There are multiple groups in society who are both underrepresented in engagement with planning processes and

often at most risk of being disproportionately negatively affected by planning outcomes. In the process of developing planning policy, it is vital that local planning authorities assess the potential impacts of draft policies on different groups at an early stage, and adjust policies accordingly over time.

Housing

Housing and Planning Act 2016

The Housing and Planning Act which received Royal Assent on 12 May 2016 applies to England. It contains a wide range of measures to expand homeownership, reform housing management and the planning process, and increase housing supply to tackle the housing crisis.

Local Authorities Local Plans within the National Park

- Adur Local Plan
- Arun Local Plan
- Horsham District Planning Framework
- Brighton & Hove City Plan Part 1 Brighton & Hove City Plan Part 2.
- Lewes District Local Plan
- Eastbourne Core Strategy
- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031
- East Hampshire Local Plan
- Adopted Chichester Local Plan: Key Policies 2014-2029.
- Worthing Local Plan,
- Winchester Local Plan
- Wealden Local Plan.

Made Neighbourhood Plans

Twyford, East Meon, Petersfield, Liss, Rogate, Milland, Lynchmere, Fernhurst, Kirdford, Wisborough Green, Petworth, Fittleworth, Bury, Lavant, Aldingbourne, Walberton, Arundel, Amberley, Angmering, Patching, Ferring, Clapham, Hurstpierpoint and Sayers common, Hassocks, Ditching, Plumpton, Hamsey, Ringmer, Lewes, Newhaven, Upper Beeding, Bramber.

Extensions and Replacement Dwellings TAN 2023

This Technical Advice Note (TAN) has been produced to guide applicants and decision-makers in interpreting relevant policies in the South Downs Local Plan. It relates to proposals for domestic extensions, outbuildings and annexes, and to proposals for replacement dwellings.

Affordable Housing SPD

The SPD provides further guidance to support the implementation of South Downs Local Plan policies, in particular Policy SD28: Affordable Homes and Policy SD29: Rural Exception Sites. The SPD covers a number of detailed matters including local connections; financial contributions in lieu of on-site provision; and vacant building credit

Air, Soils, Minerals and Water

Natural England’s Position Statement for Applications within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone September 2021 – Interim Approach & associated documents

Concerns have been raised that groundwater abstraction within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone may be harming biodiversity within internationally designated sites. In October 2021, Natural England issued a Position Statement. The statement sets out that it cannot be concluded that the existing abstraction within the zone is not having an adverse impact on the Arun Valley sites and advises that development within the zone must not add to this impact.

Water supplied by Southern Water within the zone area is sourced from abstraction points that are hydrologically linked to the Arun Valley, which includes these internationally designated sites:

- a Special Protection Area (SPA)
- a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- a Ramsar site.

In October 2021, Natural England issued a Position Statement. The statement sets out that it cannot be concluded that the existing abstraction within the zone is not having an adverse impact on the Arun Valley sites and advises that development within the zone must not add to this impact

West Sussex Joint Minerals Plan (2018, Partial Review 2021)

Joint Minerals Local Plan is the strategy for minerals supply in West Sussex until 2033. WSCC has worked in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority to produce the West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan. It was formally adopted by both authorities in July 2018. Following a Soft Sand Review of the plan, formal revisions were adopted in March 2021.

West Sussex Waste Local Plan 2014

Produced in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority. The plan covers the period to 2031 and is the most up-to-date statement of land use planning policy for waste. The plan provides the basis for making consistent decisions about planning applications for waste management facilities. The aspiration to become a zero waste to landfill county is a key element of the plan. The aim is to ensure that communities, environment and economy of West Sussex are protected. The plan sets out four key areas which will help shape the future of waste management waste in West Sussex:

- A vision and strategic objectives for sustainable waste management
- Nine policies to achieve the strategic objectives for the management of different waste types (Policies 1-9)
- 13 development management policies to ensure no unacceptable harm to the environment, economy or communities of West Sussex (Policies 11-23)
- Six site allocations to help us meet the need for new facilities (Policy 10).

Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (2013)

The Hampshire Authorities (Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council, New Forest National Park Authority and the South Downs National Park Authority), are responsible for ensuring sufficient extraction and supply of minerals up to 2030. The Hampshire Authorities adopted the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (HMWP) in 2013. The Plan is now subject to a Partial Review

Waste and Minerals Local Plan for East Sussex

The waste and minerals planning strategy for East Sussex is set out in a series of documents collectively known as the Waste and Minerals Local Plan. On the 13 May 2022, East Sussex County Council, the South Downs National Park Authority, and Brighton & Hove City Council submitted the East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Local Plan - Revised Policies to the Secretary of State so that it may be the subject of a Public Examination

West Sussex Minerals and Waste Safeguarding Advice 2020

This document provides guidance on how the safeguarding of minerals resources and infrastructure associated with minerals supply (e.g. wharves, railheads, processing plants) and waste management will take place in West Sussex. It explains how the safeguarding policies in the West Sussex Joint Minerals Local

Plan 2018 (JMLP) and the West Sussex Waste Local Plan 2014 (WLP) will be implemented in practice.

Southeast River Basin District Management Plan

This document sets out the:

- current state of the water environment
- pressures affecting the water environment
- environmental objectives for protecting and improving the waters
- programme of measures, actions needed to achieve the objectives progress since the 2009 plan

It also informs decisions on land-use planning because water and land resources are closely linked.

Catchment Flood Management Plans

Test and Itchen, East Hampshire, Arun and Western streams, Ouse and Adur, Cuckmere and Pevensey

Draft Regional Plan

Water Resources Southeast (WRSE) is an alliance of the six water companies that supply drinking water across South East England. The plan is one of five regional plans, being developed to meet the country's future water needs. In 2020, the Environment Agency published the first National Framework for Water Resources to transform how water supplies are planned. It requires water companies and other large water users to collaborate across boundaries and, through regional water groups, develop plans that consider their region's water needs. These plans should then fit together to provide a joined up national solution

Agricultural Land classification

Provisional Agricultural Land Classification Grade. Agricultural land classified into five grades. Grade one is best quality and grade five is poorest quality. Several consistent criteria used for assessment which include climate (temperature, rainfall, aspect, exposure, frost risk), site (gradient, micro-relief, flood risk) and soil (depth, structure, texture, chemicals, stoniness) for England only.

Chief Officer's report air pollution 2022

This report is about air pollution and its solutions in England, but it is also an international problem. The first chapters of this report lay out the health problems

of air pollution, but most of the report is about achievable solutions. Air pollution is everybody’s problem, but it has improved and will continue improving.

	<u>Clean Air Strategy 2019</u>	This strategy sets out the Government’s plans for dealing with all sources of air pollution, making the air healthier to breathe, protecting nature and boosting the economy.
	<u>Air Pollutions Information Service</u>	Air pollution is one of the major environmental issues in the UK, with impacts occurring at local, regional and global scales. Much is known about the impacts on natural heritage features, with major steps already being taken in the development of abatement strategies both at national and international levels. It is clear, however, that there are still major gaps in the scientific understanding. This site provides a searchable database and information on pollutants and their impacts on habitats and species.
	<u>Sussex Air Quality</u>	Sussex-air is a partnership, set up in 2000, comprised of officers from all the Local Authorities in Sussex. The aim of the partnership is to assist partners in complying with their statutory Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) duties and to contribute to improving air quality and health in Sussex.
Infrastructure	<u>Local Roads Transport assessment 2016</u>	The purpose of this was to assess the traffic impact that proposed levels of Local Plan development could have on settlements within the South Downs National Park (SDNP) boundary.
	<u>Roads in the South Downs 2015</u>	This guide aims by raising awareness of best practice for rural road design and management for highway authorities, the National Park Authority and all the communities within the area. It is intended to influence decision-making, training and investment as well as to raise awareness of opportunities and challenges in reconciling traffic movement with the inherent qualities and purposes of the National Park.
	<u>West Sussex Transport Plan 2022</u>	Details of the strategy for future investment in the highways and transport infrastructure for 2022-2036.

SDNPA Cycling and Walking Strategy 2017-2024

This is the first Cycling and Walking Strategy for the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). It sets out the aim and direction for the future of cycling and walking activities and supports infrastructure coming forward in the National Park.

East Sussex Local Transport Plan 3 (2011 to 2026)

Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) sets out how the County Council plans to improve transport and maintain the roads between 2011 and 2026. It includes the plans for regeneration and development in priority areas such as:

- Bexhill and Hastings
- Eastbourne and South Wealden
- Newhaven
- LTP3 also contains plans for transport in:
- Uckfield
- Lewes, the south coast towns and the South Downs
- Battle, Rye and rural Rother
- North Wealden and North Lewes districts

Emerging ESCC Local Transport Plan 4

New guidance is due to be published, requiring all Local Transport Authorities to update their Local Transport Plans and demonstrate alignment and contribution to net zero carbon - tailpipe and embodied emissions (through construction). The fourth East Sussex Local Transport Plan will replace the third Local Transport Plan and will run from 2023 - 2050. This will set out how ESCC plan to improve transport, deliver better access to jobs and services, including education, and create safer, healthier, more sustainable and inclusive communities.

ESCC Bus Improvement Plan

ESCC’s mission as a local transport authority and as bus operators, is to ensure that East Sussex residents and visitors enjoy the highest possible quality bus services that provide:

- a frequent and comprehensive choice
- reduce congestion
- make a positive contribution to better air quality and decarbonisation.

ESCC Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) sets out proposed cycling and walking networks and measures within specific areas of the County. The LCWIP focusses on areas of the County where there are the

greatest opportunities to increase levels of cycling and walking. There is an emphasis on delivering infrastructure improvements which supports people who do not cycle or walk.

<u>Rights of Way Improvement Plan</u>	The ROWIP sets out ESCC’s plans to improve our public rights of way network and access to the countryside.
<u>Hampshire County Council Local Transport Plan 2011-2031</u>	Hampshire County Council has a statutory requirement to have a Local Transport Plan (LTP) which sets out its vision for future transport and travel infrastructure. The current Local Transport Plan (LTP3) was developed in 2011 but is no longer relevant to today’s challenges and opportunities. The Council is currently developing a <u>new Local Transport Plan (LTP4)</u> .
<u>South Downs Way Management Plan 2015 - 2020</u>	This plan has been produced to guide the South Downs Way Trail partnership in its management of this National Trail. It will set out the direction of travel and highlight the key areas of delivery over the next 5 years. It is designed to give more bespoke and focused information than that contained in broader policy documentation such as the South Downs Partnership Management Plan. This plan is intended for all those whose work impacts or contributes to the delivery of this first class long distance trail. The South Downs Way Management Plan 2022 – 2030 is in development.
<u>Parking SPD</u>	The SPD provides further guidance to support the implementation of South Downs Local Plan policy SD22 Parking Provision.
<u>Decarbonising Transport</u> <u>Transport Decarbonisation Plan</u>	Government’s commitment to decarbonising all forms of transport.
<u>Road Investment Strategy</u>	Government’s five year strategy for investment in and management of the strategic road network from April 2020 to March 2025.

	<u>strategic investment plan</u>	Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) for south east England. This plan provides a framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services, and regulatory interventions from now to 2050.
	<u>Future Mobility</u>	Future mobility strategy sets out a people- and place-based approach to future mobility – ensuring that the benefits of innovation and investment are maximised in each part of the south east. It builds on the challenges and opportunities identified in our thirty-year transport strategy, providing a framework for local authorities and other key partners to help them understand where, when and how to invest in new transport technology, systems and services.
Design	<u>National Model Design Code</u>	The purpose of the National Model Design Code is to provide detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. It expands on the ten characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide, which reflects the government’s priorities and provides a common overarching framework for design. As the requirements relating to design codes and guidance are finalised, we will ensure we do what is required.
	<u>Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023</u>	The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill has officially become law. The Bill, which is now the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, received Royal Assent on 26 October, making it an Act of Parliament.
	<u>Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document updated 2022</u>	The SPD provides further guidance to support the implementation of South Downs Local Plan policy SD5 (Design) and other design-related Local Plan policies.

Source: South Downs Local Plan Review Integrated Impact Assessment Scoping Report

Appendix B : Environmental Baseline from the 2025 State of the Park Report

Chapter 2: Diverse, inspirational landscapes and breathtaking views

Introduction

The South Downs National Park is a diverse and historically rich landscape shaped by its geology and centuries of human activity. The eastern Downs are open and expansive, offering scenic views across the Weald and out to sea, including iconic landmarks like the Seven Sisters and Cuckmere Haven. In contrast, the central and western Downs are characterized by woodlands, while the northern areas feature more intimate landscapes with heathland, sunken lanes, and greensand ridges.

The park's underlying geology, primarily chalk, greensand, and clay, plays a key role in shaping its unique terrain, influencing land use, architecture, and culture. This variety supports a mix of habitats, historic villages, farms, market towns, and ancient pathways, all within a relatively compact area.

More than just a beautiful setting, the landscape character of the South Downs connects natural and cultural elements, linking past and present. Its landscapes provide vital resources like food, wildlife habitats, and clean water, while fostering a strong sense of place and community. Panoramic views, such as those along the 100-mile South Downs Way, highlight its distinct beauty and cultural significance.

Policy and strategic context : what has changed?

The first purpose of the South Downs National Park Authority is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

To help care for Protected Landscapes, the National Park Authority and many other public bodies have a Duty of Regard to help with their conservation and enhancement as part of their everyday work. SDNPA follows a Landscape-led Approach to design and the South Downs Local Plan sets out a series of Policies , the majority of which relate to landscape and together with landscape evidence, these policies guide planning decisions.

SDNPA Partnership Management Plan

The South Downs National Park Authority's Partnership Management Plan seeks to protect and enhance the natural beauty and character of the National Park and seek environmental net gain from infrastructure projects. It also seeks to improve green infrastructure to deliver nature recovery networks and connect people to nature within and around the National Park.

Partnership Management Plan Indicators (2020-2025):

1.1 Protect Landscape Character

1.2 Create Green Infrastructure

Local Plan

The 2019 SDNPA Local Plan protects landscape character through Strategic Policy SD4: Landscape Character which ensures that Development proposals will only be permitted where they conserve and enhance landscape character. This policy is supported by Strategic Policies SD5: Design and SD6: Safeguarding Views which outline the importance of adopting a landscape-led approach which respects the local character of a place and preserves the visual integrity, identity and scenic quality of the SDNP.

Climate Action strategies also play a key role in responding to and mitigating the effects of climate change on the landscape.

What is the current State of Landscape in the SDNP?

Landscape Character Change

PMP-1: Changes in character of the landscape, including historic elements is maintained

The Landscape character of the SDNP experiences pressures from changing land use, agriculture and the impact of human settlement and infrastructure such as new roads, pipelines or cable routes.

The South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (SDILCA) was updated by LUC in 2020 to ensure that it captured changes in the landscape since 2011, incorporated updated datasets and responded to current forces for change. It included minor changes to the classification of landscape types and areas – with some areas now being covered in more detail and a summary of the Ecosystem Services that are delivered within each landscape area. The SDILCA was updated again in 2023 to include guidance on nature recovery action by landscape character type to support the development of nature recovery schemes. The SDICLA “story map” can be explored here: [South Downs Landscape Character Assessment \(LCA\) 2020 - South Downs National Park Authority](#)

Strategic Policy SD4: Landscape Character

The key features that define the character of the SDNP landscape continue to be preserved through application of the Local Plan policies. However, there is a risk that gradual, incremental changes can accumulate over time, potentially resulting in a significant loss of local distinctiveness and sense of place.

The open downland continues to be particularly vulnerable to pressures from urban expansion along the heavily developed areas and coastal fringes bordering the National Park.

Additionally, demands for road infrastructure improvements, often involving large cuttings or tunnels, continue to remain a challenge and a threat to tranquillity across the SDNP.

Strategic Policy SD5: Design

There is a continuing trend for converting historic farm buildings into residential and commercial properties and good design conserves and enhances the quality of local environments. In 2019, the South Downs National Park Authority launched Design Awards to promote outstanding and innovative design in the National Park. The Awards returned in 2024 to celebrate projects that have made a standout contribution to the landscape, heritage, built environment and our local communities.

There remains an ongoing challenge to ensure that new developments align with local character, particularly in terms of traditional design and materials to preserve an area's unique local identity.

Strategic Policy SD6: Safeguarding Views

There have been several successful undergrounding projects to reduce the visual impact of power lines

Mineral Extraction Sites

The SDNPA is a member of the South East England Aggregate Working Party (SEEAWP) and collaborates with local authorities to develop joint minerals and waste plans for the National Park's three county areas, including monitoring extraction sites.

While efforts are made to source minerals from outside the National Park, existing operational sites, the need for a sufficient supply for national infrastructure, and the finite nature of mineral resources must also be considered.

SEEAWP has highlighted the need for additional soft sand extraction sites to ensure a steady regional supply. Several locations within the National Park also produce recycled and secondary aggregates.

Information on the tonnage from individual extraction sites is commercially sensitive data and,

Mineral	Number of sites: 2012	Number of sites: 2024	Commentary: 2024
Brick Clay	1	1	There is currently 1 site used for some small-scale extraction
Chalk	2	4	There are currently 4 active extraction sites across the West Sussex and Hampshire Areas
Oil & Gas	5	4	There are currently 4 active sites either in exploration or production across the West Sussex and Hampshire Areas.
Sandstone	2	2	There are currently 2 extraction sites in the West Sussex Area, one of which is active.
Sharp Sand and Gravel	1	0	The previous report recorded 1 site in the West Sussex Area; however, Valdoe

			Quarry has now closed, and inert landfill has been used to achieve restoration.
Soft Sand	4	4	There are currently 4 extraction sites across the East Sussex and West Sussex Areas; however, only two are active.

Urban Extent:

An analysis was undertaken using Spring and Summer satellite data from 2018 to 2024 to explore to what extent hard surfaces (urban/industrial) have increased or decreased within the SDNP. The landscape character change analysis was completed by comparing outputs from the enhanced normalized difference impervious surfaces index (ENDISI) and 34 urban OS Vector Map Local (VML) Polygons used in SDNPA Earth Observation Annual Monitoring.

There appears to be little or no correlation between the two approaches to establishing change over time, which leaves findings on this aspect, inconclusive and further analysis will be explored.

Winter Bare Soils Analysis (November to February)

Analysis of bare soil and unvegetated land per landscape character area (LCA) was completed over the winter from 2018 to 2024.

For the SDNP’s 30 LCAS which have more than 25% arable land, the analysis shows an average of between 21.6% and 32.9% arable land remaining bare during the winter.

The soil erosion risk levels for these LCAs are generally low although possible anomalies with increased medium/high risk could include the Adur and Ouse Floodplains and Valley Sides possibly due to a combination of the percentage of Arable Land, slope (valley sides) and proximity to water courses.

Broadly, the longer that soils are left open the increased negative impact on soil erosion. However, it is important to consider that over wintered stubbles are important for some wintering bird populations.

Urban Greenness

An analysis was undertaken using normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) data extracted for each urban settlement polygon from Sentinel Hub using a 5% cloud limit.

Overall, in the period between 2018 and 2024, of the 34 places analysed, 24 indicated a slight reduction in urban greenness and 10 indicated a slight increase.

Some settlements such as Meonstoke North and Lewes have seen increases in urban greenness whilst settlements including Findon and South Harting have experienced a decrease in urban greenness.

It is worth noting that whilst an increase in hard surface across all landscape character types could indicate that there is less space for nature; where that hard surface was developed within the scope of the Local Plan and in accordance with the character of the area it could be a positive.

Geological SSSIs and Local Geological Sites (LGS)

PMP-4: Percentage of designated or notified Geological/Geomorphological Sites managed in better condition

There are 60 geological sites within the National Park. This is broken down into 50 Local Geological Sites (LGS)/Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGGS) and 10 geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The sites are most often privately owned and not in SDNPA management. The RIGGS were last surveyed in 2013 by volunteers from the Sussex Geodiversity Group (SGG) who found 20% of the managed sites to be in better condition. Options to update this data are being explored.

Green Infrastructure:

The People And Nature Network (PANN) was with key local partners in 2020 and aims to protect, enhance and create a network of green and blue spaces, which sustainably meet the needs of local communities, support natural ecosystem services and respects the special qualities of protected landscapes by proposing the strategic principles for the planning, delivery and management of natural capital assets in the area. The PANN can be explored here: [The People and Nature Network \(PANN\) - South Downs National Park Authority](#)

Conclusion, vulnerabilities and opportunities

Land use change as the result of climate change

Climate change is transforming land use and could alter landscape character, with initiatives like grant schemes, biodiversity net gain, and carbon offsets increasing tree cover and woodlands. While beneficial for climate adaptation, these changes can impact open views and historic landscapes, leading to altered patterns and the loss of traditional features, such as field boundaries and veteran trees.

Low-lying coastal areas face heightened risks from flooding and sea inundation, adding pressure on land use. However, the transition to a low-carbon future offers opportunities to support sectors like energy and agriculture in ways that preserve landscape character and enhance visual appeal.

Land management responses to the impacts of climate change and climatic conditions

Climate change, socio-economic factors, and sustainability goals are driving shifts in agricultural practices, which could transform landscapes. Extended growing seasons, reduced or intensified grazing, and the adoption of new crops, including biomass, may alter the visual and ecological character of the countryside.

De-intensification of less viable agricultural might will create opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, habitat creation, and rewilding. Regenerative farming practices and nature-based solutions are also gaining momentum, offering benefits for biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and climate resilience.

Planning or development responses to climate change impacts.

Major infrastructure projects, such as roads, railways, and power transmission, are reshaping landscapes, impacting iconic views and open skylines, and sometimes clashing with the historic and traditional character of protected areas.

While green infrastructure solutions, like natural flood management, can enhance ecosystem functions, they may also alter existing landscape character. Shifts in settlement patterns, driven by development and land-use pressures, further challenge efforts to preserve landscape integrity. Balancing these demands with conservation and sustainable practices is essential to maintaining the area's visual and ecological value.

These changes highlight both challenges and opportunities as the landscape adapts to evolving environmental and economic pressures.

Chapter 3: Special Quality: Well conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage

Introduction

The South Downs National Park is defined by its unique landscape character and well-preserved archaeological and historic features, including Bronze Age barrows, Iron Age hill forts, Saxon burial sites, Norman churches, and World War defensive infrastructure. In addition, this landscape has produced material culture preserved within its soils, now housed in public museums in and around the Park. We also have the heritage unseen, including yet to be discovered archaeological sites, stories yet to be told, and places to reconsider in light of new technologies and understanding. These elements connect the Park to its rich human history, which has shaped both the land itself and the way we perceive it.

Art has long been, and will always be, a force helping us to define and understand landscapes. Through the eye of the artist, we have been able to capture responses to this land over time, with the arts communicating everything from change to perception and belonging. Renowned writers and artists, such as Jane Austen, Gilbert White and Eric Ravilious have drawn inspiration from this captivating landscape, further enriching its cultural heritage. Its dense array of historical features is evidenced through the number of monuments and buildings protected by Scheduling and Listing, with the Park embodying local traditions and the creative contributions of both past and present. The human history of this landscape, how we have shaped, changed and responded to it, helps us to understand the journey we have been on, and informs decisions we make today as we seek new futures in which custodianship and connection will be critical to the preservation, enhancement and protection of nature, habitat and the land's distinctive character. We can use this rich heritage to help support a new generation of custodians to care for the South Downs, now and into the future. The stories we tell about the South Downs are

critical to creating relevance and connection to a new generation, creating roots that run through generations.

This section will explore the current state of the South Down National Park's cultural and archaeological assets, highlighting successes and challenges. Additionally, it will discuss how heritage and the creative arts have acted as a crucial mechanism in connecting people with renaturing landscapes and addressing climate challenges, as well as building relationships with the National Park itself as an asset shaped by people, protected by people and here for the wellbeing and benefit of all people in today's society. Looking at work undertaken to date and our priorities ahead, by leveraging historical insights for future landscape decision-making, we can inform next steps for nature, people and place, while also using the cultural and historic story of this landscape to connect people more strongly to place, and to each other.

Policy and strategic context : what has changed?

Cultural heritage is embedded in Purpose 1 of National Parks, and comprises one of three intrinsic ingredients, alongside wildlife and natural beauty, which together create the unique and irreplaceable character of our national landscapes.

SDNPA Partnership Management Plan:

The South Downs National Park Authority's Partnership Management Plan emphasises the importance of cultural heritage. It aims to increase awareness and access while fostering a deeper understanding of the Park's rich history. Through this plan, there's a concerted effort to promote creative responses to, and appreciation of, the landscape.

Partnership Management Plan Indicators (2020-2025):

4.1 Increase conservation, awareness, access to, and understanding of, cultural heritage.

4.2 Promote creativity and understanding of the landscape and traditions contemporary arts and crafts

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

To support Protected Landscapes in meeting their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place Defra and Natural England are establishing ambitious targets for National Parks and National Landscapes. These targets will promote the actions that are most needed to achieve positive changes. Cultural Heritage is considered in in the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP):

Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

Target 10: Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes

The condition of heritage assets is also linked to Goal 2 (Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042), given that nationally, approx. 18% of Scheduled Monuments sit within SSSIs. Scheduled assets are protected by law, and their condition can act as a 'canary in the mine' for the wider

landscape setting within which they sit, and therefore their condition is an important monitoring consideration.

What is the current state of Heritage in the SDNP?

Number of nationally designated heritage assets in the South Downs National Park

Cultural heritage contributes to landscape distinctiveness. Heritage assets are tangible links over time to human/natural interactions, and act as a log-book of cause and effect for human interventions within the landscape. They are an inheritance and a legacy that we have a legal and moral obligation to maintain as survivals of our collective experience.

Some cultural heritage assets are nationally designated due to their significance, and as such, represent a unique and fragile reflection of our human history. In addition, heritage assets are protected by legislation and policy frameworks. Designated heritage assets include buildings, scheduled monuments, parks and gardens and battlefields.

Every year Historic England compiles a report on the sites that are ‘At Risk’ of loss – this is primarily compiled from reports received and so may not include all sites at risk. The percentage of sites that are ‘At Risk’ each year is monitored, and this acts as an indicator of the extent to which the historic environment is “well conserved”.

Year	% of nationally designated heritage assets in the SDNP to be deemed at risk
2014	2.5
2019	0.9
2024	0.6

Source: © Historic England 2024. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2024 The Historic England GIS Data on which this material is based was obtained on the dates shown above. The most publicly available up-to-date Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from [HistoricEngland.org.uk](https://historicengland.org.uk)

The above demonstrates that heritage at risk (HAR) in the South Downs National Park has been decreasing and is, overall, very low. Fernhurst Furnace has been removed from the register thanks to conservation engineering repairs funded by Historic England and the South Downs Trust.

However, we must also note that condition *trends* are important to monitor in understanding the conservation status of Scheduled Monuments. This includes where Monuments may not be officially considered ‘At Risk’ but which are showing a declining or vulnerable condition. It is therefore to be noted that in 2021, 41% of Scheduled Monuments in the South Downs National Park were identified as vulnerable based on data available at that time.

It is worth noting that improved monitoring and recording of Scheduled Monument condition *may increase* the number of assets recorded as being in a vulnerable or declining state, and likewise increase the number of Scheduled Monuments considered to be HAR. We also have to recognise that the changing climate will present some challenges over time to our long-established approaches *and expectations* to conservation and preservation, i.e. coastal heritage at risk such as hillforts, and that there may be times where HAR is part of managed programmes of retreat, where we use predicted loss of a heritage asset (which is beyond the ability to intervene) as an opportunity to save as much information as possible through monitoring, recording, research and public engagement, but ultimately accepting that they will, one day, be lost. These assets are a reminder that a protected landscape is not changeless – change is inevitable, in dynamic living spaces, and we need to respond to change by seeking opportunities to learn, record and explore what change means with the public, who may equate conservation and preservation with stasis.

Case Studies

Cultural Heritage in 2024

Our projects and partnership work between 2020-2025 has been critical to delivering impact through collaboration, pooling expertise and resources to deliver for nature, climate and communities. A key ingredient in all work celebrated by SDNPA are our colleagues across NGOs, charities and local authorities, who lead work in this area and invite us to be part of shared ambitions and outcomes. Thanks should also be noted for the collaborative culture fostered and promoted by arm's length bodies including Arts Council England, Historic England and Natural England, and by independent bodies such as the Heritage Alliance, who have collectively brought together shared priorities across a number of Government departments as a single driving vision for nature, people and place. We cannot deliver without our partners, and without the communities who invite us to be part of their stories. Examples of key successes within this PMP period includes:

We See You Now/We Hear You Now (2020-2024)

Devised and led by Alinah Azadeh and involving a cohort of emerging and established writing talent drawn from across Sussex, *We See You Now/We Hear You Now* brought together the under-told histories of the downland through the creative lens. A selection of digitally recorded works from the project have been placed on existing landscape features such as benches and finger posts, as well as available online, with content to date having been shared with an estimated 69,755 listeners through platforming by BBC Radio 3; with 18,132 people through live performances and 528 people through workshops and activities. Feedback from participants across the projects included “It made me see the South Downs and the Seven Sisters in a whole new light, and I’ve known this area my whole life, fifty-three years.”; “Many things that I take for granted like this landscape is experienced so differently. It was eye opening in a very good way” and “[It] gave me a feeling of deep belonging, of ‘this place is mine’, that I didn’t have before.” The project was shortlisted for a Campaign for National Parks New Perspectives Award in 2022, and has been featured in the Journal of Heritage Interpretation and Countryside Voices among other print publications.

Monument Mentors Guidance (2022-2023)

Developed in partnership with the National Trust and commissioned from Actalund Limited, this new guidance outlines step-by-step actions individuals, groups and projects can take to monitor and record the condition of Scheduled Monuments, by directly updating Historic England's National Heritage List for England. The guidance was subsequently adopted by the Changing Chalk project, which has ensured 89 individual monuments (approximately 15% of monuments across the National Park) assessed for their condition, with associated Historic England monument records updated with condition summary and photographs. A number of the monuments have been subject to repeat visits within the Changing Chalk project to monitor change over time.

We continue to work with partners and with Historic England to promote the guidance.

Fair Game (2023-2024)

Led by the University of Exeter, and delivered by a core team comprising Natural England, National Trust, SDNPA, British Deer Society, Sussex Archaeological Society, Fareshare and Felix Project, with a growing project partnership drawing together opportunities presented by furthering conversations with food justice charities, food box schemes, education providers, businesses and deer managers. The project uses the archaeological and historical story of fallow deer to unite partners and inspire a long-lens view of a contemporary species issue.

Recognised as an exemplar approach in utilising archaeology and the cultural story of a species to bring partners together to address a contemporary issue, the project won a Council for British Archaeology (CBA) Award in October 2024 for its focus on sustainability and systemic barriers to delivery, to further conversations cross sector, as well as its links to nature recovery.

By March 2025, collaborative work between Fair Game and the Natural England-led Sussex Woods Pilot Strategic Study will have seen 10 tonnes of venison from the South Downs distributed through food charities supporting the most vulnerable people in our society facing food poverty.

Reviving Folktales (2024)

A new partnership with Brighton Metropolitan College, Reviving Folktales combines heritage assets in the National Park such as Scheduled Monuments, with South Downs folktales and the contemporary arts to support young people to create responses to landscape through animation. In total, 48 students participated mainly from within the 18-24 age bracket, with 16% of students who completed the evaluation stating that their day-to-day lives were either limited "a lot" or "a little" by their physical or mental health. The project culminated in a print and digital publication featuring their artwork and quoted reflections on the experience, with one sharing that "I learned about new creatures and plant species like nightjar and bee orchids, which has filled me with a sense of local pride" and "I feel more inclined to spend time in nature, create artwork in nature, and walk along the South Downs...".

SDNPA continues to actively contribute to the Joint Statement for the Historic Environment, which results in opportunities for collaborative activities across NPUK cultural heritage teams, with one example being a live partnership with the Peak District National Park to assess historic maps using machine learning tools to identify lost habitats such as hedgerows and ponds, that could help inform nature recovery today. SDNPA also continues to support partners with guidance and advice on grant applications, with one example being support provided to Lewes District Council and LYT Productions with their successful National Lottery Heritage Fund bid for Walk the Chalk in 2023, a celebration of the cultural and natural landscape along England's (King Charles III) Coast Path.

Challenges

Cultural heritage impacts and opportunities in terms of the renature and climate action can be under-recognised and under-represented at local, regional and national level in terms of data and decision making. Historic environment data has an important role to play in informing landscape-scale decision making.

The impact of climate change on heritage management and conservation is not well understood outside the sector.

Without connection and understanding, cultural heritage risks loss of future custodianship in contemporary society. Building relevance is critical to future conservation.

Disconnection from cultural heritage removes/reduces opportunities to benefit from its health, wellbeing and sense of place benefits, which are well evidenced.

There is a need to address heritage crafts and skills in terms of the future workforce, in order to manage and maintain the built character of protected landscapes.

There is a sector-wide issue with regards to a lack of data that enables us to benchmark progress across conservation and engagement for, and with, cultural heritage, particularly for people's sense of connection and response to cultural heritage, and the added value heritage brings to our time in rural spaces. We know from initiatives such as Heritage Counts that heritage delivers significant benefits for the economy, health and wellbeing, but our reliance on a small number of datasets limits our ability to communicate impact and the breadth of cultural heritage as an asset. We are therefore pleased to be working alongside the Lake District National Park Authority and the Peak District National Park Authority as part of research led by the University of Exeter and the National Trust into Cultural Heritage Capital, funded by DCMS and the AHRC, to create a Cultural Heritage Capital model to parallel approaches for natural capital. This will, it is hoped, strengthen the sector nationally with regards to communicating the value and impact of cultural heritage across society. For the SDNPA specifically, it will help us better understand what messages and interpretation approaches can inspire visitor engagement with the South Downs landscape.

Heritage Craft and Skills Pilot (2024)

Conservation relies on a workforce with the knowledge, skills and understanding to ensure the cultural heritage inheritance of the past remains as legacies into the future. Led by the Sussex Heritage Trust, in partnership with Weald and Downland Living Museum, Chichester College Group, heritage craft businesses and with funding support from SDNPA, Foyle Foundation and the South Downs Trust, an innovative pilot is informing ongoing collaboration to pursue multi-year grant investment to deliver a programme that imbeds career pipeline support for young people to experience heritage crafts, and pursue training and employment opportunities in built heritage conservation.

As part of an initial pilot in June 2024, 27 young people spent the day at the Weald and Downland Living Museum, with 11 heritage craft specialists and trained volunteers, to experience hands-on heritage craft activities, including carpentry and traditional brick making. For all the young people who participated, this was their first experience of a heritage craft, and with support from heritage craft businesses, they were able to see first-hand the skills and opportunities available in and around the South Downs National Park for viable employment in built heritage conservation.

The participants were drawn principally from Chichester, Brinsbury and Crawley, with 68% of participants from areas with the lowest academic attainment and skills; 48% from areas listed with the highest levels of deprivation related to income, and 47% from areas with the highest levels of involuntary unemployment, based on ONS (2019) statistics.

Feedback included 100% of participants reporting that they understand more about the South Downs National Park and career opportunities available in heritage crafts; 100% reported that the day introduced them to building conservation and heritage skills; 81% wanted to access further training in building crafts and conservation, and 76% were interested in applying for a bursary.

The success of the pilot is timely. Skills England identified heritage retrofit as a priority for future skills development, and Historic England's *Skills Needs Analysis* (2024) shows that the current training offers available are not meeting the needs of maintaining current workforce levels, let alone increasing capacity in the context of Net Zero and the need to advocate for retrofit and repurposing of pre-1919 redundant building stock for new purposes, such as meeting housing needs.

The ongoing support provided by Sussex Heritage Trust since June continues to match participants up with further training opportunities, supporting applications for bursaries to pay for courses, and linking up with additional taster experiences in heritage craft businesses. Some participants have already gone on to undertake further training, and one has secured a job in a heritage craft business. Expanding this programme is a priority for all partners involved, and SDNPA is committed to supporting this initiative by Sussex Heritage Trust.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality

Condition: Moderate

Reason: Although Heritage at Risk (HAR) in the SDNP is very low, this should not result in complacency. HAR is open to change, particularly as climate related impacts result in increased awareness of risk – as an example, two sites, Seaford Head Hillfort and Bowl Barrow (Historic England ref. 1014523) and Belle Tout Camp (Historic England ref. 1002288) have both moved on to the HAR Register more recently in recognition of the impacts of coastal erosion on the long term preservation of both sites, making HAR something to monitor and review in the context of a changing climate. We should also note that some HAR is recorded as moving into an improving condition, which is a reminder that HAR status brings with it closer monitoring and greater focus for partnership solutions. However, data available to the SDNPA has suggested a much larger proportion of protected archaeological sites exhibiting either a declining or vulnerable condition trend, or both. As with protected sites (such as SSSIs) the principal impacts (based on data analysed in 2021) are from scrub and vegetation encroachment (37%), erosion from grazing/livestock management, vehicle damage and visitor pressures (11%), animal burrowing (8%) and arable ploughing (7%). This again presents potential around PLTOF, to look at how Target 2 and 10 present opportunities for mutual benefits for nature and heritage. Given the mosaic of landownership within the National Park, our role relies on influence, dissemination of best practice, and encouraging integrated site management approaches that consider heritage and nature as integrated eco-systems.

The rich cultural heritage of the South Downs is also a key contributor to the rural economy, with heritage and cultural organisations acting as local employers and commissioners (for both goods and services) as well as attracting inbound tourism. The culture sector has also attracted significant investment in geographic areas of interest to the National Park, from sources such as Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up, which is contributing to place making and rural economy. The sector is however continuing to struggle post-pandemic, with a slower and more precarious economic recovery than predicted due to both the cost-of-living crisis and escalating energy costs. It should be noted that the Invest 2035: UK Industrial Strategy Green Paper has positioned cultural industries as one of 8 priority sectors for economic growth, and although the sub-sectors within this are yet to be defined, we know that there are notable clusters of creative economy sectors in areas with close connectivity to the National Park, such as Brighton, Worthing and Eastbourne.

Given the ongoing economic pressures, we should also continue to monitor and support our cultural partners in light of the benefits we have gained over the past five years from partnerships with the cultural, creative and heritage sectors. This has not only been in the form of joint funding generated for shared purposes, from sources including the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England, which has enabled delivery for people and community engagement, but their role as partners providing venues, experience and resource for a number of significant programmes for the SDNPA, such as Timescape, which works with people experiencing significant health inequalities.

Heritage skills and our ability to respond to a Net Zero future with regards to pre-1919 built heritage is also an area to monitor, particularly as built heritage is a key component of landscape character. Sitting within the wider green skills deficit identified by Skills England when we look ahead to the workforce needs for Net Zero and environmental improvement, heritage skills will be part of the future workforce solution to carbon reduction and retrofit. We need to ensure the National Park has access to the skills and career opportunities to meet that future.

Chapter 4: A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species

Introduction

The South Downs National Park (SDNP), with its unique and diverse geology, geomorphological features and microclimates, hosts diverse and rare wildlife across various habitats, including chalk downlands, ancient woodlands, lowland heathlands, farmland, rivers and coastal cliffs. Iconic chalk grasslands are home to rare plants and butterflies, while heathlands support all native British reptiles and amphibians. Farmland and flower-rich meadows offer habitats for rare birds and plants, and dense woodlands shelter species like the barbastelle bat and native bluebells. Wetlands and rare chalk streams support a diversity of plant and animal species. The park is also rich in coastal biodiversity, with seabird colonies on chalk cliffs and shores. The richness and diversity of habitats and species in the Park is particularly special because it exists in one of the most populated National Parks in the UK, with 113,300 people living within the Park area and an additional 1.4 million people living within 5 kms of the Park boundary.

Policy and strategic context: what has changed?

Nature recovery is more important than ever. In 2020, the UK Government committed to the 30 by 30 target, aiming to manage and protect 30% of the UK's land by 2030. Supporting this, nature recovery targets are enshrined Environment Act 2021. Broadly these targets aim to:

- Manage existing nationally, internationally and locally important protected sites.
- Manage existing nature-rich habitats. including 'priority' habitats such as species rich grassland as well as hedgerows and areas of rare arable plants.
- Increase nature-rich areas creating bigger, better and more joined up nature,
- Slow and reverse the decline in species, both in terms of their abundance, the size of species' populations and their diversity, the number of different species from the relatively common to the rare.

South Downs National Park, like other Protected Landscapes, is expected to deliver ambitious targets contributing both to 30 by 30 and the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

Climate change presents challenges for the SDNP's habitats and species, who will need to adapt to the fast-changing conditions. Nature recovery can also help to reduce climate change through carbon sequestration and mitigation.

What is the current State of Nature in the SDNP?

The extent of nature

In contrast to other National Parks the South Downs has a relatively low proportion of nationally and internationally protected sites and the number and area of local wildlife sites, which are designated on a county basis, varies over the three counties covered by the SDNP.

Protected Sites and Priority Habitats This map shows the extent and distribution of designated sites and priority habitat across the SDNP.

Nature recovery can be gradual. Some habitats, including chalk grassland can take a relatively long time to recover, up to fifty years. So, nature recovery is usually measured by the condition of the habitat or when actions are taken to restore it.

Protected sites The most recent SSSI unit condition Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in National Parks and National Landscapes (MEOPL, *Natural England: Evidence Report on SSSI condition in National Parks by area (ha), 2020*) shows that

- 96% of the protected site areas in the Park are either in favourable condition or are being managed so that they reach favourable condition (2020).
- 6% of those sites have achieved favourable condition since 2012.

Achievements

Learning through practical experience and relationships with key partners has resulted in a greater understanding of the wider issues impacting protected sites, which often require action beyond the site boundaries. Analysis has shown that the primary challenges are grazing and scrub encroachment on grassland and heathland sites, deer browsing preventing the regeneration of woodlands and the

availability and quality of water. As of 2024, SSSIs are now assessed by feature and there are 85 SSSIs in the Park which have 416 features. 32% of the features have an up-to-date condition assessment and of those 51% are in favourable or recovering condition (October 2024).

Projects and Ranger work programmes have contributed to habitat creation and restoration across the SDNP.

Case Study: Fair Game

Fallow deer, although an important part of English cultural heritage have more than doubled in population in the five years between 2017 and 2022, with large increases in Red Deer and Muntjac populations also reported.

The dramatic increase in deer numbers hinders efforts both to establish new woodlands and the regeneration of existing woodlands through browsing pressure. Deer browsing has also been associated with bird declines due to the modification of the woodland understorey and also causing significant crop and agricultural damage. Competition for food now means that the wellbeing of the deer themselves is at risk.

Natural England’s Protected Site Strategy in West Sussex aims to tackle deer populations which are impacting woodland protected sites and the SDNPA is working in partnership with the University of Exeter and other partners to deliver the Fair Game Project which delivers Virtuous Venison with the aim to restore deer numbers to sustainable levels, contribute to woodland and habitat regeneration, helping other species thrive and support local food suppliers.

Case Study: The Seven Sisters National Nature Reserve

The South Downs National Park Authority has worked closely with partners, in a project led by Natural England to develop the proposal to extend the National Nature Reserve (NNR) at Lullington Heath.

The new NNR will be known as The Seven Sisters National Nature Reserve, will take in 12,000 hectares of land from Seaford to Eastbourne, in East Sussex, and will benefit from government funding to connect, conserve and enhance the landscape to benefit wildlife, water and people.

The NNR will also focus on creating and restoring a mosaic of habitats across this varied landscape, from the wildflower chalk grasslands, the meandering Cuckmere River, and the wooded slopes of Friston and Eastbourne Escarpment, linking in with the wider farmed landscape.

Focusing initially on the rare wart-biter cricket, found in only six sites across Britain, and the short-snouted seahorse, the project will work with partners to boost populations of these rare species.

Local wildlife sites

	Number of sites	Under management	Not under management	Unknown
2012	861	47%	9%	44%
2024	869	44%	12%	44%

Source: Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre and Sussex Biodiversity Records Centres, 2024

There has been a 3% decrease in the number of Local Wildlife Sites under management whilst 44% of sites have not been surveyed recently and the condition of those sites is unknown. SDNPA Ranger teams complete a prioritisation exercise annually to identify sites for survey and work with landowners to provide advice on habitat management.

What have SDNPA achieved? Partners, supported by South Downs National Park Authority, have worked hard to ensure local wildlife sites are monitored and managed. SDNPA Rangers and Volunteers work with landowners and farmers to improve the condition of the sites by carrying out scrub clearance to prevent encroachment on the open grassland and clearing long grass and excessive bramble or other dominant species to open the sward for wildflowers to be able to spread and thrive.

Wildlife rich habitats

The amount of priority habitat in the SDNP has remained steady since 2012 with analysis showing that the extent of priority habitat is potentially starting to increase with a 0.8% growth in the Km2 of priority habitat reported since 2020. Priority habitat outside of SSSI designation is also showing signs of possible increase with an additional 1% reported since 2020 – mostly due to a reported increase in woodland. However, these increases are small and could be due to improved data quality and a longer time series is needed to better evidence changes in priority habitat extent.

Priority Habitat In SDNP	2012	2020	2024		% of the national total
	% of the Park	Km2	% of the Park	Km2	
Woodland	23.8% (likely overestimate)	265.35	16.06%	267.96	3.5%
Lowland calcareous grassland	4%	54.14	3.28%	57.10	9%
Lowland Heath	1%	9.61	0.58%	9.57	0.3%

What have we achieved?

There are possible early indications that the extent of priority habitat is slowly starting to increase across the South Downs National Park and with the implementation of the national target to “Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042”, it is expected that this will increase. The launch of new agri-environment schemes is also expected to have a positive impact on habitat creation and restoration.

SDNPA works in partnership with landowners, managers, farmers and with key partners in supporting nature recovery action and since 2022, a total of 6,082 additional hectares of land have been secured or newly managed for nature.

What is the condition of our wildlife rich habitats?

Lowland Calcareous Grassland

Lowland calcareous grassland covers 3.5% of the SDNP and makes up 9% of the national total. Until April of 2024, there was no nationally agreed method to assess the condition of priority and wildlife rich outside of protected sites.

Since 2022, the South Downs National Park Authority has run a programme of rapid condition assessments on chalk grassland sites. In total 42 sites covering an area of 555ha have been assessed, the surveys uncovered some areas of chalk grassland in good condition however many sites could benefit from increased grazing. The condition assessments are being used by the Ranger teams to support land managers with grazing advice and recommended actions to help improve the condition of the sites.



Jan Knowlson assessing chalk grassland condition

Case Study: Changing Chalk grazing project.

A Heritage Lottery Funded project to innovatively tackle the need for grazing working with local farmers in the Eastern Downs. Partners include National Trust, Brighton and Hove City Council and the local Eastern Downs Farmer group. The project has trialled using goats and ponies to graze chalk grassland.

Lowland Heathland

Lowland Heathland covers just 1% of the SDNP and the South Downs is home to the only heath in the country where you can find all twelve of Britain's native reptiles and amphibians - including the Natterjack Toad, Sand Lizard and Adder. The Wealden Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is designated for its breeding populations of Dartford Warbler, Woodlark and Nightjar. These three species are reliant on lowland dry heathland and associated mosaic habitats such as scrub, plantation, grassland and mire.

The "Heathlands Reunited Wealden Heath SAMM" project brings together 12 likeminded organisations to help protect and enhance the Shortheath Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Wealden Heath Special Protection Area (SPA). The project aims to mitigate the recreational impact from the Whitehill & Bordon Regeneration Project on the SAC and SPA areas.

The project's aim is to protect the species found in the Special Protection Area and promote heathland that people know about, care about, and use responsibly and sustainably.

A bird monitoring programme is in operation and a baseline habitat condition survey was completed in 2023 with both surveys determining the potential impact of recreational pressure on the bird populations.

Farming

70% of the SDNP is farmed and farmers manage nature-rich habitats including chalk grassland, heathlands and hedgerows as well as managing arable and grassland for species like pollinators and farmland birds.

Field margins and hedgerows provide opportunities for nature friendly farming and in 2024 a hedgerow density analysis was undertaken. There is currently 6000km of hedgerow in the national park and the density dataset is being used by the Ranger teams to provide advice and support on hedgerow management and creation.

The Hampshire Hedgerows Project, focussed on delivering hedgerow restoration at scale at various sites within the Selborne Landscape Partnership and Winchester Downs Farm Cluster. Over 20km of hedgerow was restored or newly planted because of the project benefiting specific species such as brown hairstreak butterfly, yellowhammer, harvest mouse and corn bunting, plus foraging bats.

Woodland

16% of The South Downs is covered by woodland, making it the most wooded English National Park 70% of the woodland in the SDNP is currently under sustainable management.

Conserving this precious treescape is not without its challenges. Pests and diseases such as ash dieback and Dutch elm disease and the impacts of deer browsing and a changing climate are a cause for concern.

Trees for the Downs

Since Trees for the Downs began in 2020, it has enabled Parish Councils, farmers, community groups and more to plant trees across 114 different sites. Over 20,000 trees will be planted in Winter 2024, contributing to a total of 75,000 trees planted so far.

Rivers and Streams

There are seven main rivers that run through the National Park – the Ouse, Cuckmere, Adur, Arun, Rother, Meon, and Itchen.

As well as these rivers, there are a network of over 100km of, internationally rare chalk streams in the South Downs, many of them fed by springs rather than rain.

These rivers are among the richest freshwater ecosystems in the UK and the picturesque river valleys are an integral part of the landscape and local communities.

However, rivers across the country are in poor condition through pollution and habitat degradation. The ‘ecological status’ of UK rivers and streams is assessed under the Water Framework Directive and data shows that in the SDNP, 17% of waterbodies achieve “high” or “good” status, 33% achieve “moderate” status, 47% are considered “poor” or “bad” and 3% have not been assessed.

The SDNPA has limited powers with regards to river pollution, yet work is ongoing with Government, councils, landowners, water companies, agencies and charities to improve river health.

An example of this is by working with farmers and landowners to ensure more river-friendly farming such as using winter cover crops, which can significantly reduce nitrate leaching.

A recent partnership working success story for chalk streams includes the [**Cockshut-Stream-Restoration.pdf**](#)

Coast and Marine

The coastal section of the South Downs National Park is a designated Marine Conservation Zone and stretches 14-miles between Eastbourne and Seaford Head.

Coastal erosion, accelerated by climate change means that this section of the National Park is likely to change dramatically in the coming years, with unpredictable cliff fall occurring more often. Projects such as the Seaford Head archaeology project are assessing and recording the archaeology of the area before it is lost to coastal erosion.

Species trend lines

Long term species abundance monitoring, over 25 years is an important measure towards the Government target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030, and increase species abundance by at least 10% by 2042, compared to 2030 levels. The abundance target will be measured by looking at a set of species from different groups which are regularly measured.

Butterflies: Butterfly Conservation recently analysed butterfly monitoring data within the South Downs National Park (SDNP). The report found robust monitoring coverage for wider-countryside butterfly species across the region, with sufficient data to track population fluctuations over the last 30+ years. Trends for these butterflies in the South Downs largely mirror those in the broader South East. From 1990 to 2021, butterfly populations in the SDNP have shown a slightly smaller decline compared to the South East, while the past decade (2011-2021) shows a slightly smaller increase in population compared to the wider South East. However, these differences are not statistically significant.

Species associated with chalk grasslands, such as the Chalk Hill Blue, Adonis Blue, Small Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, and Grizzled Skipper, are consistently recorded at several sites. However, data is more limited for some habitat specialists, including the Duke of Burgundy, Grayling, and Pearl-Bordered Fritillary.

Bats: The Bat Conservation Trust completed an analysis of the National Bat Monitoring Programme data for the South Downs National Park. Since 1999, the England widespread bat index has increased by 43% (Bat Conservation Trust 2022). The data for the SDNP largely reflects national trends.

Farmland Birds: The South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI) is a collaboration between conservation organisations, farmers, and the South Downs National Park (SDNP). It has provided information on avian farmland ecology and conservation to advisors and farmers seeking to improve the status of farmland birds across the South Downs

Since 2014 the SDFBI has collated results from surveys of breeding farmland bird species, concentrating on ten (latterly nine) species commonly found in the mixed farmland landscape within the South Downs National Park. The species surveyed are grey partridge, lapwing, red kite, buzzard, skylark, wheatear, meadow pipit, linnet, corn bunting, and yellowhammer. After 2020, wheatear was no longer included in the survey.

Species	Distribution	SDNP Population Trend (last 10 years)	National Trend (last 10 years)	National Trend (long term)
Grey Partridge	Very few recorded - localised population	Stable	Decreasing	Significant decrease
Lapwing	Too few to reliably test for a population trend - localised population	Decreasing	Decreasing	Significant decrease
Red Kite	Found throughout SDNP	Significant increase	Significant increase	Significant increase
Buzzards	Found throughout SDNP	Slight decrease	Stable	Significant increase
Skylark	Found throughout SDNP	Slight increase	Slight increase	Decreasing
Wheatear	Too few to reliably test for a population trend	Slight decrease <i>(monitoring ceased in 2021)</i>	Decreasing	Decreasing
Meadow Pipit	Too few to reliably test for a population trend	Stable	Decreasing	Decreasing
Linnet	Found throughout SDNP	Slight decrease	Stable	Significant decrease
Corn bunting	Found in localised areas of the SDNP	Slight increase	Increasing	Significant decrease
Yellowhammer	Found throughout SDNP	Significant decrease	Decreasing	Significant decrease

The monitoring data shows that species trends largely mirror the national trends with population increases associated with the Duke of Norfolk’s Peppering Project. This highlights the positive effect of the conservation activities carried out by the Project which could inform conservation practices on farmland throughout the SDNP to aid farmland bird populations.

Case Studies

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.

Conclusion

Gathering cost effective, consistent and systematic data for habitats and species continues to be a challenge but there have been big steps forward, as examples such as the farmland bird survey, chalk grassland condition and local wildlife sites initiatives demonstrate.

Nature recovery requires a partnership approach, from landowners to regulators, private companies to nature conservation experts. Developing shared priorities and turning these into practically realisable projects takes time and resources. The Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Hampshire and Sussex, which are just being finalised, have, and will, help focus nature recovery action.

Many habitats and species need to be supported by repeated action, scrub clearance and grazing on chalk grassland, for instance. This requires resources and commitment.

Chapter 5: Tranquil and unspoilt places

Introduction

The South Downs National Park is the most densely populated National Park in England, yet it is cherished for its tranquillity and unspoiled landscapes, which offer a profound sense of peace and open space. In some parts of the park, the scenery exudes a timeless quality, free from intrusive development and preserving areas of pristine dark night skies. It is a place where people come to escape the hustle and bustle of life in this busy region, seeking relaxation, rejuvenation, and a chance to unwind.

'Tranquil and unspoiled places' are one of the seven special qualities that define the South Downs National Park. These qualities are central to what makes the park unique and are highly valued by both visitors and residents. In many areas, the landscape remains largely untouched by development, maintaining its dark night skies. In the bustling and pressured South East of England, these attributes hold particular significance.

Policy and strategic context: what has changed?

The [2019 SDNPA Local Plan](#) promotes tranquillity through Strategic Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity which seeks to ensure that development does not harm the relative tranquillity of the National Park and to encourage the conservation and enhancement of positive tranquillity factors.

The dark skies of the SDNP are protected through the Local Plan Strategic Policy SD8: Dark Night Skies which seeks to ensure that development does not harm the quality of dark night skies. It also encourages enhancement of the dark night skies of the National Park, for the benefit of people and wildlife. This Policy is supported by a Dark Night Skies [Technical Advice Note](#).

What is the state of Tranquillity in 2024

Tranquillity

Tranquillity mapping studies were conducted in [2017](#) and 2024, building on a proven methodology initially developed by Natural England and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) in 2005. Similar tranquillity mapping projects have also been undertaken in other protected landscapes, such as the Cranborne Chase AONB and the New Forest National Park. To ensure the project was well-suited for ongoing tranquillity monitoring in the South Downs National Park, the National Park Authority sought guidance from these organizations.

The findings of the 2017 and 2024 Tranquillity Mapping Study revealed that the areas most vulnerable to change were, to some extent, more tranquil than the original CPRE study had suggested. However, incorporating field-based assessments of the experiential qualities of tranquillity introduced an element of subjectivity to the results.

The Tranquillity Mapping Study results are also used to inform responses to planning applications and appeals.

What is clear is that the South Downs National Park contains some highly tranquil areas that need to be preserved, and other areas highly susceptible to changes brought about by increased noise and visual impacts.

Tranquillity Map

Tranquillity CPRE SDNPA 2024

- Areas of highest tranquillity (Shown in blue and purple on the maps) – should demonstrate that they conserve and enhance factors that contribute to relative tranquillity.

- Areas of intermediate tranquillity (Shown in green on the maps) are often those areas most vulnerable to change, should avoid further harm and take every opportunity to enhance it.
- Areas of lowest tranquillity (Shown in yellow on the maps) are often located within or on the edge of urban areas, may have limited scope for enhancing tranquillity but opportunities for enhancement should be taken wherever possible.

Dark Night Skies

In May 2016, the South Downs was awarded International Dark Sky Reserve status, recognizing both the high quality of its night skies and the dedication of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and its partners to tackling light pollution and preserving dark skies. The South Downs National Park is one of just 22 International Dark Sky Reserves worldwide, with the designation covering the entire park boundary. However, the reserve is primarily defined by a critical core and buffer zone where the darkest skies are found, with 67% of the National Park currently classified as having dark skies.

The critical core boundary was established using geographical features such as roads, woodland edges, and Rights of Way, under skies measuring 20.5 magnitudes per square arcsecond (mags/arcsec²). This level represents the threshold at which the Milky Way is easily visible to the naked eye by non-experts in astronomy and exceeds the 20 mags/arcsec² minimum required for a 'bronze-level' dark sky designation. Surrounding the core is a 2km-wide buffer zone, determined through direct measurements of the transition from bright to dark skies. The core zone offers the best conditions for stargazing within the National Park and the broader South East of England.

In some parts of the reserve, sky quality measurements exceed 21 mags/arcsec², indicating skies of sufficient quality to be potentially regarded as a 'silver level' dark sky.

Since 2016, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) has conducted annual sky quality measurement programs in accordance with the guidelines for International Dark Sky Reserves. These measurements indicate that, on average, sky quality across the park has remained stable, with some areas experiencing minor losses and others showing improvements.

Challenges

One challenge in analysing sky quality is its sensitivity to weather variations, which can cause fluctuations in the recorded values. Despite this limitation, there is strong confidence that the overall sky quality in the South Downs has remained consistent. Importantly, the highest readings still exceed the minimum requirements for dark sky reserve designation, demonstrating that the South Downs' exceptionally dark skies are being successfully preserved.

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) remains at the forefront of efforts to combat light pollution, working tirelessly to protect the park's dark skies, educate visitors, and collaborate with partners to achieve further progress in reducing light pollution. Although the challenge is significant—recent evidence shows that light pollution is becoming more widespread and severe—the South Downs continues to

serve as a haven of darkness. Here, people can connect with the cosmos and experience the health and well-being benefits that dark skies provide.

Chapter 6: An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise

Introduction

The rural economy has profoundly shaped the South Downs landscape, and approximately 70% of the area is farmed. Historical agricultural practices have contributed to the development of nationally significant habitats such as chalk downland and lowland heath and many farmers and landowners actively work to preserve and enhance these habitats through environmental stewardship programs.

Farming has always adapted to economic demands and continues to evolve. Some farmers have diversified by offering tourist accommodation or tapping into the growing market for locally produced food and drink. Climate change and market dynamics are further shaping the landscape, with significant growth in enterprises such as vineyards.

Farmers play a pivotal role in driving the changes necessary to safeguard and enhance the natural environment. The South Downs National Park Authority collaborates with the agricultural community to promote the adoption of Government funding for farmers and land managers such as Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) and also private finance such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). These initiatives aim to restore and protect biodiversity, not only at the individual farm level but also across entire landscapes, fostering a more sustainable and resilient countryside for future generations. Through these partnerships, efforts are being made to balance agricultural productivity with environmental stewardship, ensuring that the land continues to thrive both ecologically and economically.

However, the National Park's economy extends beyond farming and offers a mix of popular tourist attractions and a variety of businesses, including those in the land based, visitor economy and food and drink sectors which support local employment and enrich the character of towns and villages.

Policy and strategic context: what has changed?

The Duty of 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.

As the UK transitions from the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to a new agricultural support system, farming is going through a significant period of change. The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, funded by Defra has helped to facilitate the transition to the new UK Farming Policy.

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

To support Protected Landscapes in meeting their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place Defra and Natural England are establishing ambitious targets for National Parks and National Landscapes. These targets will promote the actions that are most needed to achieve positive changes. Farming is considered in:

Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife

Target 5: Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

DEFRA is developing this indicator. Nature friendly farming' (NFF) is defined as 'to farm in a way that is better for nature, but is also a productive and sustainable way of producing food' – i.e. the type of actions that are beneficial for nature but can also be incorporated into typical farming systems and farming business practices. It also includes active measures that farmers can take to deliver more/better habitats or specific year-round resources, to support farmland wildlife.

SDNPA Partnership Management Plan:

The South Downs National Park Authority's Partnership Management Plan Indicators (2020-2025):

- 1.3 Target new payments to maximise environmental, cultural and economic benefits of agri-environmental and forestry schemes across the National Park
- 9.3 Support improvement in digital infrastructure, speed and coverage throughout the National Park
- 10.1: Strengthen and support sustainably managed land-based industries and local enterprise
- 10.2: Increase awareness and desirability of the South Downs as a special place to visit.
- 10.3: To establish the South Downs as an exemplar in sustainable tourism.

What is the current State of Farming and Enterprise in the SDNP?

Farm Clusters

There are now five established Farmer Cluster Groups in the South Downs National Park, covering approximately half of the National Park area. Working from the ground up, farmers are collaborating at a landscape scale to deliver benefits for biodiversity, climate, people and place. Examples include:

- **Winchester Downs Cluster (WDC)** – An on-going project working in collaboration with South-West Farm Consultants, farmers in the WDC undertook detailed soil analysis in 2019 to assess soil health and carbon

stocks. The data is being used to look at and analyse management techniques, crop variety, cover cropping and other variables to identify practical measures to improve farm resilience and sustainability in the future.

- **Selborne Landscape Partnership (SLP)** - In 2023, the Partnership published a study, Farming in Partnership with Nature – A New Natural History of Selborne, which pulls together five years' worth of data collection to demonstrate how best to maintain and enhance the range of priority bird, insect, mammal and amphibian species. As part of this, the 27 group members have collectively restored 25.1km (over 15 miles) of hedgerow, created 151km (93 miles) of tussocky field edges, and manage 74 hectares of flower-rich habitat.
- **South Downs Farmers Group (SDFG)** - SDFG members have carried out a number of trials in collaboration with Portsmouth Water to research cover crop management and subsequent improvements in soil health and reductions in nutrient run-off. This has resulted in a bespoke, targeted grant scheme where farmers have adopted measures to reduce nitrate leaching into the chalk aquifer.
- **Arun to Adur Farmers Group (A2A)** - As part of the Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) Open Farm Sunday initiative, A2A members hold an farm open day in June each year. Open to the public, the events showcase the work that the group is doing to produce quality food whilst also caring for the environment. The event, consisting of tractor and trailer tours, machinery demonstrations and a range of stalls and displays, has attracted up to 1000 attendees each year.
- **Eastern South Downs Farmers Group (ESDFG)** - In 2020 as part of the Defra Environmental Land Management (ELM) Tests & Trials, the ESDFG undertook an exercise to identify and map all of the priority chalk grassland habitat across the groups 40 members farms. Using this information, projects have been targeted at enhancing and restoring these sites in collaboration with the HLF funded Changing Chalk project.

Agri-environmental schemes

Natural England's Agri-Environment Evidence Annual Report 2023 revealed that higher scheme uptake was associated with greater species richness, diversity and/or abundance among butterflies, moths and 2 bat species. 36%* of the South Downs National Park is currently managed under agri-environmental schemes. This figure has reduced from a peak of 57% in 2015 which is largely due to changes in agricultural policy and the gradual move towards new environmental land management schemes such as the Sustainable Farming Incentive, Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier and Landscape Recovery schemes.

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. In

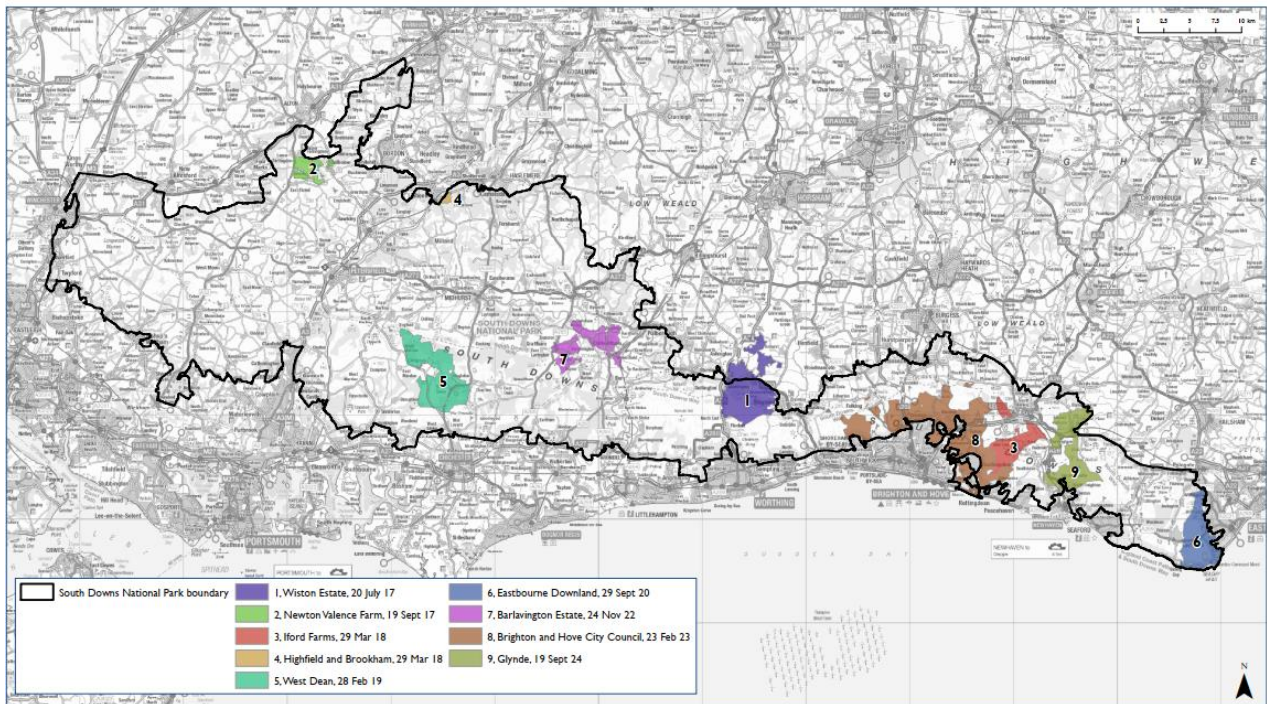
2023-24 37 Farming in Protected Landscapes projects were approved which received £602,212 in funding.

Whole Estate Plans

9 Whole Estate Plans have now been endorsed with 5 more in pipeline covering over 12% of the SDNP. It is widely acknowledged that Estates across the national park play a vital role in the conservation and enhancement of the landscape, as well as their contribution to a stable rural economy, which underpins the establishment of thriving prosperous resilient communities. Estates also provide crucial access to the special qualities and effectively manage the ecosystem services on their land. In recognition of this contribution, WEPs were established ten years ago by the SDNPA as a way of fostering new long-lasting relationships with Estates to promote collaborative working to achieve both parties' common goals. Whole Estate Plans are now seen as a vital initiative in the SDNPA's partnership working approach to deliver action towards, nature recovery, people, and climate action.



SDNPA Endorsed Whole Estate Plans (WEPs)



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 Date: 22/11/2024

Nature-based Solutions

The land-based sector of the South Downs is a crucially important part of its Rural Economy. This is true not only in terms of economic data (land-based enterprise are the third largest sector comprising of just over 1100 businesses employing approximately 5000 people) but also in terms of their role in conserving and enhancing the landscape. With approximately 85% of the land in the South Downs National Park devoted to farming, fisheries or forestry these businesses have and will always be the most important contributors to our national park purposes and duty.

Since the UK's decision to leave the EU in 2016, the land-based sector across the country has witnessed a drop off in direct European payments derived through the Common Agricultural Policy. The South Downs land-based enterprise is no different with some farmers openly acknowledging that their business income is 40% down, compared to pre EU referendum figures, as a result. With this significant loss of income coupled with the low food prices, now common-place in British society, and high input costs, the land-based sector is in a financially precarious position. This has been exacerbated in recent months following changes made to the Autumn 2024 Budget which witnessed changes to family farm tax. When extreme weather events are added into the equation, farming as a financially solvent business on predominately marginal, low grade agricultural land, synonymous with the South Downs, is becoming almost impossible today. This situation is dire for these businesses and the need to establish new income streams to supplement their traditional farming income, striving for financial stability, has never been more urgent.

Coming at an extremely pertinent time for farmers, landowners and land-managers has been the recent creation and establishment of nature markets. Nature markets according to the Green Finance Institute are the *“sale and purchasing of ecosystem services, which are commonly defined as services that nature provides for people”*. The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) (2023) articulates the need for *“high-integrity nature markets”* to attract investment to finance nature's recovery. Through the EIP (2023) The UK Government set the goal to grow annual private investment flows to nature to at least £500 million a year by 2027 in England, rising to more than £1 billion a year by 2030.

In the South Downs we have seen great interest and take up by farmers, landowners and land-managers in nature markets as a way of diversifying their businesses. In the past 24 months 550 hectares of new space for nature have been secured through legal agreements on previously farmed land unlocking new income streams for the landowners. The nature markets operating in the region include; compliance markets such as Nutrient Neutrality and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and voluntary markets such as Woodland Carbon and Voluntary Biodiversity Credits (VBC).

Nature-based Solutions have been defined by the Nature-based Solutions Initiative in partnership with the University of Oxford as projects that, *“involve working with nature, as part of nature, to address societal challenges, supporting human-wellbeing and biodiversity locally”*.

With UK Government's financial goal for investment in nature set in the EIP (2023) coupled with the increased appetite from the land-based sector to diversify away from its traditional income streams, it is expected environmental projects on privately owned land known as nature-based solutions will increase.

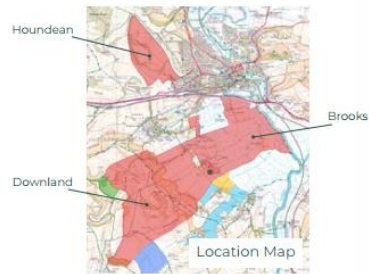
Case Study

Iford Estate: The Iford Biodiversity Project

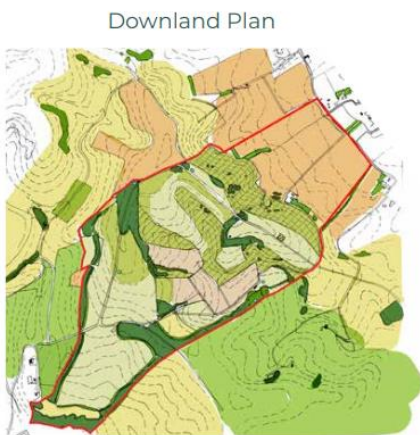
The South Downs National Park is home to the foremost pioneering landowner actively participating in nature markets to finance their 1200ha nature restoration vision. The Managing Director, Ben Taylor, is successfully driving private finance into the business through the sale of BNG and VBC from high integrity nature restoration projects. To-date Ben has secured two separate parcels of land devoted to nature

totalling just under 50 ha. The graphic below illustrates the scale of nature recovery commitment on the Estate where nature-based solutions will continue to play a prominent role.

Iford Estate Biodiversity Improvement Plans



Houndean Plan



Key

	Existing woodland
	Existing and enhanced dense scrub managed on rotation
	Conservation cultivated land - bird seed plots and arable margins
	Broadleaved woodland
	Floodplain wet mosaic (potential / poor condition)
	Cereal crops
	Fields inundated by seasonal flood water
	Existing Calceolus grassland. Enhancement where in poor condition
	Arable reverted to semi-natural grassland (and managed towards chalk grassland)
	Conservation cultivated land - bird seed plots and arable margins
	Dense scrub (aiming for mixed scrub managed on rotation to allow occasional trees)
	Semi-natural grassland (arable reversion, with eventual aim towards chalk grassland)
	Remains in arable use



Economy

Strengthen Enterprise: Diverse rural businesses

PMP-26: Number and diversity of business types that exist in the National Park.

There are an estimated 8,135 businesses located in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) providing employment for more than 55,000 people and contributing to both the local and regional economy. The majority of businesses (90%) in the South Downs National Park are micro businesses with fewer than 10 employees. The key sectors in the National Park are;

- Land-based 8.9% (agricultural, forestry, fishery & viticulture)
- Knowledge Economy 32.5%
- Visitor Economy 10.57%
- Manufacturing 4.67%
- Other (Construction, info & comms, etc)

The 2023 SDNPA Business Survey surveyed 300 businesses representing land based, visitor economy and food and drink sectors. 33% of respondents agreed that the South Downs National Park has a positive impact on the rural economy whilst 7% reported a negative impact. Negative impacts were recorded due to high energy costs, transport issues and planning challenges.

HEDNA data and the Employment Land Review 2024, suggests a modest increase in industrial space 13.2 and 5.9 hectares of office space are required in the National Park to accommodate forecasts.

More consistent High-Street data is needed to understand the health of the market towns in the South Downs National Park; (e.g. vacancy rates, footfall data, vacancy length, shop mix.)

South Downs trends: Viticulture Growth

Viticulture is one of the fastest growing industries in the South Downs National Park, with 436 hectares under vine in 2021 (0.26% of the SDNP), attracting 33,000 visitors a year and a gross value added (GVA) to the economy of £54 million. The SDNPA has supported viticulture by commissioning a Viticulture Growth Impact Assessment in 2021, sought to guide landscape and environmentally sensitive viticulture growth through a Technical Advice Note (TAN) and developing a first of its kind UK climate-positive viticulture grant fund, A third of SDNP farmland, covering 40,000 hectares could potentially be suitable for viticulture due to temperature trends caused by climate change. A number of factors mean the South Downs will likely continue to experience an increase of land under vine;

- The Gross Value Added per hectare (GVA/ha) of grapes as a crop approximately 30 times that of cereal crops
- A burgeoning international reputation for high-quality world-class wine, including a PDO (Protected Denomination of Origin) for Sussex wine
- Excellent Winemaking & Viticulture Education readily available at Plumpton College
- Diversification possibilities to support economic resilience, including wine tourism, tasting, restaurants and accommodation offerings.

Growth estimates vary, though a West Sussex focussed viticulture study estimates 50% growth of viticulture between 2020-30, which is likely to be mirrored in East Sussex & Hampshire. This will have a variety of impacts, such as on food production, resource pressure, more employment (grape production has a much higher labour intensity than traditional farming), increased GVA to the local economy, including tourism and visual landscape impact.

Ridgeview Wine Estate Case Study

As a family business in rural Sussex, Ridgeview values its role as custodians of a beautiful estate in the South Downs National Park and is committed to preserving the land for future generations.

Over the past decade, Ridgeview has grown into a leader in English sparkling wine while prioritizing sustainability. In 2023 production reached nearly 600,000 bottles, supported by a state-of-the-art winery and 1 million bottle capacity underground cellar. Ridgeview partners with other growers across the region and beyond, focusing on soil health and innovative vineyard care to adapt to climate variability.

Sustainability is core to Ridgeview's ethos; introducing regenerative viticulture to extend vine life, being a founder member of Sustainable Wines GB and a net zero target of 2030. Ridgeview became the first English sparkling wine estate to achieve B Corp status in 2022 (2024 Impact Report) as well as Green South Downs Gold, recognising their commitment to sustainability.

With stunning views over the South Downs, Ridgeview offers guided tours, tastings, and Al Fresco dining experience at The Rows & Vine. These initiatives boost tourism -with some 31,000 visitors a year- and connect the estate to South Downs National Park, promoting local heritage and environmental stewardship.

As Ridgeview approaches its 30th anniversary, it is well-positioned for future growth, continuing to innovate while preserving the cultural and environmental legacy of its location within the South Downs.

Climate Change & Sustainability

In the 2023 SDNPA Business survey, respondents reported that they perceived sustainability as important to customers and supply chains however only 2% of the businesses surveyed had a net zero target whilst over 90% had not calculated their carbon footprint. A lack of time and lack of knowledge was cited as the main reasons for this.

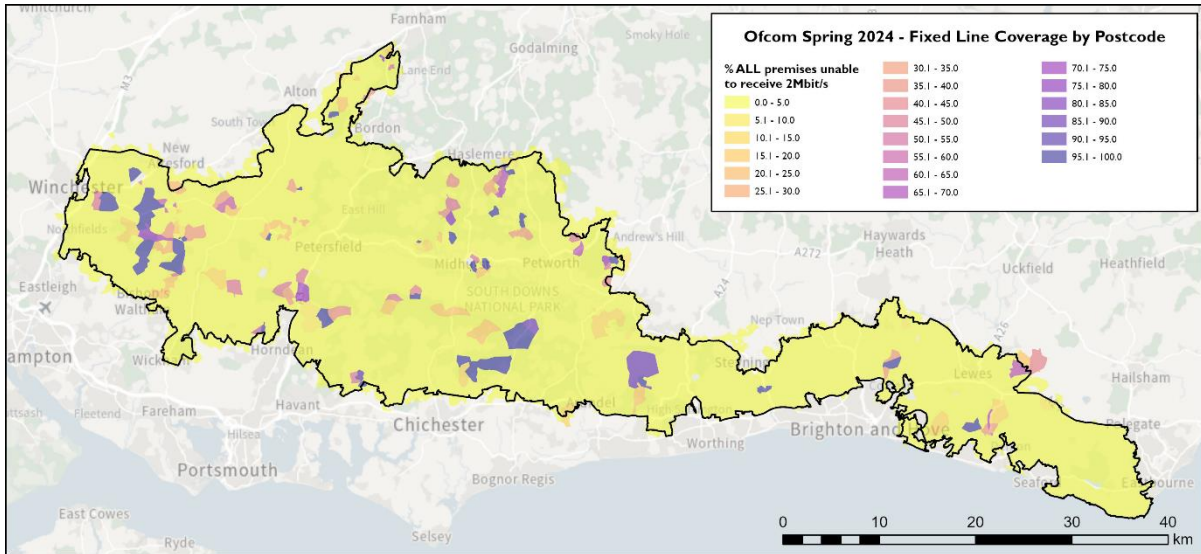
The SDNPA created a sustainability minded business network in 2022 called Our South Downs, offering support, advice and a business community. Our South Downs has grown to over 400 members in 2024, with a mailing list of 1000 receiving a monthly business newsletter and an Instagram following of 700 to celebrate and inspire sustainable practice, share tips, funding opportunities, learning opportunities and events.

Digital Infrastructure

PMP-25: Area of National Park with broadband connection (at or above national average speed)

SDNPA works in partnership to support improvement in digital infrastructure, speed and coverage throughout the National Park. Between 2019 and 2024, the Ofcom Connected Nation reports have shown that the percentage of premise unable to receive internet of 2mb/s has fallen from 1.3% to 0.75% . Meanwhile the percentage of premises able to receive superfast broadband has risen from 81.5% to 89.8%. Connectivity and speeds within the National Park are slightly above the average for Rural England but lag behind the average for the UK as a whole. The SDNPA has worked to support a West Sussex County Council 'Growing Sussex 5G Innovation Region' project. This project works with soft fruit and salad growers in Barnham, together with Brinsbury and Plumpton colleges, to deploy advanced wireless connectivity and co-develop technology 'use cases' with telecoms and technology partners, education centres and commercial producers. The use cases will test how

digital technology and applications using devices such as sensors, monitors, drones and cameras can develop future farming and growing practices that increase sustainable food, drink and plant productivity.



Destination awareness and sustainable Tourism

The National Park is a popular visitor destination, with people drawn to the area by its outstanding landscapes, cultural heritage, wildlife and opportunities for recreation.

- There are an estimated 19 million visitors to the SDNP each year (STEAM report 2016-2023). This figure has stayed relatively constant since 2016 with the exception of 2020 where Covid-19 restrictions understandably resulted in visitor numbers halving. As of 2023, visitor numbers returned to pre-2020 levels with growth expected in future years.
- Tourism is an important contributor to the local economy and the economic impact generated by visitors totalled £554 million in 2023, representing an increase of 17% on the previous year. Most visitors to the SDNP are day visitors who also account for 74% of the economic impact and particularly benefitting the food and drink sector which contributes 24% of the total visitor economic impact.
- Sustainability has become increasingly important to travellers, with 75% of travellers saying they want to travel more sustainably in the next 12 months. In 2022 The SDNPA launched Green South Downs, a first of its kind in a protected landscape Sustainability Certification developed in partnership with industry experts Green Tourism. The scheme recognises sustainable business and makes it simple and easy for travellers to choose sustainable organisations.
- By the end of 2024, 30 businesses working in the visitor economy, food and drink or land-based sectors have been awarded Green South Downs Certification.

Challenges

- Comprehensive data set required showing the financial vitality of the SDNP land-based sector
- Extreme weather events witnessed in recent years making adaptation to climate change critical for land-based businesses.
- Competing pressures on land-use in an economically precarious sector; balancing food production with nature and the environment in a context of financial instability
- Planning challenges
 - In pursuit of decarbonisation of business – Net Zero journeys
 - Supporting diversified income streams such as re-imagination of redundant farm buildings
 - Renewables
 - Urgent repairs/ refurbishment to unlock inherent value in built assets
 - Simplify and shorten complex, expensive application process
- Finding a solution to the barrier to entry into nature-based solutions that is high up front capital costs. This relates to Nature Positive and Net Zero journeys
- Tenancy Agreements on vacant employment space

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality

Macro-economic indicators in a post-COVID, post-Brexit UK indicate a fragile economic landscape characterised by a decade of low GDP growth, low productivity and a challenging taxation environment for UK business. A cooling inflation trend following Covid-related quantitative easing is trending towards the Bank of England's target of 2%. The unemployment rate is very low by historic standards, though wages have only begun to outpace CPI inflation consistently since summer 2023.

Regionally, there are indicators of relative resilience in sectors of the local economy. While High-street vacancy rates are trending up across the UK long term, regionally the South-East is lowest in the UK barring London, and where data exists; market towns within the South Downs National Park outperform regional averages. The land-based sector in the SDNP faces arguably the most significant challenges through tapered reduction of direct support through the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), recent taxation changes, and with extreme climatic events, both drought and flood, making farming as a viable business increasingly more difficult. There are positives in the sector, which include, the emergence and establishment of nature markets which allow landowners to sell ecosystem services on their land as a diversified income stream.

Therefore, the economic landscape for the South Downs National Park is generally moderate, with some key sectoral challenges. The rural economy faces a pivotal time where it must adapt to great change; climatic, societal, legislative and policy, if it is to establish a sound financial footing from which it can then grow and continue to contribute to the landscape and its communities.

Chapter 7: Distinctive towns and villages, and communities with real pride in their area

Introduction

The South Downs National Park is the most populated National Park in the United Kingdom, with 113,000 people living within the boundary. Significantly more people live in the major urban areas and villages that surround the National Park.

The South Downs is unique in having the largest market towns of any UK National Park – Lewes, Petersfield and Midhurst. The character and appearance of these and many other settlements throughout the National Park derives in large part from the distinctive local building materials. Picturesque villages like Selborne, Charlton and Alfriston blend into their landscapes. Many of these settlements contain strong and vibrant communities with much invested in the future of where they live, and a sense of identity with their local area, its culture and history. Across the National Park there are also communities of people who come together through common interests, for example, farming, conservation and recreation. These communities dedicate time and resources to enhancing community life, conserving what is important to them and planning for future generations.

This chapter looks at the communities, housing and services within the National Park.

Policy and strategic context: what has changed?

The existing South Downs Local Plan, adopted in July 2019, sets out the planning policies and allocations (sites for development) for the South Downs National Park. All planning applications for development within the National Park are judged against these adopted Local Plan policies, as well as against any made Neighbourhood Development Plans and adopted Minerals and Waste Local Plans as appropriate to the location and type of development. Local Plans are required to be reviewed every five years, and the review of the South Downs Local Plan commenced in May 2022. The first public consultation on the revised Local Plan will be in early 2025, with a second public consultation in early 2026 and submission for examination by the Planning Inspectorate in summer 2026. Adoption of the Plan is anticipated summer 2027.

SDNPA Partnership Management Plan

The South Downs National Park Authority's Partnership Management Plan includes indicators to increase affordable housing and support vibrant communities.

The state of distinctive towns, villages, and communities with real pride in their area.

Key data

Affordable Housing

PMP-24: Proportion of new homes built that are affordable housing

To increase affordable housing stock in the National Park, with focus on exemplary design and using local sustainable materials.

The South Downs National Park is known for having some of the highest house prices in the country. Properties in the area are highly sought after, with towns and villages frequently featured in property sections under headlines like 'most desirable,' 'prettiest,' and 'happiest.' The demand from affluent urban households seeking a move to the countryside, coupled with limited land availability, exacerbates the issue.

The lack of affordable housing significantly affects those with modest incomes, often forcing them to relocate and leave behind their support systems and employment opportunities. This outflow of families can disrupt village communities, reducing access to local services and impacting businesses that rely on a steady network of employees and customers. Many jobs within the National Park are relatively low paid, making it challenging for workers to live nearby. Consequently, they often face long commutes, increasing their expenses and contributing to traffic congestion and pollution.

To address these challenges, the South Downs National Park Authority is actively supporting the development of affordable housing. This includes implementing planning policies and offering grants to projects that build affordable homes on rural exception sites or through non-profit organizations like Community Land Trusts.

Under the South Downs Local Plan Policy SD28, developments of 11 or more homes must allocate at least 50% of the total as affordable housing. Additionally, developments with 4 or more homes are required to include a proportion of affordable housing onsite.

In 2023 63 affordable homes were built and in total 372 have been built since 2014. There are also 536 (2024) outstanding planning permissions for affordable homes yet to be built. Since the adoption of the South Downs Local Plan, the proportion of planning permissions for affordable homes has been increasing, however, there are delivery challenges specifically for 'Registered Providers' who are responsible for the ongoing management of affordable homes. These challenges are faced across the country but are particularly acute in rural areas where sites for affordable homes are smaller and less viable for Registered Providers.

Population and density

As of 2021 the population of the South Downs National Park was 113,339, a growth of 0.9% since

the 2011 Census. Since the 2011 Census the number of households has grown by 2.7% to 48,558.

Population age

People aged 65 and over make up 26.6% of the population in the South Downs National Park, a significantly higher proportion than the regional and national averages. In contrast, the working-age population is underrepresented.

Single-family households are the largest household type, accounting for 66.6% of all households. Older households are more prevalent in the National Park compared to regional and national figures, while households with dependent children are less common.

The housing stock within the National Park tends to be less dense. Detached homes make up 39.5% of all dwellings, and 32% of properties have four or more bedrooms. Nearly half of all households have at least two more bedrooms than they require. Furthermore, the majority of homes (68.6%) are owner-occupied, a rate higher than both regional and national averages.

Active communities

PMP-21: Number and proportion of community led plans that are adopted and/or endorsed by the National Park Authority

Most residents of the South Downs National Park live in the market towns of Lewes, Petersfield, Midhurst, and Petworth, or in the larger villages. These lively settlements not only offer essential services and facilities to their own residents but also serve the surrounding rural communities. In contrast, the smaller and more remote settlements, while appealing for their unique character and charm, face greater challenges in accessing services and amenities.

SDNPA has set out a commitment in its Partnership Management Plan to support the development of high-quality community-led plans and initiatives which enhance the towns, villages, and landscapes of the South Downs National Park, and support for community-led plans, and the volunteers who help to prepare them, contributes to the Partnership Management Plan.

Community-led plans include Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Parish/Village Design Statements (P/VDS)

There are 62 designated neighbourhood areas in the South Downs National Park, of which 71% (44) have “made” Neighbourhood Development Plans. This is an increase on the 54% of communities that were preparing or had a complete community led plan in 2012.

PMP-22. Percentage of communities with access to natural greenspace

According to the 2014 Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) Study, 90% of households within the National Park boundary were located within 2km of a 20ha site of ANG.

The evidence base is currently being updated as part of the Local Plan review and a new Open Spaces Strategy will be published in September 2025.

PMP-23: Percentage of communities with access to key facilities.

Communities are classed as the 176 parishes with at least 33% of their boundary in the NP. Key facilities are classed as cashpoint, GP, primary school, pub, supermarket and post office. In 2024, of the 176 parishes in the NP, 99 have access to at least one of the above mentioned key facilities (55.9%). This is down from 100 Parishes in 2020/21.

Challenges

The abundance of larger properties and the high cost of housing make access to affordable homes a significant challenge for many local communities. This issue is particularly acute for young people and families, who often struggle to find affordable housing that would allow them to stay in the area. As a result, this could raise the average age of local populations, strain existing services, and force residents to travel further to secure suitable housing and employment.

Additional challenges include keeping local facilities and services open and viable such as local shops, pubs and primary schools. An ageing population will also have impacts on the access to and provision of health and social care facilities.

Chapter 8: Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences

Introduction

The South Downs National Park offers diverse recreational and educational opportunities for residents, visitors, and lifelong learners. With over 3,300 kilometres (2,050 miles) of public rights of way, including the South Downs Way, the park is ideal for walking, cycling, and horse riding, alongside activities like paragliding, orienteering, and canoeing. Popular spots such as Queen Elizabeth Country Park in Hampshire and Seven Sisters Country Park in East Sussex provide spaces for walking, picnicking, and outdoor play.

The South Downs National Park's landscapes, wildlife, and cultural heritage offer rich learning experiences through museums, historic sites, outdoor education opportunities, and wildlife reserves. Volunteering opportunities abound, from conservation work and rural skills to guided walks and wildlife surveys.

The South Downs National Park offers opportunities for lifelong learning to inspire action and involvement. With 893 schools nearby and over 200 outdoor learning providers, the park can support diverse educational experiences, despite barriers like transport costs .

Research also highlights the significant physical and mental health benefits of access to nature, including improved fitness, mental well-being from green exercise, and enhanced social interactions that foster community connections.

This chapter explores access, recreation, and learning opportunities within the park.

Policy and strategic context: what has changed?

The second purpose of the South Downs National Park is to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 has enabled the creation of the King Charles III England Coast Path. The South Downs section of this new National Trail was officially opened in 2021, meaning the South Downs now has two National Trails.

A new Government Agency, Active Travel England has been set up to facilitate Active Travel infrastructure development and improvement, including within national parks.

The Department for Education has launched its Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy which provides advice and guidance for schools to reduce their environmental footprint as they move to net-zero. This includes new requirements for all schools to have a Climate Action Plan and Sustainability Leads in place by 2025.

Skills England is a new arms-length body that will bring together key partners to meet the skills needs of the next decade. Green Skills are a key sector if we are to meet the needs of a low-carbon economy.

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

To support Protected Landscapes in meeting their huge potential for nature, climate, people and place Defra and Natural England are establishing ambitious targets for National Parks and National Landscapes. These targets will promote the actions that are most needed to achieve positive changes. Access, recreation and learning is considered in:

Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

Target 9: Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in Defra's Access for All programme

SDNPA Partnership Management Plan 2020-25

The South Downs National Park plan emphasises the need to make the park more accessible and inclusive, removing barriers to ensure everyone, particularly underrepresented groups such as young people, global majority communities, people with disabilities, and those from deprived areas, can enjoy its landscapes and heritage.

The plan puts emphasis on sustainable access by enhancing public transport, creating travel hubs, and advocating for rural transport services to reduce car dependency and support eco-friendly visitor experiences. It also prioritizes high-quality outdoor learning opportunities that foster young people's social, physical, and academic growth, supported by resources and training for educators.

In addition, the plan recognises the vital role of nature in improving physical and mental health. Through local partnerships promoting the South Downs National Park as a space for well-being and relaxation.

Partnership Management Plan Indicators (2020-2025):

- A National Park for All
- Improve Accessibility
- Encourage Sustainable Transport
- Provide Outdoor Learning for Young People
- Improve Health and Wellbeing
- Increase Volunteering

The State of Access, Recreation and Learning in 2024

Percentage of visitors who felt very satisfied with the visitor experience

PMP-16: Percentage of visitors who felt very satisfied with the visitor experience

In 2018 and 2021, 98% of respondents rated their enjoyment of the National Park 'high' or 'very high'. Whilst this is an excellent result, this is a slight decrease from the 2015 survey (99%)

Percentage of people who are aware of why the National Park is a special place.

PMP-17: Percentage of people who are aware of why the National Park is a special place

96% of people surveyed in the 2021 Visitor Survey noted that at least one of the South Downs National Park's seven special qualities was a contributing factor to their enjoyment. This compares to 96.5% in 2018 and 95% in 2015. The next visitor survey is due to take place in 2026 when we will report updated data.

Access

The SDNP is home to 204km of National Trails including the South Downs Way and part of the King Charles III England Coast Path National Trail.

South Downs Way

Over the last five years more than 7650 metres of the South Downs Way has been resurfaced to improved accessibility and over 100km of vegetation clearance has been done to keep the route open and accessible. Over 150 gates, signposts and waymark posts repaired or replaced along the Trail over the last 5 years.

PMP-13: Percentage of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that is 'easy to use' or in good condition

In 2019/20 The South Downs Society surveyed 5% sample of PRoW within the SDNP . The 93% figure is an increase on 2018/19 where we reported 79% of PRoW were 'easy to use' or 'in good condition'. and found that 93% were "easy to use" or in good condition.

Whilst SDNPA does not manage public rights of way, the SDNPA has been working with key partners to implement extend or create new routes to increase enjoyment of the National Park.

Egret's Way Since 2012, SDNPA has been working in partnership with local communities, Sustrans, The Environment Agency, East Sussex Highways, Lewes District Council and National Highways to develop a new 11km safe-cycling route connecting Newhaven and Lewes.

Most recently the Linklater Pavilion to Ham Lane, Lewes (2020), Piddinghoe to Riverside Park, Newhaven (2023) and Ham lane to Rodmell (2024) have been completed and are open. Now the final 700m phase is in development.

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-milelong South Downs Way at Cocking, providing further opportunities for people to explore the National Park. The first section of the Centurion Way extension is due to open in the Spring of 2025. In 2024, work is ongoing 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.

Open Access

With the transfer of ownership of Seven Sisters Country Park a new Section 16 CRoW Access land dedication has added over 130ha of Access Land to the National Park.

Access for All

In 2022, Defra Access for All grants funded accessible equipment including: Inclusive Paddleboard and Kayaking equipment, disability hoist and Inclusive bikes, trikes, scooters and trampers. The equipment was distributed to the South Downs National Park and 5 of its partners

In 2023-24, 1,140 visits were facilitated by the equipment. The equipment has supported visits from schools, youth organisations and private individuals including elderly individuals benefiting from a stable craft to explore the water with confidence. One partner has established a regular weekly session with a SEN school and provides access to the equipment for 32 students weekly.

Over the last 5 years we've worked with partners to improve the accessibility of the Rights of Way network through the replacement of step stiles with more accessible gates, including 33 new gates installed in partnership with Friends of the South Downs National Park.

PMP-14: Number of routes promoted as accessible

Serpent Trail The 106km trail through the Heathlands of the SDNP was relaunched in 2021. As part of the relaunch SDNPA rangers replaced a number of stiles on the Serpent Trail making more of the trail more accessible. As well as a new guidebook launched in April 2021, other work such as the Iping Common boardwalk has contributed to making more of this route accessible

A 4km Easy Access Trail at Seven Sisters Country Park was completed. The trail is suitable for people with impaired mobility, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and push chairs

Encouraging sustainable transport

PMP-15: Proportion of visits by public transport

In 202, the SDNPA Visitor Survey reported 8% of visitors used public transport to visit the National Park. This is a reduction from 15% reported in 2018 and is possibly due to the impact of Covid-19. The next Visitor Survey is due to take place in 2026.

Providing Outdoor Learning for Young People

PMP-18: Percentage of schools within a 10km radius of the boundary using the National Park for learning outside of the classroom experiences at least once a year

In 2022 57% of schools within a 10km radius of the boundary reported using the National Park for learning outside of the classroom experiences at least once a year. This is 17% below the 69% reported in 2017. This is likely due to the reduction in school trips during the Covid-19 period of restrictions and it is likely that this figure will increase in the next survey due to take place in 2027.

Outdoor Learning Grant: This year, over 6,000 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. Since 2021, over 21,000 children have enjoyed all kinds of activities including exploring the landscape at Seven Sisters Country Park, a visit to a working South Downs farm, hands-on conservation tasks, a visit to the Sustainability Centre, searching for “mini-beasts” at Woods Mill, and stepping back in time at Butser Ancient Farm.

Ambassador Schools

Ambassador Schools are schools within the South Downs National Park that offer high-quality learning experiences and resources that link to the special qualities of the National Park.

As leaders in this area, these schools offer peer-to-peer support, inspiration and host visits for schools, colleges and other learning providers.

There are currently three South Downs National Park Ambassador Schools: Droxford Junior School in Hampshire, Bury CE Primary School in West Sussex and Moulsecomb Primary School in Brighton and Hove.

Generation Green

Generation Green was a 16-month funded project (January 2022 – April 2022) that connected young people to nature, and promoted pathways to green careers.

Through this project 6 new South Downs National Park Youth Ambassadors were recruited and trained, and a new programme of South Downs Youth Action days were delivered for youth groups from urban communities. Outdoor Learning Providers within the South Downs Learning Network came together to create a series of inspiring online teacher training resources aimed at connecting pupils to learning within the National Park. New self-led resources were created for schools to support learning about the special qualities of the South Downs National Park and hundreds of school children from schools from our more economically disadvantaged communities were able to take part in fun, nature connection activities on day visits and residential experiences.

Improving Health and Wellbeing

PMP-19: % of visitors using the National Park for the improvement of their health and wellbeing

31% of visitors reported using the National Park for the improvement of their health and wellbeing SDNPA visitor survey 2021. This question was included in the survey for the first time in 2021 and will be repeated in the 2026 survey. Health and Wellbeing opportunities within the National Park supports people to connect to the landscape through easily accessible walks, creativity and learning about the landscape and how to take care of nature through low level conservation tasks. The priorities for health and wellbeing are to support those people experiencing physical and mental health issues, loneliness and isolation and other life challenges. We have partnered with several organisations including MIND and local community mental health teams, Carers Support in East and West Sussex, organisations working with families, organisations across the National Park supporting adult and young asylum seekers,

The effects of COVID19 has widened health inequalities for those a living in areas of high levels of economic deprivation and those from ethnically diverse backgrounds. We work closely with people living in the urban fringes to support those individuals experiencing health inequalities and those from diverse backgrounds, so they have opportunities to connect to nature and with each other as a way of supporting their health and wellbeing.

Timescape

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

Increasing and diversifying volunteering

PMP-20: Total number of volunteer days spent on activity relating to the special qualities

In 2016, a survey of volunteering organisations reported 95,120 volunteer days relating to the SDNP special qualities.

This is an increase on 91,000 as calculated from the first Volunteering Audit in 2011. A Volunteer Network Survey is currently underway which will provide an updated figure for 2025.

Youth Action: in 2023-24 21 Youth Action Days engaged 131 young people in positive environmental action

In 2023-24 341 volunteer rangers spent 1052 days supporting National Park Work

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality

There is excellent provision of Learning Outside the Classroom and volunteering opportunities across the South Downs National Park and engagement across these areas is very high. Nearly 60% of schools access these opportunities for learning outside the classroom and over 95,000 days of volunteering activity take place each year. There are established grant schemes to support travel into the South Downs, especially for schools and Health & Wellbeing groups. These provide opportunities to remove some of the financial barriers to accessing the National Park for target audiences and are very well received.

Despite these positive activities, there remains inequality in access with some individuals and groups less likely to access the National Park than others. More work is needed to address these barriers and to increase participation and engagement opportunities for all.

