

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	20 November 2025
By	Performance & Learning Officer & Performance and Projects Manager
Title of Report	Q2 SDNPA Corporate Performance and Projects Report 2025/26
Decision	

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

I. Receive and consider the Q2 SDNPA Corporate Performance and Projects Report 2025/26.

I. Introduction

- I.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Policy & Resources Committee on the Authority's corporate performance during Quarter 1 (Q1) and Quarter 2 (Q2) of 2025/26: 01 April to 30 September 2025.
- I.2 The Policy and Resources Committee's terms of reference include: "To monitor and identify improvements based on the outcomes and evaluation of projects identified by the Committee, audits, surveys, and other feedback, and to make recommendations as needed," as well as, "To monitor and review the performance, including financial performance, of the Authority regarding business delivery, management, and maintenance of the Authority's assets in line with the agreed budget, Corporate Plan, and other approved plans, and to recommend changes as necessary."
- I.3 The Committee is recommended to receive and consider the content of the performance report and make any recommendations arising from its consideration of the report. Any such recommendations would be subject to a vote at the committee meeting.
- I.4 Progress towards Partnership Management Plan (PMP) outcomes is reported via the three High Level Target themed areas and four Corporate Plan priority areas, which includes Grant Funding. Dashboards demonstrating performance are included as appendices and explained in this report. Key project information is also included in this report at section 4. The report also provides Members with a progress update for the actions from the Annual Governance Statement and the Human Resources and Health and Safety report (see sections 6 and 7).

2. Progress against High level targets

- 2.1 Each High-Level Target in this report has been given a RAG rating to indicate whether progress against indicator targets are progressing as expected. **Appendix I** summarises

contributions at Q2 towards the High-Level Targets and Corporate Plan KPIs and provides annual progress comparisons.

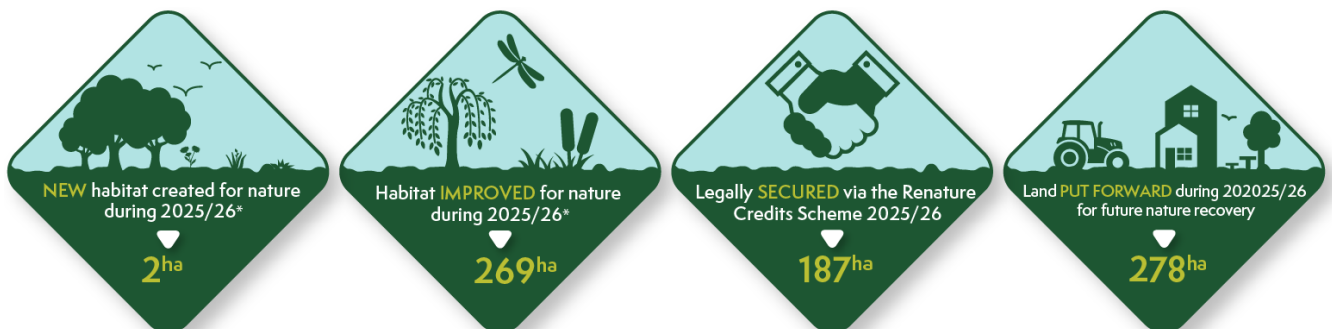
Table 1 Summary of HLT RAG Status Q2 2025/26

HLT	Description	RAG
HLT1	To secure an additional 13,000ha, or 33% of land managed for nature by 2030 from a baseline of 25%.	AMBER
HLT2	Work to maintain, enhance and/or restore 30% of existing Core Nature sites and support key species recovery within the SDNP by 2030	AMBER
HLT3	To prepare for and implement Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	TBC (Q4)
HLT4	South Downs National Park Authority to reduce its carbon footprint by 150 tonnes per annum in line with the 2030 net zero target	RED
HLT5	5% reduction per annum in the overall carbon footprint of the South Downs National Park from the baseline reported in 2019	RED
HLT6	Increase diversity of those engaging with the South Downs National Park	GREEN
HLT7	Work to make sure the landscape, scenery and tranquillity of SDNP is available to everyone, no matter what their access needs are.	GREEN
HLT8	Digitally engage 100,000 people per year with the SDNP	GREEN

Nature Recovery

- 2.2 **HLT#1: To secure an additional 13,000ha, or 33% of land managed for nature by 2030 from a baseline of 25%.**
- 2.3 **HLT RAG Status: AMBER**
- 2.4 Despite only delivering 35% of the annual target (458ha of 1,300ha) in the first half of this year, we expect to meet our target as the majority of delivery is expected to happen in Q3/Q4 through the green finance pipeline. The pipeline currently has a potential of over 3,000 hectares of land to be used for nature.

Figure 1



*From previously committed land

- 2.5 Progress against HLT1 has been monitored through key performance indicators outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 Progress against HLT I: To secure an additional 13,000ha, or 33% of land managed for nature by 2030 from a baseline of 25%

KPI	KPI Target (2030)	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/26 KPI contribution Q1/Q2	Cumulative progress to date (2022 start)
HI.1 Total hectares of habitat created for nature	13,000ha (annual targets 1300ha)	404ha	13ha	146ha	2.2ha	566ha
HI.2 Total hectares habitat improved for nature		4,312ha	761ha	270ha	269ha	5,612ha
HI.3 Total hectares legally secured via the ReNature credits scheme		192ha	593ha	74ha	186.7ha	1056 ha
TOTAL (HI.1, HI.2, HI.3)	13,000ha	4,908 ha	1,367 ha	491ha	457.9	7,224ha
HI.4 Total hectares land put forward for future nature recovery	N/A	1,061ha	3,073ha	639ha	278ha	4,190ha

- 2.6 At the end of Q2, a total of **7,224** additional hectares of land have been secured or managed for nature since 2022. This is **56% of the 13,000 hectares target** to be achieved by 2030. Please note that all hectares are estimated, and these calculations are based on best available data.
- 2.7 At the end of Q2 a total of **458** hectares of habitat has been created, improved, or secured for nature recovery so far this year, **35%** of the annual target of 1,300ha.
- 2.8 The apportionment of the PLTOF targets for the National Park, released last year, have been finalised and the targets have been incorporated into the forthcoming Partnership Management Plan. The SDNPA contribution towards the targets will be included in the Corporate Plan which is currently being drafted.

Collaboration

- 2.9 In May, the SDNPA submitted its response to the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) consultation, with Sussex’s public consultation expected in early Autumn. Approved by Defra as a Responsible Body under the Environment Act 2021, the SDNPA can now use this designation to support green finance and nature recovery efforts.
- 2.10 The Seven Sisters National Nature Reserve (NNR) has now been approved and is to be officially declared imminently. Additionally, a new Wealden Heaths NNR spanning Surrey, Hampshire, and West Sussex has been established, including parts of the South Downs National Park.
- 2.11 In partnership with Pastures for Life and Changing Chalk, the Grazing Project has developed a chalk grassland management guide for landowners and Big Chalk partners.

Contribution towards targets

- 2.12 H1.1: At the Dripping Pan stadium in Lewes, wildflowers and permaculture are transforming grass verges and the Community Garden into a pollinator corridor. Nearby, a Beeline route along a public path includes bee banks, a bumblebee nest, and a new orchard, all seeded with a vibrant ‘Sow Wild’ mix. Meadow creation is underway using grazing, scarifying, and cut-and-collect methods to restore floral diversity.
- 2.13 H1.2: At Balmer Down, the Pounds for Ponds initiative is restoring a dew pond with a new liner, plants, fencing, and a 2m buffer zone, funded by SDNP Trust and SDNPA. Stephen’s Castle Down is managing chalk grassland through remote mowing and volunteer efforts to control dogwood, while the Meonside Beaver Project explores reintroduction plans and Reeds Farm combats Himalayan Balsam along the River Rother. Heathland sites continue to receive regular maintenance, focusing on bracken and rhododendron control.
- 2.14 H1.3: Q1 saw 138ha secured for nature at Halnaker Hill Farm (mix of nature based solutions) and 18.66ha at Chilgrove Farm (nitrates). In Q2, 30ha land has been legally secured for BNG at Wiston Estate on once intensively farmed land. In addition to this, a new nutrient mitigation scheme was legally secured near Winchester through a septic tank to modern package treatment plant replacement methodology set to benefit local water quality and housing development.
- 2.15 H1.4: Land put forward for nature covers totals 278ha across 11 sites. The largest hectareage was 50ha put forward at Midlington Farm, Droxford.

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

2.17 HLT RAG Status: AMBER

- 2.18 This KPI is now monitored through national targets set out in the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF):
 - Target 2: Achieve favourable condition for 80% of SSSI features within the National Park by 2042, with an interim milestone of 50% by 2031 (end of the PMP).
 - Target 3: Ensure that 60% of SSSIs within the National Park are assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
- 2.19 While progress is being made, current performance remains significantly below the interim targets set for 2031 and 2028, indicating that further improvement is needed.

Condition assessments

- 2.20 SSSI condition data is published annually. In Q1, 29.7% of SSSI features in the National Park were reported as being in favourable condition — a slight increase from 29.3% in 2024.
- 2.21 Efforts to improve SSSI condition are ongoing. This is reflected in Q1 data, which shows that

20.8% of SSSI features had ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition — a notable rise from 13.2% in 2024.

- 2.22 In Q1, 41 chalk grassland sites across the National Park—excluding those designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)—were surveyed to gain a clearer understanding of their condition. Of the 41 sites, only 4 were in favourable condition. These assessments are now being used in discussions with landowners to inform and improve land management practices, helping to restore the condition of this vital habitat.

Habitat and species management

- 2.23 Conservation efforts continue across the region. At Seven Sisters Country Park, activities included ragwort pulling, scrub management, sluice repairs, cut and collect work, and summer surveys. The Downs to the Sea project is underway at RSPB Pulborough Brooks, improving water management to support grazing and wetland bird breeding through sluice maintenance and dam installations.

- 2.24 Species protection work continues, including hazel dormouse monitoring and an ongoing programme to eradicate invasive American Mink. Eco Rother Action also launched a volunteer-led river monitoring initiative between Petersfield and Midhurst, using Fluidion technology to track E. coli and address water quality data gaps.

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

2.26 **HLT RAG Status:** TBC

- 2.27 Annual data will be published in December 2025 and progress will be included in the Q4 performance report.

Climate Action

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

2.29 **RAG Status:** RED

- 2.30 Annual data will be published in December 2025 and progress will be included in the Q4 performance report. However, it is predicted that capital works carried out in 2024/5 has likely generated increased carbon emission. We expect the data published in Q3 to reflect this increase and have assigned a red RAG status for this HLT as a consequence.

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

2.32 **HLT RAG Status:** RED

- 2.33 The HLT target data, LULUCF Forestry component data, is reported annually and progress will be included in the Q4 performance report. However, data from the Carbon Disclosure project, detailed in the following paragraphs, has shown a rise in emissions against the baseline figure, albeit from 2022/2023 as reporting is retrospective.

- 2.34 The Carbon Disclosure project’s first results for South Downs National Park, calculated by Small World Consulting, show a 0.8% rise in CO₂ emissions from 2022 to 2023, missing the forecasted 5% reduction. This is mainly due to increased domestic energy use (up 10%), visitor travel (up 6%), and industrial processes (up 5%). However, emissions from resident travel and industrial energy use fell by 10% and 5% respectively. Work is ongoing to include carbon sequestration from Nature Recovery and Woodland Planting, which is expected to improve the overall carbon footprint once factored in.

- 2.35 Reducing emissions in the South Downs National Park relies on widespread behavioural change, supported by initiatives such as nine Future Energy Landscape workshops in Q1 that helped Parish Councils and community groups explore local energy needs and renewable solutions. Additionally, SDNPA has funded the expansion of PeCAN’s Education and

Outreach project, which has successfully engaged over 720 staff and pupils in local schools.

- 2.36 Internally, the Climate Team have developed and successfully delivered a programme of carbon literacy training for internal staff. This has been a tailored programme, based on the existing Defra programme. It has been well received and, so far, the training has reached 57 staff - and we are on track to achieve Silver status as an organisation. We are also looking at how we can develop and roll out the training beyond internal staff.

A National Park for All

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

2.38 **HLT RAG Status:** GREEN

- 2.39 The RAG status is green due to a scheduled programme of events and activities throughout the remainder of the year, which are expected to support the successful achievement of the KPI targets.

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

Table 3

KPI	KPI Target	KPI contribution Q1/Q2
H6.1 Number of people from underrepresented audiences engaged through engagement & project activities	3,500	3,034
H6.2 Number of engagement activities targeted at underrepresented audiences	90	111

- 2.41 A busy and successful first half of the year has resulted in significant progress and achievements against both KPI targets, with H6.2 already exceeding target. Examples of delivery and activities are detailed in the following paragraphs.
- 2.42 Dark Skies & Wildlife Engagement: Events like bat walks at Iping Common and Shortheath combined stargazing with biofluorescent wildlife exploration. The Astronomy Festival at Herstmonceux highlighted the Park’s International Dark Sky Reserve. Flagship events like the ‘ReNature Festival’ and ‘Discover Your Heaths Day’ celebrated biodiversity and nature recovery.
- 2.43 Wellbeing & Inclusion: Mindful walks, creative nature sessions, and support for asylum seekers, carers, and NHS staff helped connect people to nature. Partnerships with East Sussex County Council and the Early Psychosis Team supported families and mental health.
- 2.44 Education & Youth Engagement: School sessions have introduced pupils to fieldwork, conservation careers, and National Park habitats. The South Downs Youth Action programme offered green careers guidance and hands-on nature recovery activities for young people.
- 2.45 Community Outreach & Cultural Events: Stands at Jalsa Salana and Southampton’s Mela Festival engaged diverse audiences. Walks with Muslim Hikers and pop-ups at SSCP fostered inclusion and awareness of the Park’s work. Initiatives like #PlasticFreePeople and Lewes Climate Hub have encouraged eco-friendly living. Bordon Community Fun Day engaged young families with nature-based activities.
- 2.46 **HLT#7: Work to make sure the landscape, scenery and tranquillity of SDNP is available to everyone, no matter what their access needs are.**

2.47 **HLT RAG Status: GREEN**

2.48 This year has seen a strong start in improving physical access across the National Park, with extensive planning and groundwork and delivery completed, positioning the Authority to exceed the year’s targets. Targets are currently being reviewed as part of the drafting process for the new Corporate Plan.

2.49 Progress against HLT7 is monitored through key performance indicators outlined in Table 4.

Table 4 Progress against HLT7: Increase the diversity of those engaging with the South Downs National Park

KPI	KPI Target (Bridge year 2025/26)	2023/2024	2024/2025	KPI contribution Q1/Q2 2025/26
H7.1 Number of sessions facilitated by mobility equipment*	100 per year	151	150	153
H7.2.1 Metres of new and/or improved accessible path	1,350m	5,770	7,545	6,509
H7.2.2 Number of interventions to improve access**	85	N/A	N/A	74
H7.3 Number of visits to the digital Accessibility Hub**	10,000	N/A	N/A	3,482
H7.4 Number of page views of the Seven Sisters Country Park Accessibility Guide	5,000	3,445	4,789	2,097

* These figures currently represent bookings at SSCP only.

** These KPIs have been introduced or amended for the 2025/26 bridge year

2.50 Bookings for the mobility scooters at Seven Sisters Country Park has already exceeded its annual target. Prolonged good weather has seen bookings from repeat visitors from the local area alongside first-time users. Feedback is always positive, notably with joy that people can access the park with friends and family. Without scooters this wouldn't be an option.

2.51 SDNPA has exceeded its targets for accessible path improvements through several major projects. These include 1,600 metres of resurfaced trail at Plumpton Plain, 400 metres of upgraded Public Right of Way from Old Shoreham Bridge to the A27, and 650 metres of new path linking the A27 flyover to Coombes Road. In Q2, 1.6 kilometres of shared-use path was completed as part of the Centurion Way extension, alongside restored access points—now branded as “Halts”—and the refurbishment of Singleton Station platforms, which now feature landscaping and heritage interpretation.

2.52 Ongoing support for 10 permissive path agreements has helped preserve around 25 kilometres of public access that would otherwise have been lost. Additional access enhancements delivered this year include bridleway gate replacements, signpost repairs, path widening and surface upgrades, and the installation of new cycle racks to encourage active travel.

2.53 The target for H7.3 is ambitious. Data trends show that visits to the digital Accessibility hub have stabilised since it was launched with 1k-2k visits per quarter. We continue to promote the hub through various social posts and media stories. We will identify more opportunities

over Q3 and Q4 to promote the Seven Sisters Country Park Accessibility Guide in order to meet our annual target.

2.54 **HLT#8: Digitally engage 100,000 people per year with the SDNP**

2.55 **HLT RAG Status: GREEN**

2.56 We continue to see excellent growth and engagement across our social media channels resulting in increased traffic to the digital hubs. As part of developing the new Communications and Engagement Strategy and the Corporate Plan, which launches in April 2026, we will be reviewing the metrics used to evaluate the Authority’s communications and engagement activities.

2.57 Progress against HLT8 is monitored through key performance indicators outlined in Table 5.

Table 5 Progress against HLT8: Digitally engage 100,000 people per year with the SDNP

KPI	KPI Target	2023/24	2024/25	Q1/Q2 2025/26	Change on previous year
H8.1 Total number of E-newsletter subscribers	12,000	11,989	13,326	13,705	+3%
H8.2 Total social media audience	100,000	97,774	115,876	140,213	+20%
H8.3 Total visits to the hubs throughout the year: (Nature Recovery, Climate Change, Walking hub, Communities*)	65,000 since launch	27,694	53,196	66,477	+25%

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

2.58 Targeted campaigns and seasonal activity have grown our social media audience and subsequent visits to our digital hubs. We have trialled new different styled posts and timings and maintain an engagement rate of over 7%. Key dates and events such as Walking Month in May and the ReNature Festival in June have proved especially impactful.

3. Progress against Corporate Plan Priorities

Place Making

3.1 Two priorities are associated with ‘Place Making’:

- CP1 Administer the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106
- CP2 Provide specialist advice in respect of Conservation, Design and Landscape across the organisation

3.2 Quarterly progress has been monitored through the key performance indicators outlined in Table 6.

Table 6 Progress against Place Making - CPI & CP2

KPI	KPI contribution Q1/Q2
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CPI.1 The total CIL and S106 distributed (in £) across the three HLTs	£ 1,695,836.01
CP2.1 Summary of service provided to be included in the Authority's Annual Monitoring Report	Highlights from the annual AMR report are included in this Q4 reporting

3.3 Highlights of progress towards CPI include:

- In Q1/Q2, CIL distributed £1,370,417.82; this has been spent on 17 projects including footpath and bridleway improvements, a support cargo bike delivery service, Downs to the Sea project funding and a SuDs scheme / playground redesign at Fittleworth School.
- In Q1/Q2, S106 distributed £325,418.19. This has funded Penn's Play Area in Petersfield, transport mitigation and footpath improvements, plus nitrate mitigation and BNG monitoring.

Generating income

3.4 In line with the Authority's Standing Orders, the Committee has oversight of bids for grant funding and receives updates on the submission of bids for grant funding and the application of grants funds received. Table 7 below, includes everything submitted since the last report to P&R which has now received a final outcome.

Table 7

Funder & Scheme	Project	Status	Value	Lead
National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative Round 15	Rotherlands Connections	Successful	£233,086	SDNPA
Southern Water	Support for Big Chalk	Successful	£160,000	TBC
Lewes District Council CIL UK Shared Prosperity Fund via Lewes DC	Cliff Gardens	Successful grants transferred to SDNPA as part of OVCA project	£56,000 £58,114	SDNPA

3.5 Applications over £50k, currently in consideration, can be seen in Table 8. These will be reported in future updates until they have achieved a final outcome.

Table 8

Funder & Scheme	Project	Status	Value	Lead
National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative	Boosting Butser Butterflies	Successful EOI; Full bid postponed until Feb 2026	£100,000	SDNPA

West Sussex Lane Rental Fund	Centurion Way	Bid submitted	£450,000	SDNPA
Energy Redress Fund	Community energy advice services	Bid submitted	£267,000	SDNPA Trust

3.6 **CP3 Aim to raise £2.5 million self-generated income p.a. through bids to Statutory sources & support for the SDNP Trust in continuing to build a philanthropic income stream.**

3.7 Quarterly progress against CP3 has been monitored through the key performance indicators outlined in Table 9.

Table 9 Progress against Generating income - CP3

KPI	KPI Target (2025/26)	KPI contribution Q1/Q2
CP3.1 Total self-generated income raised (£)	£3.5m	£1,810,186

3.8 Progress towards the annual target includes £281,000 from Green Finance, where Q1/Q2 saw the establishment of two new habitat banks totalling 171 hectares, strong initial Voluntary Biodiversity Credit sales, and encouraging momentum in both BNG and Nutrient Neutrality markets.

3.9 In Q1 at Seven Sisters, £209,000 was generated across visitor income streams, including £94,862 from parking, £66,539 from food and beverage, and £37,034 from the visitor centre. In Q2, a particularly strong summer, secured a further £256k—with additional stewardship income still to be received. Overall, this places us in a strong position to deliver our budget by year-end.

3.10 Fundraising efforts have made a particularly solid start to the year, including a £233,000 grant for the Rotherlands Nature Reserve, a £100,000 philanthropic gift for carbon credit development, and £154,000 to support the Big Chalk initiative—delivered both directly and in partnership with the South Downs Trust. An additional £95k was secured through two Portsmouth Water grants and a successful Trust application. The fundraising pipeline has strengthened considerably, now approaching £2 million in live prospects.

3.11 Other successes include securing a new £90k partnership with the OBS Group and £50k in funding from Lewes District Council for the Ouse Valley Climate Action (OVCA) community pitch.

3.12 **CP4 Incubate a number of income generating initiatives, building on Seven Sisters and the South Downs Trust**

3.13 Quarterly progress against CP4 has been monitored through the key performance indicators outlined in Table 10.

Table 10 Progress against Generating income - CP4

KPI	KPI Target (2025/26)	KPI contribution Q1/Q2
CP4.1 Number of new income generating pilots	1	1

CP4.2 Increase in income that contributes towards core costs or is budget relieving	£250K increase	£187,432
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- 3.14 CP4.1: Research and development into new income-generating pilots has increased this year to date, with the most advanced being the Carbon Retail Offer. This initiative, developed jointly by the Trust and the Authority, aims to accelerate woodland planting across the South Downs National Park by introducing a new funding stream that complements existing grants like the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO). The model involves transacting Carbon Credits with landowners, which can later be sold on the open market to generate income for reinvestment into future planting schemes. The pilot is expected to catalyse up to 32 hectares of new woodland.
- 3.15 CP4.2: Q1 was a buoyant first quarter of the year from both the supply and demand perspectives. From the supply side, we have seen two new habitat banks secured through legal agreements delivering high integrity nature recovery for a minimum of 30 years. From a demand side we have seen a steady flow of sales for Voluntary Biodiversity Credits further establishing this new nature market conceived by the SDNPA in May 2024. BNG sales have risen better than predicted with commission due on sales brokered in June yet to be received. Nutrient Neutrality sales have also picked up despite the uncertainty surrounding this market following the Planning Reform Bill. In total, £181,000.00 was generated in Q1.
- 3.16 In Q2, a modest increase is anticipated through the Nature-Based Solutions Reserve. Several opportunities remain in development, including a significant partnership with the Eden Project, the incorporation of full cost recovery within our Southern Water Big Chalk project, and a major donor funding bid.

Land Management

- 3.17 Quarterly progress has been monitored through the key performance indicators outlined in Table 11.

Table 11 Progress against Land management – CP5 & CP6

Corporate Plan Priority	KPI	KPI Target (2025/26)	Q1/Q2
CP5 Facilitate and support the endorsement, actions and key priorities through the process of Whole Estate Plans (WEPs)	CP5.1 No. of Estates with new endorsed WEPS	1	1
	CP5.2 No. of estates working towards an endorsed WEP	3	1
CP6 Deliver the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme in the National Park	CP6.1 Total funding (£) allocated across the Defra themes of People/ Place/ Nature/ Climate	£602,868 (Yr5 funding)	£562,412.70

- 3.18 On 18th September 2025 Firle Estate witnessed its Whole Estate Plan become endorsed at the P&R Committee. Firle becomes the 12th Estate to have its WEP endorsed by the SDNPA. There is now only one estate remaining who is working towards endorsed WEP, Foley Estate.

- 3.19 On 18 September 2025, Firlie Estate’s Whole Estate Plan was endorsed at the P&R Committee, making it the 12th estate approved by the SDNPA. Only Foley Estate remains without an endorsed WEP.
- 3.20 A substantial proportion (93.3%) of the FiPL project delivery budget has now been allocated though no projects are yet completed. This has been a deliberate strategy as it provides a significant amount of time to allow projects to be completed by 31 March 2026.
- 3.21 Examples of projects receiving FiPL allocations include: surveying of chalk grassland & arable habitats across multiple farm holdings, establishment of deer/venison storage and processing facilities, installation of grazing infrastructure to manage an area of chalk grassland priority habitat, hedgerow creation, pond restoration, diversification of redundant farm buildings into education facilities and installation of kitchen facilities to facilitate on-farm school visits.

Economy

- 3.22 Quarterly progress has been monitored through the key performance indicators outlined in Table 12.

Table 12 Progress against Economy – CP7 & CP8

Corporate Plan Priority	KPI	KPI Target (2025/26)	Q1/Q2
CP7 Develop the ‘Our South Downs’ (OSD) enterprise network	CP7.1 No. of new businesses signed up to OSD network	60	26
	CP7.2 No. of Green South Downs certified businesses	32	30
	CP7.5 Total income generated vis OSD	£20,000	£1,316
CP8 Tourism in the South Downs National Park	CP8.1 No. of businesses signed up to Visitor Giving	2	3

- 3.23 CP 7.1: New sign ups have been through organic growth. Presenting at a Brighton Chamber Business Event and those engaging with the Visitor Giving scheme have resulted in new registrations.
- 3.24 CP 7.2: Green South Downs Certification continues to face challenges amid tough economic conditions and limited time availability for businesses. Despite offering a free subscription as an incentive in Q1 for completing the Accommodation Review Survey, uptake was nil, highlighting time investment as a key barrier. In response, a more accessible pilot has been launched to support SMEs in developing Carbon Action Plans, funded by SDNPA. Across all years, a total of 30 businesses have completed or are undertaking Green South Downs.
- 3.25 CP 7.5: Corporate income typically comes in Q3 and Q4, with Visitor Giving half year payments arriving Q3, South Downs Protector, and income from tree pledge partnerships in Q3/Q4. Q1/Q2 has been dedicated to pipeline building with corporate partnerships, attending two events and meeting new potential partners, including a commitment from a new corporate partner to donate regularly to Trees for the Downs. We expect to meet the annual target.

- 3.26 CP 8.1: We have had 3 signs ups to date this year, a London Restaurant 'BKC', and 'Freshly Fermented'. Upwaltham Barns Wedding Venue have signed an MOU to donate a set fee per wedding to the South Downs Trust. This brings us a total of seven Visitor Giving Partners across all years.

Authority Process

- 3.27 **CP9 Ensure that the organisation is more diverse and representative both in its staff and Members and considers Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in service delivery and policy development**

- 3.28 An annual update will be included in the Q4 performance report.

4. Projects in delivery

- 4.1 As of Quarter 2 end, there were 38 projects in delivery. This includes thirty projects with a green RAG rating, seven projects with an amber RAG rating and one project with red RAG rating. The amber and red projects are listed below. Please see the quarter 2 Project Summary dashboard at Appendix 2 for more detailed project performance.

4.2 Amber RAG rating:

- Adopt a Phone Box: this project is 20% complete. The project has not been able to progress in any great way due to the Agreement with the Trust not yet completed. The Comms Team have been working on draft content for the first phase of interpretation while waiting on this, so that we are in a position to move quickly when the Agreement is complete.
- Alternative Model for Woodland Creation: this project is 10% complete. This project is delayed, however, there is a key meeting in the diary for mid-October to deliver a feasibility study for a large, wooded area.
- Centurion Way: this project is 30% complete. This project is amber because dissatisfaction or resistance from stakeholders, meaning acceptance of deliverables may not be achieved and cannot be resolved by the project manager. Consent from the National Trust for the construction of the route in sections 5 and 6 has been withheld, pending resolution regarding issues raised by Sussex Bat Group. The expectation is that this will be resolved this coming quarter.
- Ebernoe and Butcherlands Landscape Enhancement Scheme: this project is 50% complete. This project remains at amber as it is still underspent and behind schedule with the main tree works. Most of the works are, however, planned and scheduled for this autumn/winter and Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) expect to catch up on most of the activities in this financial year. At the time of this Q2 report, SWT have not confirmed any recent progress, so the project remains at amber, but we anticipate having a significant update by the end of the Q3.
- Egrets Way: this project is 25% complete. In July 2025 we received resistance / rejection from landowners (private residences) of proposed options (previously supported in principle), primarily due to designs non-achievement of speed limit reduction to 30mph. ESCC and Sussex Police support the proposed options (within given parameters, design guidance and highway policy) eligible for speed limit reduction to 40mph only. The project timescale is delayed, therefore further Stage I design review, development and engagement is required to identify an agreeable option (if achievable), target by Q4 end 25/26.
- Meon Catchment Investigation: this project is 0% complete. It aims to identify gaps and conduct a survey of the River Meon to support nature recovery. Portsmouth and Southern Water are already undertaking statutory investigations into fish passage, water quality, and flow. To avoid duplication, the Authority is awaiting confirmation of their

findings. Southern Water has defined its scope, while Portsmouth Water is awaiting regulatory approval. A MORPH river survey, likely the missing element, is expected to be funded through this project.

- Rother Valley Way development: this project is 50% complete. Project progress is slower than anticipated due to difficulties and complexities of securing private landowner agreements.

4.3 **Red** RAG rating:

- Foley Estate Beaver Encloser: This project is 0% complete. The project in its original plan has hit licencing issues from Natural England. A change of plan may be required. If we are not able to get the licence for the enclosure soon then we will go ahead with the planned vegetation clearance and then apply for the licence again next year.

5. Project Performance Reporting: Strategic Fund Implications

5.1 Following the end of year 2024/5 outturn, the balance in the Strategic Fund was, and still remains, £17,000 (allowing for committed project funding). This was due to the reduction in our revenue Defra grant settlement and the need to under-write some multi-year projects. As a consequence, OMT (with SLT support) agreed at the end of 2024/25 to temporarily close the Strategic Fund to new expressions of interest. This is still the case, and it will be reviewed at the end of this financial year.

5.2 The new Defra Capital fund has enabled the SDNPA to fund a number of projects which will be delivered in-year. As at the end of Q2, 16 projects have been approved with funding from the Defra Capital fund, with a total funding allocation of £1,098,814. More projects will be allocated funding from the Defra Capital fund in Q3.

6. Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

6.1 The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) details 5 actions for 2025/26. These are monitored and reported on quarterly. See Appendix 3 for progress on the Annual Governance Statement actions for Q2.

7. Human Resources & Health and Safety

7.1 The Human Resources & Health and Safety paper detailed 8 actions for 2025/26. These are monitored and reported on quarterly. See Appendix 4 for progress on the Human Resources and Health and Safety actions for Q2.

8. Other implications

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

Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	We have listed in the report and appendices which PMP outcomes and corporate plan objectives our corporate and project work link to. Generally speaking, all projects and work will deliver against one or more PMP outcome.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	Where appropriate these are set out in the report.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority’s climate change objectives	Please see the Climate Action section of this report which sets out high level targets around climate action.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority’s equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes - Priority area three outlines the projects that have a specific focus on encouraging all people including those with protected characteristics and those from our target audiences of young people, people experiencing health inequalities and conditions, people from diverse backgrounds and people from areas experiencing socio-economic deprivation to engage with and access the National Park. Completed EDI assessments are required at project approval stage for projects across all priority areas from Q3 2023/24. Any issues identified are highlighted within this report.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal??	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None

9. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

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

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
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<p>Unforeseen changes to the level of funding provided by relevant Government departments for future years</p>	<p>Possible</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>A robust monitoring and project approval system with regular reporting to relevant Committees on projects. The budget available is set to sit with a Corporate Plan, setting out clear priorities to support delivery of Partnership Management Plan outcomes. These controls enable us to respond quickly if new funding streams are announced. A strong project pipeline also helps to prioritise those that should go forward when funding allows.</p>
<p>There may be some risks to our reputation if we are unable to provide match funding for some of our larger projects. This would also potentially reduce the types of funding we were able to apply for.</p>	<p>Probable</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>A decision has been taken to temporarily close the Strategic Fund for new funding approvals, as there has been no new allocation of funds during the year. Some projects are now funded using the capital fund allocated to the SDNPA by DEFRA. This programme is closely monitored and managed as the funding can only be used in the year it is awarded for.</p> <p>Further mitigation for this risk is the work that will be carried out to generate income for the South Downs National Park and also potentially for the SDNPA.</p>
<p>Lack of robust data or changes to data makes it difficult to provide trend information</p>	<p>Possible</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>SDNPA has contracts in place to provide a range of data and this is regularly reviewed. Changes to the data required as a result of Government requirements have been factored into future planning as far as is possible. We also have several pieces of work aimed at improving our data and monitoring capacity.</p>

ANNE REHILL

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- Appendices
1. Q2 2025-26 Corporate Performance Summary
 2. Q2 2025-26 Project Summary Dashboard

	3. Q2 2025-26 Annual Governance Statement update
	4. Q2 2025-26 Human Resources & Health and Safety update
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive Officer; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services, Interim Business Service Manager; Countryside and Policy Managers.
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	Corporate Plan Bridge Year 2025/26

