

Carbon Literacy Case Study:

South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA)

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is responsible for keeping the South Downs a special place. It is a public body, funded by government, run by a Board of 27 [Members](#) and is the planning authority for the National Park.

The SDNPA began its Carbon Literacy Journey in November 2024 with a pilot session, which led to senior leaders agreeing to aim for Silver Carbon Literacy Organisation (CLO) status. Training was rolled out to staff from February 2025. By January 2026, 60 of the 147 members of staff have been trained and a further 15 are booked for training later in 2026. 34 members of staff have received their certificates, with a further 11 in process of being certified, which is enough to meet the requirement for Silver CLO status.

Why Carbon Literacy Training?

In March 2020, the South Downs National Park Authority formally adopted a [Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan](#) with a goal of becoming a 'Net-Zero' organisation by 2040. The Action Plan aims to deliver actions across National Park teams, which works well at a strategy lead level. Carbon Literacy training has allowed wider staff to consider how they can contribute to this work.

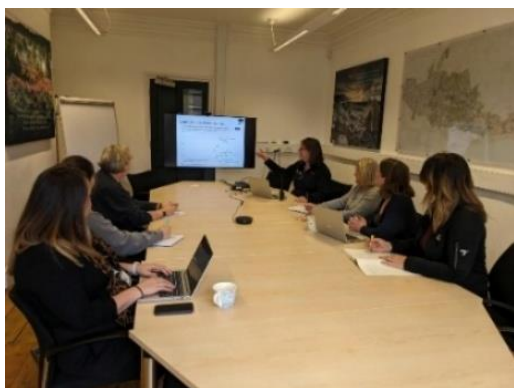
In January 2026 the SDNPA launched its new [Partnership Management Plan, 2026-31](#) (PMP) which is the most important strategic plan for the National Park.



Climate Change is now one of the organisations 7 key priorities, and the Authority recognises that Nature loss and climate change are impacting the landscape, nature, water, communities, businesses, our day-to-day lives, and our health and wellbeing.

It was clear that whilst many staff had good knowledge about climate change, with the increased importance placed on this area of work, training all staff to ensure a level knowledge base, would be key in driving this work and increasing confidence on talking to the public and partners we work with.

Carbon Literacy Training Delivery



Training was delivered by the Climate Change Officer. It was promoted to staff through the Organisational Management Team (OMT) and through an internal weekly Update to staff. A staff booking sheet was created listing dates on offer so staff can easily book themselves on to training dates that suit them. This ensured there was a cross organisational mix in each session.

Dates offered were mostly in-person and each course on different days of the week to ensure there would be dates to suit all staff irrespective of part-time working or those needing to do school pick up. One session was delivered fully online to cater for those unable to travel into the office.

These cross-organisational sessions have really helped embed climate actions across the SDNPA. They enabled staff to share their different perspectives and experience which has increased awareness of the varied areas of work that contribute to climate change action across the Authority.



An example of one of many internal Update articles:

A total of 33 staff have now completed the one-day Carbon Literacy training. There have been issues getting the certificates through from Defra due to changes in staff in their sustainability team. However, Congratulations go to Emma Allen, Hayley Madgwick, Jan Knowlson, and Natacha Bricks-Yonow whose certificates were received last week!

The organisation has made a commitment to work towards achieving Silver Carbon Literacy Organisation (CLO) status and we need another 22 people to sign up to the training to reach this. Further dates are planned for October (6th and 13th afternoons) and November (7th and 14th mornings). If you would like to take part, check with your line manager and [you can sign up here](#).

Why sign up to Carbon Literacy training? The PMP consultation gave a clear steer that climate is a priority for the organisation going forward and it is important as staff that we feel confident to understand the basics around climate change, what are the causes and impacts and policy around carbon and net zero targets. Carbon Literacy training is being delivered by a wide range of organisations and it really helps to fill in the gaps of our knowledge, share information and learn from colleagues, and helps us to understand the solutions that we can all contribute to in order to tackle this massive issue.



One challenge was encouraging participants to complete the online pledge form via Defra (who our licence is under). With the training stimulating lots of great discussions, it often ran to the wire with less time for group pledge discussions. Lessons learnt have led to changes in delivery to ensure sufficient time remains for small group discussions at the end of the training to ensure cross-pollination of ideas before leaving.

Also, the pledge form is now sent to participants along with the marking guidance document at the beginning of the training, so that people can think about their actions from the very start and be ready with commitments by the end of the course.

The Success of Carbon Literacy Training



The training has created a level playing field for knowledge on the causes, impacts and actions needed to tackle climate change. It has led to more and better-quality conversations internally as well as more joined up working is emerging from the action pledges. It has created a buzz that will drive the climate action that is emerging as part of our new PMP commitment to Climate Change.

The CEO mentioned Carbon Literacy in his [report to National Park Members](#) at their December 2025 meeting.

- ✓ *“This was brilliant training and hugely valuable from a personal and professional perspective. It has given me the confidence to advocate for positive climate action across our networks and has sparked some exciting plans for project delivery.” Learning, Outreach, Volunteering & Engagement Lead*
- ✓ *“I would really recommend taking Carbon Literacy Training. I found it particularly useful to understand comparatively how much CO₂ is emitted as a result of different human activities. It provided a welcome platform to discuss climate concerns and action with others.” Project Delivery Officer*
- ✓ *“We need to be leaders in doing all we can as individuals and as a team. This training underlined the sense of urgency, filled in the many gaps I had in my knowledge and inspired me to do more.” Interim Director of Landscape and Operations*

Future Plans

Carbon Literacy Training will be offered twice a year for new staff. A comms plan will emerge summarising the action pledges and carbon savings committed. These will also feed into the next iteration of the Climate Action Plan and be reviewed at quarterly to ensure learning and actions continue to have impact.

Next steps include exploring options for broadening out training opportunities to partners, businesses, parish councils and the public. It is hoped that this will align well with a new proposed Climate Action Campaign encouraging people in the National Park to pledge actions to tackle climate change.

