

Report to **Policy & Resources Committee**
Date **26 June 2025**
By **Grants Officer (South Downs National Park Trust)**
Title of Report **Annual review of the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF)**
Note

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the annual review and year-end position of the Sustainable Communities Fund managed by the South Downs National Park Trust

1. Background and Summary

- I.1 The SCF is a rolling fund administered by the South Downs National Park Trust and established to provide grants to community and voluntary groups, social enterprise organisations and businesses for 'not for profit' projects. Projects should take place within the National Park or within 5km of the boundary where there are strong links to park outcomes.
- I.2 To ensure proper scrutiny and well-informed decision making, a panel advises on bids for funding between £2,001 - £10,000. This panel is Chaired either by a SDNPA Member or a South Downs National Park Trust trustee and governed by a terms of reference document. Smaller grants from £500-£2,000 are made by the Trust with the agreement of the SDNPA's Director of Landscape and Strategy. You can find out more information about the funding here: [The Sustainable Communities Fund](#).
- I.3 In 2018 the national Park Authority agreed to transfer the Sustainable Communities Fund balance to the South Downs National Park Trust who fundraised to match the amount. This was successful and £331,390 was invested in an endowment fund overseen by the Trust Investment panel. Both the Authority and the Trust are recognised as founding patrons of the fund in perpetuity.
- I.4 The return from the endowment contributes to the running of the annual grants programme whilst the remainder, alongside additional funds raised by the Trust, is invested so that the endowment can grow.
- I.5 The Endowment therefore now stands at £488,646. This is in line with the aspirations presented to the Park Authority at the creation of the endowment and included within the associated "Funding Agreement".
- I.6 The fund has an annual budget of £35,000. This is made up of £25,000 from the SDNPA and £10,000 from the Trust. Underspends can be invested, alongside additional funds raised by the Trust. A request can be made to use underspend or draw a larger sum to support high quality projects where these would exceed the annual budget.

2. 2024-2025

- 2.1 In 2024/25, two panel meetings were held for large grants over £2,001 and two small grant rounds took place.
- 2.2 The SCF committed £46,465 to ten new projects, an increase in the number of projects funded in previous years. These are listed with a brief description in Appendix 1, along with a map showing the allocations and a second map showing all allocations throughout the life of the fund.
- 2.3 Panel members seek to add value to projects by reflecting on the sustainable use of materials as well as additional links that can be made to local business/community groups. This was reflected in the Chattri Memorial project where an additional £1,000 was committed to underwrite additional costs to funding locally sourced UK timber products.
- 2.4 This overspend on the usual annual budget of £35,000 utilised an underspend that had occurred in the previous year.

3. Other implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	N/A an already agreed fund between SDNP and the Trust
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	To be eligible grants must contribute to objectives
Links to other projects or partner organisations	N/A
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	The fund aligns with SDNPA ambitions
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 – as the subject matter of the report is an update on projects and funding, no specific issues arise
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	N/A
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	N/A

Implication	Yes*/No
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None

4. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
The return on the endowment investments could reduce due to changes to the economy	Possible	Major	The investment is a medium risk portfolio and is reviewed regularly by the Trust's investment committee, which includes investment professionals.
Reputational risk if we are unable to provide cash match funding for some of our larger projects	Possible	Moderate	Work to generate income for the South Downs National Park through the South Downs National Park Trust. A robust monitoring and project approval system and regular reporting to this Committee.

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Appendices:

1. Sustainable Communities Fund Project List
2. Sustainable Communities Fund Projects Map 24-25
3. Sustainable Communities Fund All Projects Map

SDNPA Consultees: Andrew Shaxson (SDNPA Member and SCF Chair)

External Consultees: None

Background Documents: None

I. Sustainable Communities Fund 2024-2025 Grant Allocations

I.1 Arundel Wildlife Corridor - £9,960 towards a total project cost of £30,920

Organisation: Greening Arundel

Wildlife corridor between Arundel train station and Arundel Park including wildflower verge, mini wetland and a screaming swift art piece.

I.2 Building Conservation Taster Day - £10,000 towards a total project cost of £38,169

Organisation: Sussex Heritage Trust

A learning day for 16-24-year-olds at the Weald and Downland Living Museum, enabling young people to try different building conservation skills to encourage interest in green career pathways, and increase conservation, awareness and understanding of the South Downs National Park.

I.3 The Hampshire Magnificent Meadows Project - £5,000 towards a total project cost of £10,000

Organisation: CPRE Hampshire

Unify fragments of land around junction 10 of the M3 under one management plan working with local community groups and schools in the area to create meadow habitats for wildlife and people. Included survey and mapping chalk grasslands in gardens to connect doorsteps to the downs. Scrub clearance as well as hay making using traditional techniques.

I.4 Active Inspire Paddling Challenge - £450 towards a total project cost of £900

Organisation: Inspire Sussex (formerly Eastbourne and District Mencap)

An inclusive event for individuals of all abilities, called “Active Inspire Paddling Challenge”. A remarkable opportunity to achieve a collective distance of 100K at the Active Buzz Cuckmere Outdoor Sports Centre, Seven Sister County Park, Exceat.

I.5 An Atlas of the Amphibians & Reptiles of Hampshire & the Isle of Wight - £2,000 towards a total project cost of £10,500

Organisation: Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Network (HARRN)

Using verified species records HARRN will produce an atlas showing the distribution of native species of amphibian and reptile in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The supporting text, aimed at a general readership, will, with photographs, promote an understanding of the life histories of these species and their conservation needs.

I.6 Secure storage facility - £2,000 towards a total project cost of £5,000

Organisation: East Chiltington Parish Council

Provide secure, rodent free storage for Parish marquees, tables, chairs and associated equipment to provide village venue for fetes, harvest suppers, nature groups and associated groundworks and hedge planting.

I.7 Hampshire Market Garden - £8,000 towards a total project cost of £16,000

Organisation: Hampshire Market Garden

To purchase and install a new polytunnel on our agroecological market garden. This will provide a community education space, additional growing space for existing ties with local food banks and night shelters, and provide winter volunteer opportunities supporting local health (including nutrition, physical & mental health)

I.8 Refurbishment at the Chattri Memorial - £5,000 towards an estimated £10,000

Organisation: Chattri Memorial Group

To improve and update the Interpretation Board which is currently situated at the entrance of the site. Improve signage to the Chattri site from the road for visitors. To replace the existing four benches with six new ones. *An additional £1,000 has been reserved for this project as they have been asked to source more sustainable wood materials which will be more expensive.*

I.9 Let a thousand flowers bloom - £1,850 towards a total project cost of £27,180

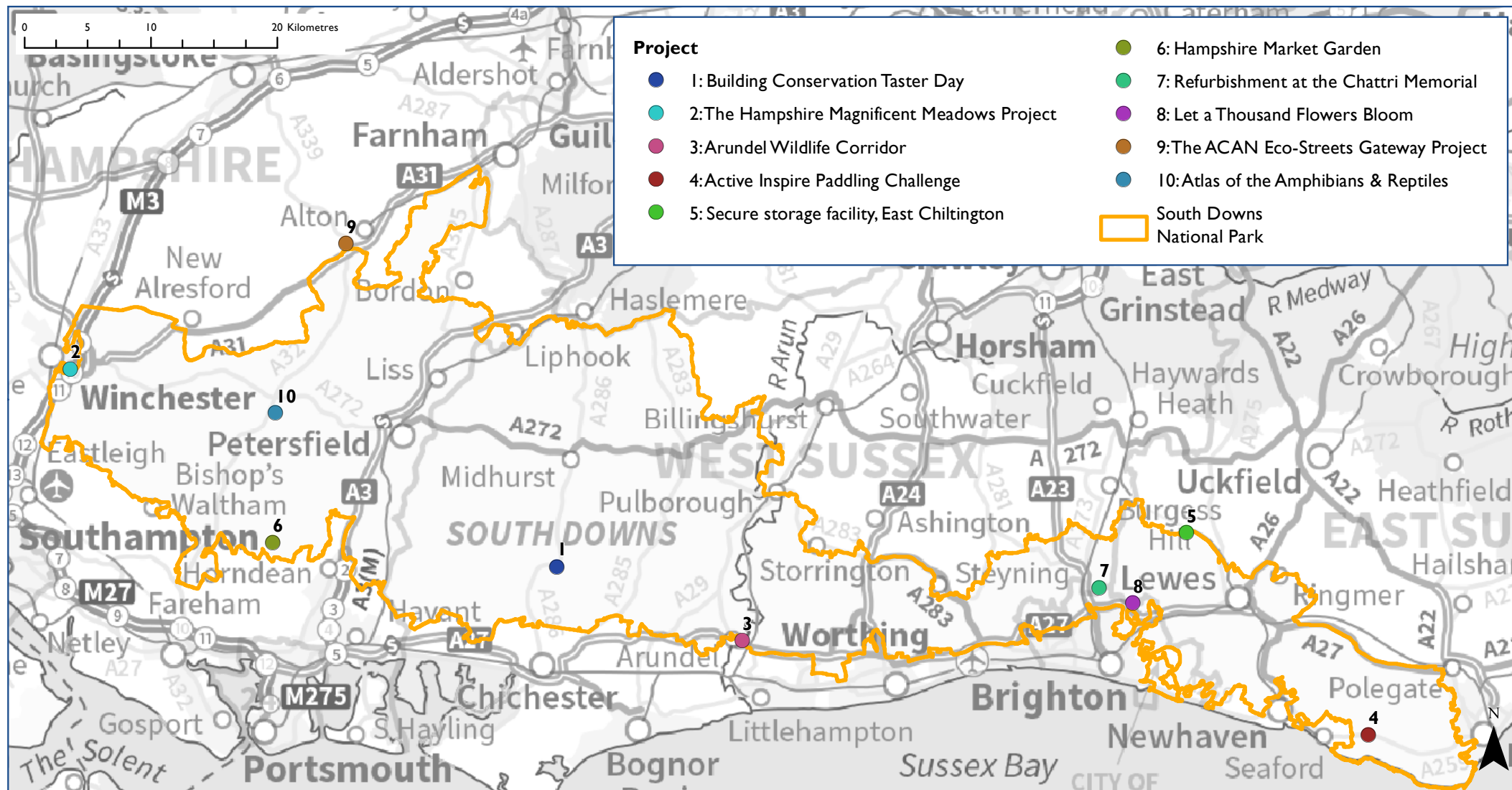
Organisation: Samphire Brighton and Hove CIC

A project that will engage diverse community members impacted by poverty and mental ill health. We will deliver sessions in the National Park where people will collect and sow seeds, grow wildflowers, restore local habitat and take part in nature-based craft activities.

I.10 The ACAN Eco-Streets Gateway Project: Connecting Alton sustainably with the South Downs - £1,365 towards a total project cost of £2,730

Organisation: Alton Climate Action Network (ACAN)

Walks and workshops using imagination and creativity to stimulate communities on Alton's south-western edge to take action for nature and climate in the SDNP



Scale at A4 1: 430,000

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