



ANNUAL REVIEW 2015/16

A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

In 2015/16 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) used the ambitious programme and vision we have created for England's newest National Park to make an impact on the national stage.

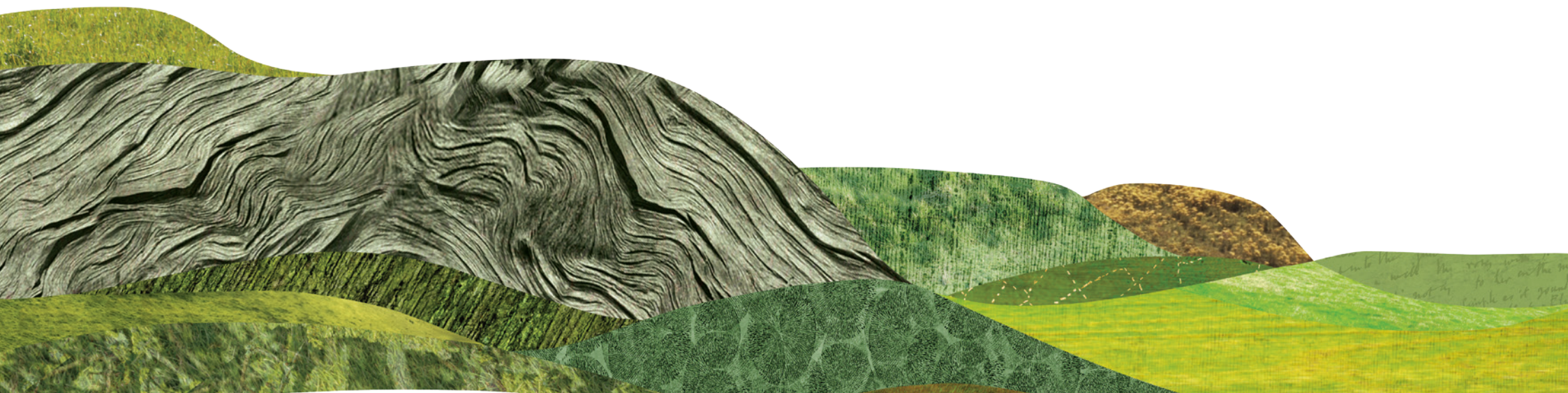
The archaeological discoveries from our Secrets of the High Woods project made national news and promise to keep archaeologists busy for many years to come. Our South Downs Food portal has quickly become established as the busiest and most comprehensive in the country. We obtained major Heritage Lottery funding for our five year Heathlands Reunited project which will set new standards in the restoration of this rare habitat. We created one of the first farm clusters in the country, helping to shape a new model for the collaboration of farmers and landowners to achieve landscape scale benefits.

This record of national success was capped with an international achievement just after the 2015/16 year end when the National Park was awarded International Dark Skies Reserve status, becoming only the second such reserve in the UK and only the eleventh worldwide.

With the National Park's identity now firmly in place we have been able to further enhance the profile of the South Downs through our website, social media and printed publications. Our campaign work promoting responsible dog walking and sustainable travel to and around the National Park has reached over 27 million people during 2015/16 – a fantastic achievement.

As the National Park Authority we work with a wide range of communities, organisations, landowners, farmers, local businesses, societies, such as our colleagues in the South Downs Society, residents and visitors, all of whom are committed to caring for the South Downs. This work is informed by the policies in our Partnership Management Plan which guide the work of all of those with a stake in our precious landscape.

You can read more about this work in this Annual Review which provides an overview of how partnerships are crucial to conserving and enhancing the National Park and improving understanding and awareness of this special place.



The South Downs is blessed with a large, highly skilled and dedicated band of volunteers. Their numbers have been growing recently to reach the current total of 520 and this year they contributed a record total of 6,277 days. It would be impossible to tackle the range and diversity of projects that we deliver every year without the commitment, enthusiasm and sheer hard work of the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. We owe them a continuing debt of gratitude.

We hope you will find that this document provides a useful insight into the work we share with our partners as well as further evidence of our total commitment to the delivery of our ambitious long term vision for the South Downs National Park.



Trevor Beattie
Chief Executive



Margaret Paren
Chair

PURPOSES AND DUTY

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

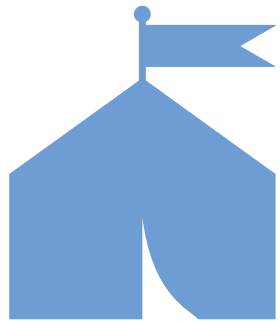


KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 2015/16



93% OF WOODLAND OWNERSHIP

now identified within the South Downs National Park



61

EVENTS
attended



275

businesses signed up to the

FOOD AND DRINK PORTAL



520

SOUTH DOWNS
VOLUNTEER
RANGERS
helping throughout
the National Park



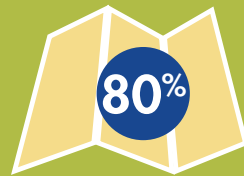
6,277

VOLUNTEERING
DAYS
supporting National
Park work



£1m

£1,010,250.93
secured by section
106 agreements



80%

PLANNING
APPLICATIONS
major and
minor...dealt with
within agreed
timescales



100+

PROVIDERS

are now on our
interactive outdoor
learning map

154



CHALK
GRASSLAND,
WOODLAND,
HEATHLAND
AND RIVER
SITES

maintained and
enhanced
across the
National Park



8,358

STUDENTS

from our more deprived
communities visited the
National Park thanks to the
SDNPA Travel Grant



37.5

km

of new or resurfaced

CYCLE & MULTI-
USER PATHS

34



KEY SPECIES
are being monitored

17,602 kWhrs

GENERATED



by the solar
panels at the
South Downs
Centre



NUMBER OF PARTNERS...



37

...helping to deliver a thriving
living landscape



36

...helping to promote
opportunities for understanding
and enjoyment



49

...helping to deliver towards a
sustainable future



45

...using the National Park
shared identity

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

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

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Create a Heritage Coast Partnership Plan	The five year strategy for the Heritage Coast Partnership is now in place covering a wide range of topics including natural resource management, access, sustainable tourism and heritage. The partnership has begun implementing this strategy through working groups looking at conservation grazing and visitor information.
Formally adopt a number of Conservation Area Management Plans	18 Conservation Area Management Plans were adopted in 2015/16. At the start of Q1 there were 12 in progress or adopted, with a further six adopted during the year.
Secure medium-term funding to continue to develop our aspirations around bigger, better, more joined up heathlands	Heritage Lottery funding was secured for the five year Heathlands Reunited Project which will support ongoing maintenance and enhancement of heathland sites. It will also inform, engage and involve people and local communities with their local heathland heritage.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Prepare for the submission of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) Local Plan in accordance with the timetable and procedures set out in the agreed Local Development Scheme (LDS)	We received an exceptionally high number of responses to the Local Plan Preferred Options consultation. A revised timetable for the Local Plan has been produced which reflects the large amount of work needed to progress neighbourhood plans which form an integral part of the development plan for the National Park. The revised date for the publication of a composite draft Local Plan for Regulation 19 consultation is autumn 2017.
Work with a number of partners on projects to deliver against Objective 1	In 2015/16 we worked with 37 partner organisations on a range of projects relating to Objective 1. This exceeded the 28 partner organisations we worked with in 2014/15. Of particular note are the following who we are working/worked with on two or more projects: Natural England, English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Forestry Commission and the National Trust.

PROJECTS ON THE GROUND

Here are some highlights of work carried out on the ground across the National Park during 2015–16:

BUTSER HILL OPEN ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS



New access furniture was installed on Butser Hill National Nature Reserve at Queen Elizabeth Country Park in January 2016. Some locations on this site were not suitable for kissing gates so step through stiles have been used instead. These offer a good alternative to step-over stiles which some people can find awkward.

CLOTH FARM (MANAGEMENT FOR ARCHAEOLOGY)



A total of 0.45 hectares of scrub was cleared from Cloth Farm, Jevington in the winter of 2015–16. This was carried out in partnership with the land owner and farmer to protect the ancient field system on the site, which is thought to date from the Iron Age and is listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The scrub clearance will also facilitate better access on this area of Open Access Land.

GERMANLEITH BANKS RESTORATION



Germanleith Banks rests on the edges of a dry valley system in the parish of Treyford, West Sussex. Managed by a local farmer under lease, the site comprises c.4 hectares of chalk grassland in total but had been divided in two by an old byway, and part abandoned. The site's location is important as it forms part of a series of chalk grassland sites within the valley. Consent was sought from West Sussex County Council to erect field gates across the byway at either end of the site and bridle gates were installed for ease of use for equestrians. The fencing that lined either side of the byway was removed allowing Sussex cattle to graze across both sides of the hill. Additional new fencing completed the new perimeter, while scrub and trees were cleared to support the grassland restoration and opened up views both to and from the site for the public to enjoy.

HALCOMBE FARM



Work has been carried out to improve access to this designated Local Wildlife Site near Piddinghoe. Volunteers helped install two new bridle gates to enable grazing and carried out scrub clearance to prevent further scrub encroachment and restore valuable chalk grassland. Butterfly surveys following last year's work showed an increase in both numbers and species. The newly surfaced section of the Egret's Way cycle route, from Southease to Piddinghoe, comes out opposite the bridleway leading to the site so it is easily accessible for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

HIMALAYAN BALSAM CONTROL



© SDNPA

Since 2013 we have worked with undergraduate students, volunteers, contractors and partners to map and eradicate the invasive non-native aquatic plant, Himalayan Balsam. Growing tall and fast in the riparian zone (between the water's edge and the top of the river bank) balsam easily outcompetes native vegetation and is now found along most river systems in England. During the summer of 2013, using Living Record, a recently developed recording and mapping programme, students mapped the spread and abundance of balsam along 18kms of the Upper Rother. After three years of cutting we have made an 80% reduction in its abundance in these areas.

KITHURST MEADOW AND ROAD BANKS WORK



© SDNPA

Kithurst meadow and road banks are one of the finest butterfly sites in West Sussex. Of the 34 species recorded at this location several are rare, infrequent or localised. Recently we worked with Butterfly Conservation and West Sussex County Council to remove several large conifer trees to prevent their shade from ruining the butterfly's habitat. The positive results of this are already apparent and this spring saw the highest numbers of the nationally rare and threatened Duke of Burgundy butterfly ever seen at this site.

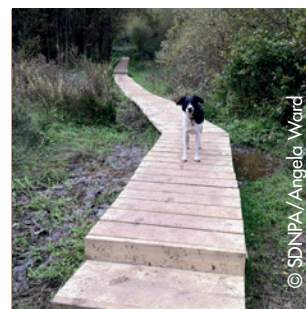
RIVERFLY MONITORING INITIATIVE (RMI)



© SDNPA / Ruth James

Initially launched in 2007 by the Riverfly Partnership the RMI has a team of volunteers monitoring the biological water quality of our rivers by recording a selection of freshwater invertebrates. River flies are one of these freshwater invertebrates which form the heart of the freshwater ecosystem providing food for fish and birds – a vital link in the aquatic food chain. They are also important biological indicators due to their limited mobility and specific tolerances to changes in environmental conditions. In 2015/16 112 surveys were completed by volunteers, local residents, landowners, river keepers and anglers who all received training on monitoring techniques and water safety.

ROTHER WALK BOARD WALK



© SDNPA / Angela Ward

Following requests from the public a new section was added to the River Rother boardwalk where the recent wetter winters, together with higher footfall, had led to an area becoming impassable. This section was completed by the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service and has been greatly appreciated by walkers as it means they can now use the path all year round.



Volunteers and staff researching at the archive of Arundel Castle, February 2016

SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS UPDATE

We are now coming to the end of our 3-year Heritage Lottery Funded community archaeology project, The Secrets of the High Woods, which aims to reveal the hidden past lying beneath the dense woods of West Sussex and Hampshire. Having commissioned a cutting edge LiDAR survey across 305sqkm of wooded downland, over 130 volunteers took part in exploring the landscape and investigating the hidden woodland mysteries...

The LiDAR survey involved a plane flying across the project area scanning the ground with lasers. Penetrating the woodland canopy and ground vegetation this survey was able to detect many topographical features which have been obscured from view. Using the LiDAR data our intrepid volunteers ventured out into the field armed with a bespoke field work app, OS maps and other forms of cartography to determine what the discovered features are and how they may have changed over time.

Running in conjunction with the field work, volunteers carried out archival and oral history research. This involved interrogating historical documentation across the project area and developing an understanding of how this unique landscape has been utilised and interpreted by our ancestors. Our specially trained oral history team undertook interviews with both prominent archaeologists and those who have lived in and worked this landscape, sometimes for generations. Foresters, farmers, folklorists, woodsmen, coppicers, charcoal burners and other people with an intimate understanding of this landscape have shared their memories.

With each of the project strands drawing to a close soon, all of the findings, exciting research, absorbing interviews and the new, fascinating secrets will be revealed in a variety of ways throughout 2016. These include:

- A travelling exhibition touring various venues in the South Downs area, featuring some exciting CGI recreations of the project landscape over time.
- Hands-on activity days at a number of South Downs area museums.
- A 'Hidden Past' Festival at Portsmouth City Museum in August.
- A rich project book presenting many of the project's key findings.
- A series of archaeology themed self-guided walk leaflets around the project area
- A two day project conference and showcase event in September.
- Two community archaeology excavations within the project area.
- A professionally produced film to showcase the project work and findings.


In July 2016 we released some of the findings of the project which included the route of a Roman road and details of extensive prehistoric field systems. Find out more about the project findings and related events on our website at southdowns.gov.uk/highwoods

FARMLAND BIRD INITIATIVE

The South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI) is a collaborative partnership between farmers, conservation organisations and government agencies which provides a focal point for information and advice on integrating conservation management into modern farming businesses to support important populations of farmland birds, and other wildlife, on the farmed areas of the South Downs.

The initiative provides a one stop shop of advice for farmers and land managers to encourage practices that provide the right conditions for farmland birds to survive and populations to improve. The first of these practices is winter cover and food, which can be provided by leaving areas uncultivated until the spring or growing cover crops and wild bird seed mixes. Secondly is the provision of suitable nest sites; this might be fallow plots within a crop or uncultivated field margins. Finally, to provide shelter and feed for chicks, specific features such as beetle banks can be created to increase the supply of invertebrates as a food source.

The SDFBI also monitors populations of important species across the National Park. To achieve this over 100 volunteers venture out each spring and record all the species in a series of randomly selected squares. Species of particular concern include corn bunting, yellowhammer, grey partridge and lapwing. It is too early yet to get a clear picture of trends but the survey has shown that populations of many species are faring better in the South Downs than elsewhere in the South East of England. One species of particular concern is lapwing and over the coming year there will be a focus on monitoring this species and also trialing new management practices to support successful breeding.



Grey partridge
(*perdix perdix*)

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

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

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE	WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Increase the number of volunteer days undertaken by the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (SDVRS)	Between April 2015 and March 2016, volunteers carried out 6,277 volunteer days. This is an increase of 386 days when compared to the same period in 2014–15. Tasks included the clearance of encroaching scrub on chalk grassland and heathland, coppicing in woodlands, maintaining rights of ways, laying hedges, water vole monitoring, surveying riverfly, flint walling and project admin support. Volunteers work in partnership with a wide range of organisations including the National Trust, Natural England, Butterfly Conservation, County and District Councils and smaller community groups.	Increase the proportion of visits to and within the South Downs National Park by sustainable modes of transport (continued...)	Our sustainable transport campaigns reached over 20 million people, while 1600 individuals actively participated in our events programme. Highlighting this success our 2015 Visitor Survey results indicated a drop in the number of visitors arriving by private car from 87% in 2014 to 83% in 2015.
Increase the proportion of visits to and within the South Downs National Park by sustainable modes of transport	Six new or improved shared-use paths were completed creating more opportunities for walkers, cyclists and equestrians to explore the National Park. We held over 60 events including a Walking Festival, Discovery Bike Rides and railway station engagement days to promote these.	Increase the number of local tourism businesses promoting the National Park and encouraging visitors to visit multiple venues	Throughout 2015/16, 167 local tourism businesses promoted the South Downs National Park on the <i>Our Land</i> website. Our aim is to increase this number in 2016/17 through wider promotion outside of <i>Our Land</i> .
		Work with a number of partners on projects to deliver against Objective 2	In 2015/16 we worked with 36 partner organisations on a range of projects relating to Objective 2. This exceeded the 27 organisations in 2014/15. Of particular note are the following who we are working/worked with on two or more projects: West Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council, the National Trust, Hampshire County Council and East Sussex County Council.

WINCHESTER CITY MILL

In June 2015, a new South Downs National Park visitor exhibition was opened at Winchester City Mill, a working corn mill in the heart of the city. Winchester attracts an estimated four million visitors each year and the mill is a key visitor attraction which is owned and managed by the National Trust (NT) and welcomes approximately 40,000 visitors annually. The project to develop this exhibition was jointly funded and managed by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and NT.

A key objective for this project was to increase awareness and understanding of the National Park and showcase National Trust sites within it. Winchester is a start/end point for the South Downs Way National Trail

at the western end of the South Downs and the Mill is well placed (100m from the trail end) as a gateway/orientation point.

A new exhibition was installed in the former shop area. This has free public access and the exhibition serves as a 'one-stop shop' for visitors and residents who want to learn and experience more about the South Downs National Park. In the main Mill site, new exhibits were installed and existing interpretation was enhanced. The project exemplifies strong and effective partnership working. It was also an opportunity to showcase the newly established National Park Shared Identity and early indications show an increase in visitor numbers to the Mill as well as NT membership.



SOUTH DOWNS ALPHABET

The South Downs have a strong association with well-known writers, poets, musicians and artists who have drawn inspiration from and captured the essence of this most English of landscapes. This year the work of Eleanor Farjeon is being celebrated in a project to bring a wide range of her poems to life and stimulate creative responses from the next generation.

Eleanor Farjeon was an important literary figure from World War I onwards. Her series of poems, *A Sussex Alphabet*, published in 1939, captured the essence of the county she loved.

The Heritage Lottery Funded South Downs Alphabet project is using *A Sussex Alphabet* as a lens through which to view the modern day South Downs National Park. It has been developed through a partnership between the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and The Write House, a group of independent historians and authors based in Sussex. Schools across the National Park are taking part in this inter-generational project alongside University of the Third Age (U3A) groups.

The aim is to bring Eleanor Farjeon's love of the landscape, and her funny, poignant and relevant poetry alive for a new generation and to stimulate research into the heritage that inspired her.

The project started with inspiration events followed by opportunities for archival research, visits to sites within the South Downs National Park and workshops to uncover the heritage behind Eleanor Farjeon's work. Participants are now creating a series of poems reflecting what people value most about the South Downs as it is today.

The end product will be a new South Downs Alphabet book of these poems to be published in a box set edition alongside Eleanor Farjeon's original book. The events, research and creative responses started in February 2016 and will run until July. The final book will be published in December 2016.



Children and U3A
make new alphabet
for the South Downs

© Derek Martin



© Derek Martin

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

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

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Increase the number of stakeholders who are aware of and using our shared identity to raise the profile of the National Park in their venues, communities or businesses	In 2015/16 we worked with 45 partners to enable their use of the shared identity. This compares to 12 stakeholders in 2014/15. Partners have used the identity in a variety of ways from branding buses to its use by small businesses to add value to products 'proudly produced in the South Downs National Park'. We have also rolled out the shared identity across all of the communications and engagement work of the National Park Authority.
Increase the number of the target audience reached by our sustainable behaviour campaigns	In 2015/16 over 27 million people were reached by the following sustainable behaviour campaigns: 'Share the Path', 'Have an Adventure in the South Downs', 'Responsible Dog Ownership', and 'Take the Lead'.
Work towards setting up the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	The Draft CIL charging schedule was approved for consultation in June 2015 and was published alongside the Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The Authority submitted its draft Charging Schedule for Examination in February 2016 and in June 2016 it was recommended that the Authority formally adopts its proposed CIL arrangements, without modification.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Work towards setting up the CIL (continued...)	We now propose to consider this recommendation at a meeting on 22 September 2016. If agreed, we will implement CIL collection from all relevant new housing and retail developments submitted from 1 October 2016 onwards.
Ensure those writing community-led plans were satisfied with the quality of advice and support provided by the SDNPA	All those who had contacted the SDNPA about community-led planning in 2015/16 were sent a survey asking a series of questions about their experience. One question asked respondents about their overall satisfaction with the quality of advice and support they received, of whom 93% reported that they were either very or fairly satisfied.
Work with a number of partners on projects to deliver against Objective 3	In 2015/16 we worked with 49 partner organisations on a range of projects relating to Objective 3. This exceeded the 33 in 2014/15. Of particular note are the following who we are working/worked with on two or more projects: Arun District Council, Chichester District Council, Coast 2 Capital LEP, DEFRA, Horsham District Council, Lewes District Council, Mid Sussex District Council, Southern Water and West Sussex County Council.

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT IN THE NATIONAL PARK

What is planning enforcement? This is a question that is often asked. It is about building something without planning permission or using something, like land, where a material change of use occurs. UK planning regulations are in place to control the development and use of land and buildings in the public interest and we, the SDNPA, are responsible for planning within the National Park. We have agreed unique partnerships with the Local Authorities operating within the National Park boundaries and for seven of these we deal directly with enforcement. The other seven authorities deal with enforcement issues on our behalf.

As the planning authority for the National Park we expect land owners and developers to comply with planning laws and not carry out development without the necessary planning permission. We are committed to ensuring that planning, and other environmental controls are enforced and where consent is granted, approved plans and conditions are followed.

Enforcement is not all about telling people to tear a building/structure down or stop what they are doing. It is about mediation; understanding why something is happening and educating the public in the vagaries of the planning system.



The range of issues we deal with are varied and to date have included an unauthorised shed in a rear garden, a two storey rear extension on a house, unauthorised adverts on a highway, use of land for equestrian use, an animal hospital set up in a garage, developments not being built in accordance with the approved plans, trees being cut down, and a pole being placed in front of a first floor window. Proper enforcement is vital to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the South Downs National Park.

In 2015/16:

- **25** Enforcement notices, breach of condition notices and temporary stop notices were served.
- **688** enforcement cases were registered across the National Park.
- **106** of these cases were dealt with by our enforcement officers.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND

In 2015/16 a total of £46,589 was granted to 14 community-led projects through the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF). An excellent example of how this fund can give smaller projects a real boost is...

PATINA CARNIVAL OF THE CREATURES

Lewes Parents And Teachers In Art (Patina) was set up in 2002 with parents and teachers working together on an annual parade, with the costumes made by children. The parade celebrates children's transition from primary to secondary school.

In 2014, Patina Lewes applied to the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) for a £5,000 grant which was successful because the artwork for the 2015 parade – entitled 'The Carnival of the Creatures: Moving on 2015' – was inspired by animals and plants of the South Downs. It was also firmly embedded in education on the species of the South Downs for the many youngsters and adults involved.



On 10 July 2015, a hugely supportive community cheered the children through town, with creatures being represented including the Adonis Blue butterfly, rose chafers, yellow meadow ants and two-colour mason bees.

16 schools participated in this event, 48 art workshops were delivered across Lewes and surrounding villages where over 400 Year 6 pupils, along with 8 local artists and 55 parents, developed their "carnival arts" to create costumes and structures relating to each animal. The artwork was created with cost, recyclability and sustainability in mind using materials such as willow and tissue paper.

Thanks to the Authority's support, Patina could build more substance into the parade by adding stronger educational elements into the project and integrating the wildlife theme into its activities all year.

"This was a fantastic partnership which brought so much to all the children and families involved in our project and established a relationship which will be enduring for our two organisations. This is a model which we would definitely like to repeat."

Member of Patina



OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2015/16

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK APPLICATION FOR INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY RESERVE STATUS



As part of our evidence work around Dark Night Skies we worked extensively with volunteers, societies and groups to take 25,000 individual measurements of sky quality across the South Downs National Park. This allowed us to generate a map highlighting that the South Downs has highly valuable dark skies which are accessible to hundreds of thousands of people in one of the

most light polluted parts of the South East of England.

The map established that we have a core area meeting necessary criteria for designation as an International Dark Skies Reserve. It also highlighted that 88% of threats to our Dark Night Skies lie outside of the National Park. This has helped us work with adjoining Local Authorities to develop street lighting designs and policies to try and address these threats. In May 2016 we received confirmation of the South Downs National Park's new status as an International Dark Skies Reserve – see our website

southdowns.gov.uk for more details.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FARM CLUSTER APPROACH



Farm clusters enable groups of farmers and landowners to work together to achieve landscape, habitat and biodiversity benefits on a scale that couldn't be achieved acting alone. The approach aims to maintain and enhance the environmental outcomes, social network and

economic opportunities begun by the South Downs Way Ahead Nature Improvement Area.

Seven farm cluster groups have been established or are in development in the National Park covering almost 97,000 hectares (approximately 60% of the National Park). The cluster farming approach delivers on our Partnership Management Plan. The success of this approach was highlighted by Liz Truss, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, when she visited the Selbourne cluster in spring 2016.

OUTCOME 1C ECOSYSTEMS APPROACH SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE



The ecosystem approach is a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes their conservation and sustainable use in equal measures. The specific target, Outcome 1C, measures how the ecosystem approach is being applied to biodiversity delivery to help connect people and nature.

Early in 2015, National Park Authorities (NPAs) were the first set of organisations to assess their use of the Ecosystem Approach. As part of the NPAs self-assessment of this work, the South Downs National Park Authority's (SDNPA) own ecosystem services self-assessment was highlighted as an excellent example of this work.

Furthermore, the SDNPA were saluted for the impressive range of further work we proposed in our self-assessment. There are plans to share the SDNPA's experiences more widely, including through the South East Protected Landscape Forum and the Ecosystem Knowledge Network (EKN).

CENTURION WAY



In December 2015 a 2.5km stretch of new and improved path on the Centurion Way opened up year-round access for walkers and cyclists of all abilities. The trail follows the line of the former Chichester to Midhurst railway line, the last section of which closed in 1991. It is now a safe, off-road route for both walkers and cyclists running from Chichester into the heart of the South

Downs National Park.

For the time being the trail ends at the face of the West Dean tunnel with information panels telling the story of the railway line. Existing access to the village itself stays the same via the segregated path alongside the A286, however providing access from the new path to the village remains a priority for the National Park Authority. Development of further sections of the route will be created as funding becomes available.

FOOD AND DRINK IN THE SOUTH DOWNS



The South Downs region is home to English sparkling wine with over 20 vineyards and more than 50 breweries. Its exquisite dairies create over 80 regional cheeses and artisan makers have won national and international awards for their creative products, from ice cream to charcuterie and from pies to pickles. Southdown Lamb, Sussex Beef and superb fish from the Sussex and

Hampshire coastal waters all help make the area a true foodie haven.

Thanks to a new web portal – southdownsfood.org – which launched in June 2015, the tasty delicacies of the South Downs are now easy to find and enjoy. Including hundreds of local food and farm shops, restaurants,

pubs and cafés, vineyards, breweries and food producers who sell directly to the public, the unique website showcases the extraordinary range of produce grown, reared, caught and made in the area, with a clever interactive ‘food finder’ to help locate it.

The portal is also a resource that enables retailers and hospitality businesses to source locally produced food and drink. As well as this it includes a comprehensive ‘What’s On’ calendar which is a useful tool for event organisers, visitors and residents, with over 700 food and drink related events and attractions listed in the first year.

Created by Natural Partnerships Community Interest Company with support from the SDNPA and The Southern Co-operative, the website now currently has 275 businesses signed up and has received around 40,709 views.

DEFRA'S 8 POINT PLAN FOR NATIONAL PARKS



Along with other National Park Authorities, the SDNPA are currently working on a paper to demonstrate how National Park Authorities plan to deliver the DEFRA 8 Point Plan which was announced in April 2016. The 8 Point Plan sets out DEFRA's priorities for improving National Parks in England over the period from 2016 until 2020.

It includes plans to connect more young people to the environment through National Parks, and to increase visitor numbers, as well as developing apprenticeships through National Park Authorities, and to protect and enhance the natural environment.

HOW THE AUTHORITY IS FUNDED

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

In 2015–16 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) received a grant totalling just under £9.8 million. This was the largest grant of any National Park Authority in England, reflecting the geographic spread and population of the South Downs.

As the Planning Authority for the National Park, a significant part of our budget is dedicated to processing and determining planning applications for development. In 2015–16 the SDNPA received income of over £1.1 million through planning activities.

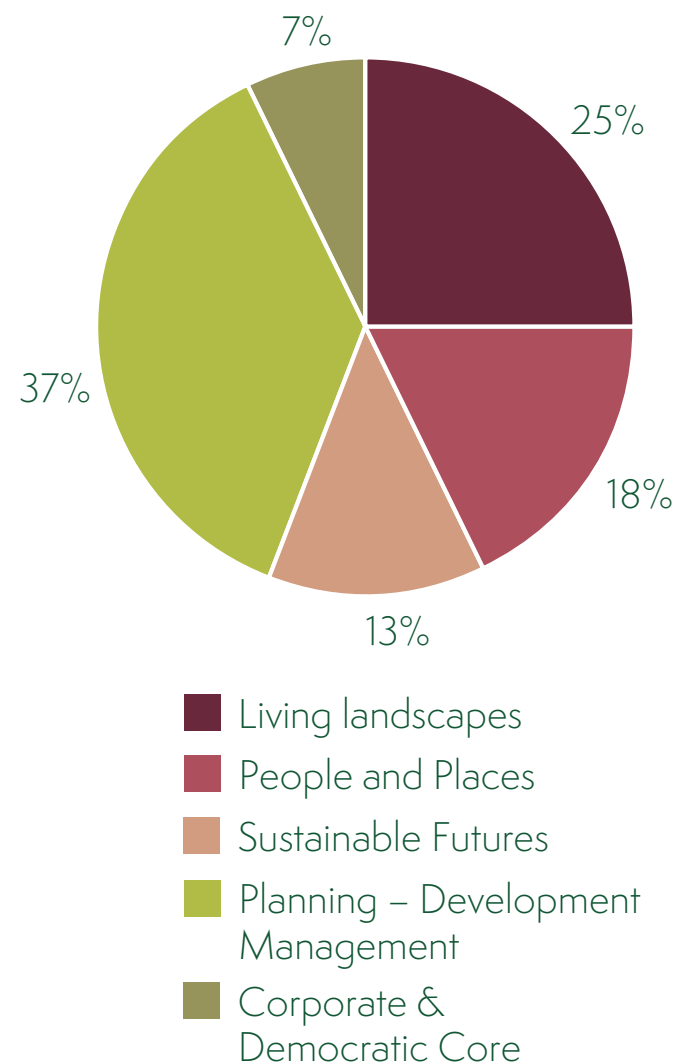
The SDNPA was also successful in attracting significant funding for projects to deliver the Partnership Management Plan. During 2015–16 the SDNPA received almost £1.4 million of income through specific grants in addition to funds secured by other partners to deliver work in the National Park.

In total the income received by the SDNPA in 2015–16 was just short of £12.5million.

HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT

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

SDNPA Expenditure 2015-16



THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK VISION

By 2050 in the South Downs National Park:

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

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

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





SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

South Downs Centre
North Street
Midhurst
West Sussex
GU29 9DH

T: 01730 814810
W: southdowns.gov.uk

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