

# Case Study

SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK

## South Pond Project - Midhurst

### Background

Midhurst's South Pond has a history as old as the town itself. It is fed by two streams which were once the boundaries of Saxon settlements.

The South Pond was formed when one of the medieval lords of Midhurst dammed the streams with the intention of making a breeding pool for the fish, which the household ate on Fridays and in Lent. There were perch, bream, trench, roach and carp. The lord's servants netted them from a boat.

South Pond has for many years suffered from 'general' neglect and the build-up of silt in the centre of the pond often created flooding when there was heavy rain fall.

It used to be one of the prettiest parts of the town; many local residents wanted to see improvements and created the South Pond Group (SPG).

Working in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), the SPG set about developing a project that would improve the flow of water and create a wildlife haven in the heart of Midhurst. The solution sought was a redistribution of the built up silt from the centre to the edges, whilst creating a pretty environment for local residents and visitors to enjoy, look after and learn from.

*Building the walls  
with the  
volunteers and  
school group  
watching*



### The project

The priority action was to seek funding for the £68,000 project costs. After two years hard work, SDG members and SDNPA officers from the Operations Team were successful in securing the funding needed and developing a broader partnership project between SPG, SDNPA (provided £20,000) and others including;

- Chichester District Council (£18,000)
- West Sussex County Council
- Midhurst Town Council
- Arun and Rother Connections Project (£1,000)
- Environment Agency
- The Grange (£2000)
- Operation Watershed (£25,000)
- South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service ((SDVRS) £4,000)

Before the works began on site SDNPA staff, the SPG, the SDVRS and children from five local schools all contributed by making birch bundles known as 'faggots' to helprevet the new edges of the pond.

Salix, the contractor, began works in 2014, building the walls and pumping the silt from the centre of the pond into areas behind the revetted walls that were built from the faggots and chestnut posts. The marginal aquatic plants that had been grown over the winter on a site away from the pond were installed at the end of April 2015 when the silt had settled in the newly created areas.

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# “We have created a wildlife haven within the centre of the town of Midhurst”

*Graham Ault member of the South Pond Group*

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## The outcome

It is hoped that with the introduction of reeds, sedges and flowers like yellow iris and purple loosestrife, the populations of fresh water invertebrates, amphibians and warblers will flourish and the water quality within the pond will be much improved. The pond will once again become one of the prettiest parts of the town.

The refurbishment of South Pond will;

- help break down the speed of any flash flooding in the future
- increase the biodiversity of the pond including aquatic plant species, dragonfly species and fish species
- help oxygenate the water in the pond
- improve the links with the local schools and the community
- replace an uninteresting plant-less pond with a flourishing wildlife haven.

*A perfect spot for a picnic!*



## The future

The project has been a great success showing just what can be achieved when you bring together local interest and passion with technical expertise and funding.

The creation of the sedge and reed beds have transformed the appearance of the site and new species of plants and insects have already been attracted to the pond.

The project has also stimulated a groundswell of new interest in the pond within members of the local community, including schools.

The pond will be maintained in the future by Chichester District Council for the main works and The South Pond Group will do the smaller jobs, sometimes with a little help from the Wealden Heaths Operation Team from the SDNPA.

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For a history of South Pond see;  
[www.violetdesigns.co.uk/southpond.htm](http://www.violetdesigns.co.uk/southpond.htm)