



ANNUAL REVIEW 2016/17

A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Throughout a year of political upheaval and uncertainty, the South Downs National Park Authority has maintained a tight focus on the objectives in our Corporate Plan, enabling us to deliver a series of notable successes which have made national headlines. This is a tribute to the hard work of our staff, Members and volunteers as well as to the support of the many partners who work with us to deliver the projects in our *Partnership Management Plan*.

In the spring of 2016, the National Park marked its sixth birthday and the successes of the following year have provided the best possible celebration. The award of International Dark Skies Reserve status was followed by our first Dark Skies Festival which saw 18 partners run events right across the National Park. Our £2.37m Heathlands Reunited project has made

a strong start to its five-year programme and the farm clusters, which now cover 60 per cent of the National Park, will be used to pilot new approaches to the future of farming. The proposals for the South Downs National Park Trust have been approved and the first Trustees appointed. We are looking to launch the new Trust in 2017. We also secured, with our partner Brighton and Hove City Council, £3.8m Heritage Lottery Funding for the restoration of Stanmer Park.

We have led the way in promoting shared services between National Parks to improve efficiency and make best use of the very limited public resources at our disposal. The first two such services have delivered significant savings through the collective procurement of insurance and a new e-learning system to spread best practice.

We have completed our Secrets of the High Woods project which used ground-penetrating radar to reveal the archaeology below the trees. This has already discovered a new Roman road, a nationally important prehistoric field system and 2,500 historical sites, and there is much more data still to analyse. The popular travelling exhibition of our findings has now found a permanent home in the Weald and Downland Museum's new Gateway building as part of an interpretation centre which we helped to fund.

The rate of progress will continue to accelerate in the coming year which will see the submission of our innovative, landscape-focused Local Plan. It will also, however, be time to take stock as we begin the process of



reviewing our *Partnership Management Plan*. The original Plan was based on 18 months of extensive consultations involving more than 3,000 people. We do not intend to re-write it from scratch, but much has changed since it was published at the end of 2013. We will therefore review our progress against its ambitious delivery framework, refresh the policies to meet the challenges and opportunities of Brexit and develop tighter priorities.

You can read more about what the National Park Authority has achieved over the past year in the pages that follow. It is an impressive track record for an organisation in its sixth year. It has secured the experience, the partnerships and the projects necessary for us to review our priorities in preparation for the challenges of 2017/18. To keep up to date with all South Downs National Park news and events sign up for our monthly newsletter at southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter.



Trevor Beattie
Chief Executive

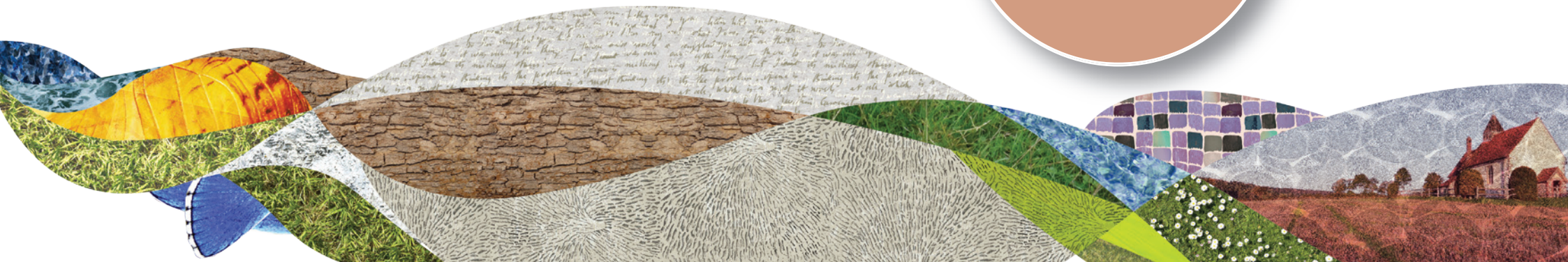
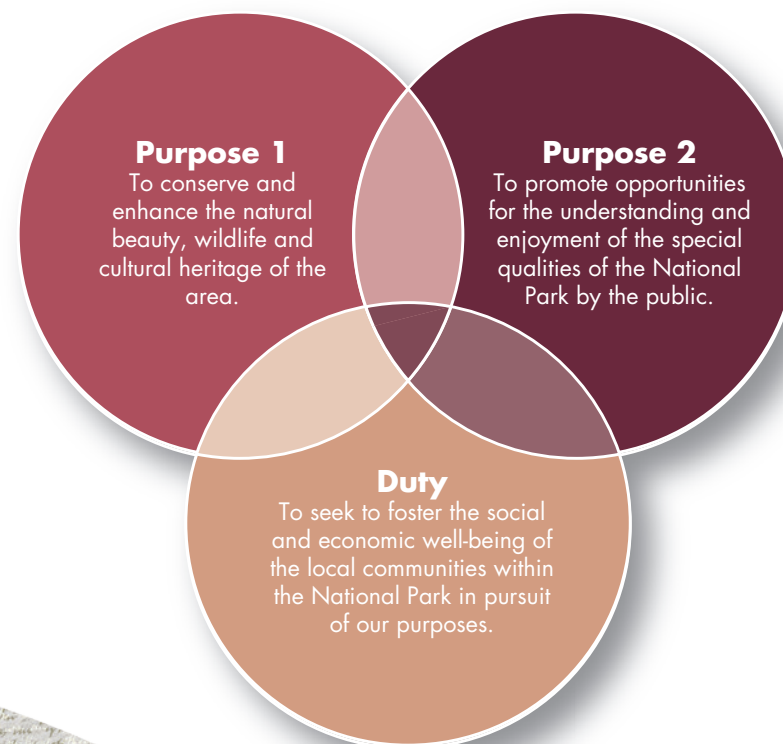


Margaret Paren
Chair

This Annual Review highlights some of our key achievements for 2016/17 which link to the objectives laid out in our 2016–21 Corporate Plan (see southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/key-documents and click on **Corporate Plan 2016–21**)

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 2016/17

144 CHALK GRASSLAND, WOODLAND, HEATHLAND & RIVER SITES

...maintained and enhanced across the National Park



34 KEY SPECIES

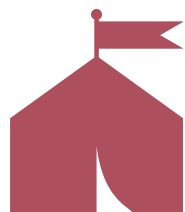
are being monitored



VOLUNTEERING DAYS

supporting National Park work

6,372



62 EVENTS attended

£1.5m
PLANNING
£1,559,216 secured by section 106 agreements

90%
PLANNING APPLICATIONS
(major, minor and other) dealt with within agreed timescales



2,711

SCHOOL CHILDREN

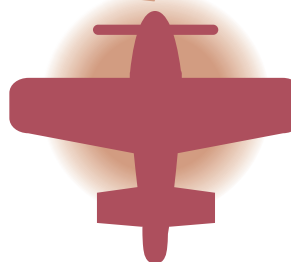
from our more deprived communities visited the National Park thanks to the SDNPA Travel Grant



36 FORESTERS engaged in cultural heritage

2,500

historic features identified by LiDAR DATA



NUMBER OF PARTNERS...

18

...who held events during our Dark Skies festival

Heathlands Reunited
10

...working on Heathlands Reunited

64

...using the National Park shared identity

50 WALKS & RIDES available on ViewRanger



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. Progress against our key objectives as laid out in the Corporate Plan are summarised below:

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Prepare for the submission of the South Downs Local Plan	Work has progressed on the South Downs Local Plan which is on schedule to be published for Pre-Submission consultation in September 2017. The key milestone for the year was the Sites & Settlements informal consultation with the town and parish councils that took place in autumn 2016 on new Local Plan allocations and designations. All revised policies and chapters for the Pre-Submission plan were presented to Members at the Local Plan Members Working Group and the Planning Committee. A draft composite plan was compiled by 31 March 2017 to be assessed by consultants for the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Develop a Green Infrastructure Framework	<p>'Green infrastructure' describes the network of natural spaces and corridors in a given area. Green infrastructure assets include open spaces such as parks and gardens, allotments, woodlands, fields, hedges, lakes, ponds, playing fields and coastal habitats, as well as footpaths, cycle ways and rivers.</p> <p>These assets provide areas for recreation and education, habitats for wildlife and environmental services such as flood defences and absorption of air pollution. We have worked with a range of partners to develop a South Downs Green Infrastructure Framework which will ensure green spaces are incorporated into future development plans. When complete the framework will provide an overarching set of spatial priorities and principles within which other plans, strategies and delivery mechanisms can sit.</p>

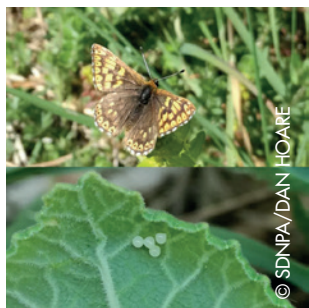
WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Implement agreed Heritage Coast Partnership Action Plan	The Heritage Coast Partnership began implementing the 5 year action plan and have completed the first year of actions as outlined in the Heritage Coast Strategy – southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/sussex-heritage-coast . The partnership has established working groups to take forward specific groups of actions and the adoption of new bylaws has helped to protect the marine zone and introduced an educational area along the sea shore. Partners are also carrying out an audit of interpretation, investigating and mapping archaeology and seeking a sustainable solution to conservation grazing of important chalk grassland.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Work with farm clusters in the South Downs National Park to produce action plans	Across the National Park six farm cluster groups have now been established or are being developed. Covering approximately 60 per cent of the National Park, the purpose of all these clusters is to achieve multiple landscape, habitat and bio-diversity benefits at a landscape scale. The approach is simple, through farmers and landowners working together more can be achieved and sustained than by working individually. The SDNPA plays a role in all six farm clusters; from being the appointed facilitator (Winchester Downs Cluster) to supporting (Arun to Adur Cluster). Although the level of input may differ, our aim and commitment to all the clusters is the same: to enable and facilitate collective partnership working to deliver long-term sustainable benefits that conserve the National Park's special qualities and deliver the outcomes of the <i>Partnership Management Plan</i> .
Secure medium-term funding to continue to develop our aspirations around bigger, better, more joined up heathlands	Funding for the Heathlands Reunited project was secured in 2016. See page 11 for more details on the project's very successful start.

PROJECTS ON THE GROUND

Here are some highlights of work carried out on the ground across the National Park during 2016–17:

CHALK GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT



For over five years we have worked with Butterfly Conservation and the landowner at an important chalk grassland site near Winchester to manage it for the nationally rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly. Returning throughout 2016/17 we have cut back encroaching blackthorn and bramble and carried out surveys which show continued positive results for this stunning species.

CHALK STREAM NATURALISATION



Since 2014 the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (SDVRS) has been working with the Wild Trout Trust to transform the River Meon at East Meon from a concrete channel to a more natural habitat. Early in 2017 volunteers shovelled 16 tonnes of gravel into the river channel, installed oak timber, sourced from sustainably managed local sites, as flow deflectors and helped stabilise the bed materials. These berms will vary the water's speed and depth and in time create a much more natural river system and habitat for brown trout, grey wagtails and egrets.

CHAPEL COMMON



Chapel Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and an open access site. Under an agreement with the landowner, the SDNPA manages the site for conservation, landscape and informal recreation. This year, through the Heathlands Reunited project we have cleared a large tract (approx. four acres) to create bare ground and allow the heather to regenerate. Due to our active, targeted management of the site it has become one of the best sites in West Sussex for the silver studded blue butterfly.

GARBITT'S WOOD STEPS



These new steps enable the pupils of Rogate Primary School to get quickly and safely to Garbitt's Wood, an open access Woodland Trust site right next to the school which they use as an outdoor classroom. Previously the journey involved walking along the A272 and crossing three road junctions. It will now enhance the school's outdoor learning and also improve access for village residents. As well as giving plenty of support to the Parish Council the SDNPA gave £2,585 towards the project, and a further £3,400 was given by the Woodland Trust.

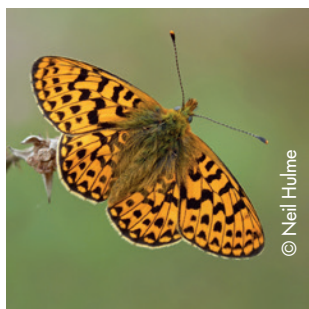
HEDGE LAYING ON THE FOLKINGTON ESTATE



© SDNPA

This year rangers worked with the Folkington Estate to lay around 250 metres of hedge (mainly sycamore) which had been flailed to the same height for many years causing it to develop a gappy base with growth concentrated at the top. Hedges are much more beneficial for wildlife if they are comprised of a range of species and dense from the ground up so that they provide more food, shelter and nesting habitat. Under the expert tuition of local professional hedgelay, Gary Moore, the hedge has now been successfully laid in the Sussex Bullock Fence style and the gaps planted with a range of native shrubs such as hawthorn, hazel and spindle to create a thicker, more species-rich hedge.

REWELL WOOD



© Neil Hulme

After several poor years the regionally endangered pearl bordered fritillary has had an excellent year. This has largely been down to the work undertaken during the winter of 2016 by Butterfly Conservation's Fritillaries for the Future Project Officer, Neil Hulme, the landowner Norfolk Estate and the SDVRS. Numerous coppicing tasks undertaken by the SDVRS, led by SDNPA rangers have generated the ideal conditions by creating open areas where the butterfly's caterpillar food plant, dog violet grows. This area is already being used by the butterfly and is capable of supporting a sizeable colony again.

STEYNING DUKES PROJECT



© Steyning Dukes Project

1,500 primulus plants, a combination of vulgaris and veris (cowslips and primroses), were planted in practically perfect Duke of Burgundy habitat, as a final swan song of the multi partner, HLF-funded Dukes of Steyning project. The seed had been harvested by local volunteers. Once collected they were whisked off for cleaning, sorting and drying at Kew's Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst place, then distributed back to the volunteers for planting.

WART-BITER CRICKET



© DNPA/Matt Dowse

Two surveys to monitor the state of wart-biters were carried out this year – the largest and rarest bush cricket in the UK – on one of its three sites in the eastern end of the National Park (it is only found on five sites nationally). One of these surveys turned up an extremely rare pink morph which hasn't been seen in the UK for over 15 years. A translocation for the species in partnership with Natural England, Buglife and South East Water, was also carried out to establish a new breeding population at Deep Dean in East Sussex. Populations will be monitored every year and the next step is to look strategically at wart-biter conservation, identifying potential sites in the National Park for future reintroductions, working towards the Biodiversity Action Plan goal of having 10 populations nationally.

HEATHLANDS REUNITED – FIRST YEAR



The SDNPA secured £2.37m funding from the Heritage Lottery and partner organisations for a five-year project entitled 'Heathlands Reunited'. This project has been working on re-engaging and inspiring communities to visit their heathlands, learn more about them and work together to look after them so they can be enjoyed for generations to come.

So far we have been setting up the foundations for a number of public engagement activities for the future such as 'Healthy Heath Walks' and John Muir Award leadership training. We have also revamped our Take the Lead campaign which encourages responsible dog walking in the South Downs. This includes a new animation, eight Canine Confession films and promotional material such as a leaflet and window stickers which will be used by partners. Responsible dog walking on heathland sites is crucial for the survival of ground nesting birds as well as walker and dog safety on military sites.

In the first year of this project we have worked on 41 existing heathland sites with staff, contractors and volunteers to ensure that many of the isolated rare plants and animals thrive. Over the winter some 60 hectares of heathland have been recreated and 3 kilometres of heathland corridor has been created to link heathland sites together. We also carried out a very successful 'Secrets of the Heath' event in September 2016, with 2,000 people attending.

To encourage people to help preserve the heaths that were created by our ancestors we have been setting up the foundations for volunteers to become involved in activities such as fixed point photography and becoming dog walking ambassadors, as well as taking part in wildlife monitoring, practical management and heritage monitoring. So far we have 40 volunteers signed up to the project, to find out more and apply to be a volunteer, visit: southdowns.gov.uk/heathlands-reunited.



The Brighton Chalk Block provides public water supplies for Brighton & Hove and beyond to some 365,000 people, as well as base flow to rivers and the marine environment.

The South Downs Collaborative Nitrate Modelling Project identified a need to address rising nitrate levels in the Brighton Chalk Block which is at poor status under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The principal aim of the ChaMP project is to protect and improve the quality of groundwater in the Brighton Chalk, to ensure it remains a sustainable resource for public water supply.

To achieve this, a collaborative approach has been adopted to put into practice integrated catchment management using a range of techniques such as engagement and consensus building, to more specific mitigation and intervention measures. These interventions are being piloted both in the rural and urban environment and will be used to provide practical advice and improvements to land management. Interventions in the rural setting include cover crops, manure management and precision farming trials. In the urban setting the project will deliver advice to land managers on groundwater protection and pollution prevention, urban stakeholder events and practical measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems.

Practical interventions are being supported by other measures to raise public and land-manager awareness of groundwater protection and to inform the evidence base. There is also a need to undertake monitoring to understand which techniques have the greatest benefits.

The project will provide a tool box of intervention techniques that can help restore water quality through land management changes and that can be replicated in other areas across the National Park. The primary concern for the project is groundwater protection. However, the various interventions also have potential to improve soil structure, provide erosion and flooding protection, regulate air quality and climate, secure food provision, improve the urban landscape and increase biodiversity.

Brighton ChaMP

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, and are working with partners to ensure quality access management and accessibility. Progress against our key objectives as laid out in the Corporate Plan are summarised below:

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)	<p>Between April 2016 and March 2017, volunteers carried out 6,372 volunteer days. This is almost the same as last year, with an increase in activity in the Eastern Downs not quite offsetting the reduction in contribution by the Secrets of the High Woods, as the HLF funded project drew to a close.</p>	Have a demonstrable influence on major infrastructure decision making	<p>The SDNPA remains fully engaged with partners such as Highways England, for whom we have prepared advice and evidence in their ongoing major highways schemes on the A27 at Chichester, Arundel, Lancing/ Worthing and east of Lewes towards Polegate. Here we see the SDNP and its special qualities referenced in decisions made and in consultation materials put forward.</p>
	<p>Tasks undertaken by volunteers included scrub clearance on chalk grassland and heathland, coppicing in woodlands, maintaining rights of way, laying hedges, water vole monitoring, surveying water invertebrates, flint walling, project work and administration at the National Park Authority offices. Volunteers work in partnership with a wide range of organisations including the National Trust, Natural England, the Forestry Commission, South-East Water, County and District Councils and smaller local community groups.</p>	Develop and implement projects which add value to the Local Highway Authorities' delivery of their rights of way statutory responsibilities	<p>An example of this is our work at Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve which contains one of the finest yew forests in western Europe including a grove of ancient trees which are among the oldest living things in Britain.</p> <p>In 2016/17, working with Natural England's Reserve Manager and West Sussex County Council's rights of way team, we supported access improvements at either end of the public right of way leading from the car park to the reserve.</p>

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Develop and implement projects which add value to the Local Highway Authorities' delivery of their rights of way statutory responsibilities (continued...)	(continued...) Work included new kissing gates and surface improvements within the reserve, enabling visitors in wheelchairs to access the field museum for the first time. Contacts from the Disabled Ramblers helpfully provided advice on the design of the access furniture and visited the site to test the gates and to explore routes around the open access land.
Target socially deprived communities to enable schools to access outside learning opportunities via the South Downs Travel Grant	The South Downs National Park Travel Grant Scheme targets schools from the 20% most deprived urban communities around the National Park and aims to reduce the main barrier to outdoor learning identified by teachers in our schools survey; the cost of transport.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Target socially deprived communities to enable schools to access outside learning opportunities via the South Downs Travel Grant (continued...)	<p>The Travel Grant enables these schools to have subsidised coach travel to visit one of over 100 outdoor learning providers on the South Downs National Park Learning Map and supports our network approach to connecting schools and learning providers. In 2016/17, 2,711 students from 39 groups have been able to benefit from Learning Outside the Classroom in the SDNP due to the Travel Grant.</p> <p>learning.southdowns.gov.uk/learning/travel-grant for more information.</p>



VIEWRANGER WALKS



Over 50 walks and rides in the South Downs National Park have been made available on ViewRanger, the outdoor discovery app during 2016/17. It is an established and globally used platform, which enables users to search a geographical area for routes, then select and download them for free to a smart phone, tablet and smart watch. All of our routes are identifiable by an SDNP icon making it easier for users to find other routes from our suite of walks and rides.

The user experience is further enhanced by the augmented reality app known as 'Skyline' whereby key points such as hills, lakes and villages can be identified by simply holding the smart device up to the landscape. Skyline helps users explore and gain knowledge of the National Park like never before, displaying key points up to 20 miles away.

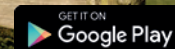
To date, our popular walk and ride leaflets have been reproduced on the digital platform and supplemented by new routes generated by the Access and Ranger teams. Some of the routes are tailored towards specific user groups such as ornithologists and equestrians, whilst others highlight routes which are classed as Access for All trails. In time we intend to add to the

range of routes offering a special experience for everyone from adventurous mountain bikers and hikers, to new cyclists and families with young children.

We aim to make 150 routes available on ViewRanger by 2020 including new route guides such as the South Downs Way by Bus and Train and the Serpent's Trail. We also aim to work with partner organisations and attractions to adapt and incorporate other suitable routes into the SDNP suite.

The South Downs National Park Authority was recently presented with a 2016 Top Publisher Award by ViewRanger. The inaugural awards recognise excellence in digital route guide publishing with the winners judged on the quality of their route guides and creative use of digital publishing.

Download the ViewRanger app and get exploring!.



EMBRACING THE DARK SIDE OF THE DOWNS



In May 2016 the South Downs National Park became the world's newest International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR). With 2 million people living within 5km of the National Park the new reserve will be one of the most accessible in the world. To celebrate and promote the learning opportunities that this presents, the National Park Education Team offered free sessions to primary

schools, introducing the wonders of the National Park's Dark Night Skies. This fascinating subject links learning about nocturnal wildlife, human settlements, light and the solar system, and includes:

- Constellations and wonder;
- Creatures of the night;
- Light pollution: the good, the bad and the ugly; and
- How to be a mini-stargazer.

These sessions captured the imagination of schools and in February and March we ran 12 sessions at eight schools, engaging 265 pupils across Key Stages 1 and 2. Schools included Camelsdale Primary School, Bury CofE Primary School, Fittleworth C.E. Village School, Midhurst CofE Primary School, St. James' CofE Primary School, Petworth Primary School, Hollycombe Primary School and Fernhurst Primary School. In addition we supported a star party at St James' CE Primary School, West Sussex, where the clear night skies gave us great views of planets, constellations and even the International Space Station. This family event marked the culmination of their year 5/6 space topic and was supported by staff from the SDNPA alongside expert astronomers from the South Downs Astronomy Society.

Alongside this primary school engagement, Dark Night Skies fits very well with secondary school subjects including science, engineering, and maths (STEM). We developed a roadshow of Dark Skies engagement activities and took this to STEM-fests at Eastbourne, Winchester and Southampton as well as the Brighton Bright-Sparks event which is part of the Brighton Science Festival. Activities included the giant Dark Skies floor puzzle, Dark Skies badge making and an investigation of nocturnal wildlife. School engagement is planned to continue into 2017–18 with the launch of a Dark Night Skies mini-explorer pack which will accompany the Novium Museum space loan boxes. We are also investigating more family friendly activities for the 2018 Dark Night Skies festival which will provide more opportunities for young people to engage with this exciting subject.

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 development of sustainable tourism and the growth of sustainable local businesses. Progress against our key objectives as laid out in the Corporate Plan are summarised below:

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Work with landowners to create Whole Estate Plans	<p>The majority of land in the South Downs National Park is privately owned, forested and farmed. A Whole Estate Plan (WEP) aims to enable collaboration between individual estates and the National Park Authority to achieve the ambitions of the organisation and the purposes of the National Park, and deliver the <i>Partnership Management Plan</i>.</p> <p>WEPs are a progressive and almost unique approach by a planning authority or National Park Authority in the UK as they look to foster good working relationships to key stakeholders and facilitate better understanding of the issues surrounding sustainable rural estate communities. The Whole Estate Plan is divided into four key areas: Vision; Asset Audit; Ecosystem Services Analysis; Action Plan and projects. From the outset it will be clear that having a WEP will not guarantee planning consent, but a Whole Estate Plan which is endorsed by SDNPA will carry additional material weight.</p>

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Work with landowners to create Whole Estate Plans (continued...)	In 2016–17, 28 different estate representatives attended an SDNPA led workshop about WEPs, and a third of these estates are now well on their way to developing their own integrated Whole Estate Plans. The SDNPA recognises the contribution that the estates make to the purposes of the National Park and the WEPs act as a memorandum of understanding, acknowledging this contribution and providing a strong base for communication, today and into the future.
Increase the number of businesses using the shared identity	We are in the process of promoting the new National Park shared identity with businesses, food producers and tourism bodies. Uptake to date has been positive, with 23 businesses downloading the shared identity resources from our new Communicating the South Downs online hub. One example of a business using the shared identity is Langham Brewery in West Sussex who provide a wide range of locally produced beer and ales.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<p>Work with partners to ensure projects use the shared identity resources</p>	<p>88 projects have used our shared identity resources. These include the visitor exhibition at Winchester City Mill (National Trust) which attracts over 40 thousand visitors each year and interpretation by Brighton and Hove City Council on their downland sites on the edge of Brighton.</p>
<p>Identify opportunities for, and develop, five hubs and gateways over the next five years</p>	<p>Work has been completed on a new gateway for the Weald & Downland Museum. We have also completed our input on the first phase of Petersfield Museum and are contributing to the development of their longer term plans. Work is continuing with the Gilbert White House for a museum relaunch in late spring 2018 and we are also working with Truleigh Hill YHA for launch by summer 2018. Work is also taking place to create information hubs in Lewes, Seaford and Eastbourne Tourist Information Centres.</p>
<p>Set up and manage the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)</p>	<p>On 31 January 2017 the SDNPA formally agreed that the CIL Charging Schedule shall take effect from 1 April 2017 across the entire National Park. CIL money will be used to help deliver key National Park priorities, such as green infrastructure, sustainable transport and education.</p> <p>The SDNPA will be inviting expressions of interest for projects to consider adding to our emerging Infrastructure Business Plan which will help to prioritise how we spend monies collected from CIL across the National Park to support growth in accordance with the Local Plan.</p>



LOCALISM IN A PROTECTED LANDSCAPE

The SDNPA is now involved in 50 Neighbourhood Plans from the very rural such as Patching to the much larger county town of Lewes. The preparation of these plans presents opportunities to get deeply ingrained in issues that matter to local people but they can also raise the potential for conflict, with the views of an organisation such as the National Park here to safeguard the landscape for the nation. This balancing act is a key part of the role of the small team of officers working on these plans.

Take, for example, the need to protect a large industrial estate which offers cheap accommodation in a good location versus the wish of local people for more affordable housing – which should take precedence when the landscape quality means that most other sites are not suitable for development? Through the preparation of viability assessment work, negotiation with the landowner and the Parish, a policy was agreed which allowed for a housing scheme with small business units on site. Even more difficult perhaps is the community who wish to allocate a large site of sensitive and open landscape for housing development due to their determination to provide improved access to their school and allow new



© Anne Kairin Purkiss

residents to be close to services and facilities. As this Plan progresses the SDNPA has to use the expertise of a number of different officers in cooperation with the Neighbourhood Planning Group and the land owner, all with different expertise to ensure that it will be a success.

The SDNPA has a strong desire to deliver locally supported appropriate development and, as a result, this balancing act will continue. Officers now have a wealth of experience and have dealt with many different scenarios. As a result a neighbourhood and community planning consultancy arm to the SDNPA is now up and running and providing support to three other communities outside of the National Park. This work will expand in the future as part of the Authority's income generation work focusing on community planning from consultations to preparing Neighbourhood Plans.



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND

In 2016/17 a total of £36,798 was granted to 13 community-led projects through the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF). An excellent example of how this fund can support local projects is shown in the following case study.

PETWORTH COMMUNITY GARDEN

When Kate Brickell opened her community garden, the activities and attendance grew steadily to the point where the onsite facilities could not cope. Week by week the group and local community pitched in to raise money for and build wheelchair accessible paths, raised beds, childrens' and wildlife gardens, an accessible shed and an accessible composting toilet so that the site could continue to provide for its growing audience. A third plot was also adopted by the group and a polytunnel put up to act as a 'Living Larder' to provide enough food to share with all participants. The site began to strain again and the "off-grid" nature meant that charging batteries for tools and heating water for tea had to be done at Kate's home but lack of light and heating also meant that activity in the winter months was very limited.

Connecting the site to the power grid was not feasible so the group identified solar power as an option and approached the Sustainable Communities Fund with the Sustainable Sunlight Project. The South Downs National Park Authority was impressed with all that had been achieved on the site and offered a grant of £2,874 towards the cost of purchasing and installing a solar power system. Since installation the solar powered system has been over-achieving and provided energy all through the winter. This has meant that the community garden can now operate all year round with indoor space for activity, respite and refreshment when the weather becomes inclement. The improved facilities have seen more people continue to participate throughout the winter months. There are several cases of attendees returning to training and work with the support of the sessions.



OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2016/17

SOUTH DOWNS VIEWSHED STUDY



The South Downs **Viewshed Study** won the Strategic Landscape Planning Award at the **2016 Landscape Institute Awards**.

'Breathtaking views and diverse, inspirational landscapes' are one of the seven Special Qualities of the SDNP which residents, communities and visitors told us about in 2011. We want to protect and conserve these views and others like them so

that future generations can continue to be inspired by them.

In order to help with this the SDNPA commissioned Land Use Consultants to undertake a study of the views in and around the National Park in 2015. The study takes 120 of the most widely known views and landmarks in the National Park and maps them using computer modelling to a 35 kilometre distance. These plots of views are called Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTVs). They are used to help assess and understand the impact of visible change in the views.

Among the innovative tools available is a Google Earth virtual flight over the National Park with additional layers that provide detailed research about the landscapes. It is also possible to look at selected views as 360 degree panoramic photos.

The Viewshed Study will form part of the landscape evidence base for the South Downs National Park Local Plan and we are already using it to consider how proposed changes in land use might impact our landscapes when deciding planning applications.

EGRETS WAY EXTENSION



In May 2016, 1.5 miles of new and improved paths opened in the Lower Ouse Valley as the next phase of Egrets Way. Works included a new one mile long section from Southease Bridge to Deans Farm in Piddinghoe which connects the South Downs Way with the rights of way network north of Piddinghoe village, providing a link to Peacehaven. The SDNPA is grateful to the many

landowners that have supported the development of the Egrets Way to date and continue to share the aspiration and support the work of the Ouse Valley Cycle Network to provide a safe multi-user path between Lewes and Newhaven.

SETTING UP THE SOUTH DOWNS TRUST



The March National Park Authority meeting marked a major milestone in the development of our National Park through the approval of our independent charitable trust. The Trust will help to increase the National Park's profile and will be able to access many new sources of funding in support of the Partnership Management Plan. The next step is to seek the approval of the Charity

Commission and put our fundraising strategy into action. This work is ongoing and will be completed over the course of 2017.

INCREASE CONNECTIVITY ON THE CENTURION WAY



The Centurion Way shared-use path extension from Binderton to West Dean, developed by the National Park Authority in 2015, is averaging more than 500 users per week and user volumes to the south of the extension have increased by 11 per cent in 2016.

New access steps, incorporating a ramp to enable cycles to be wheeled to and from the path have been installed at West Dean. The new access provides path users with direct access to village amenities including tea rooms, stores, the public house and primary school, and enables onward journeys to West Dean College, the Weald and Downland Museum and other northerly destinations. The direct access to Centurion Way also provides the West Dean community and users from the north with southerly access to Lavant, Chichester and onward connectivity to Chichester Harbour and the coast via Salterns Way. The National Park Authority is currently undertaking feasibility and design work to extend the multi-user path to the South Downs Way and Cocking with funding secured from the Local Growth Fund, administered by the Coast-2-Capital Local Enterprise Partnership.

LOOKING FORWARD...

Here are just a few examples of work we will be involved in during 2017/18...

- Launching the new South Downs National Park Trust.
- Putting the Local Plan out for consultation in September 2017.
- Increasing the number of our Miles without Stiles online leaflets.
- Holding the first SDNP Health and Well-being conference at the South Downs Centre in Midhurst on 11 October 2017.
- Approving the South Downs Green Infrastructure Framework in 2018.
- Developing visitor hubs and gateways at the Petersfield Museum, Gilbert White's House and Truleigh YHA using the shared identity.
- Taking a number of completed Whole Estate Plans to committee for approval.

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 2016–17 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) received a grant totalling around £9.9 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 2016–17 the SDNPA received income of just over £2.2 million through planning activities.

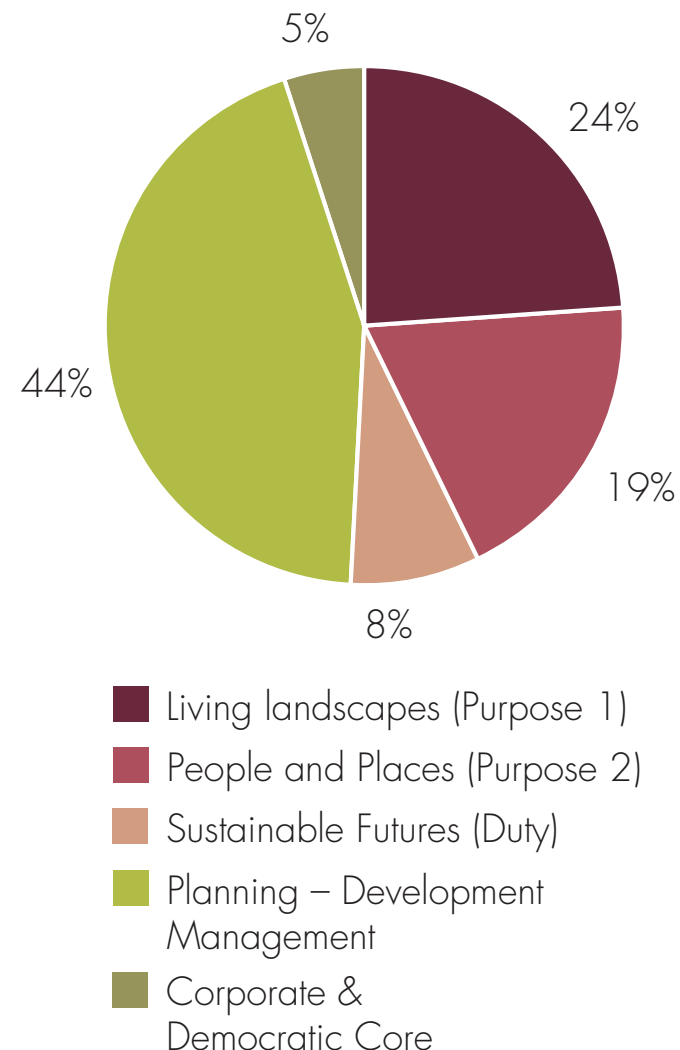
The SDNPA was also successful in attracting significant funding for projects to deliver the Partnership Management Plan. During 2016–17 the SDNPA received £988,000 of income through specific grants in addition to funds secured by other partners to deliver work in the National Park.

In total the income received by the SDNPA in 2016–17 was just over £13 million.

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 2016–17



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 2016–21**

