

# Secrets of the High Woods 2013 - 2017

## PROJECT EVALUATION

June 2017

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## CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>P4</b>
<b>2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>P5</b>
2.1 ACTIVITY	P5
2.2 PROJECT SUCCESSES	P6
2.3 PROJECT CHALLENGES	P7
2.4 RECOMMENDATIONS	P9
<b>3. SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS – ACTIVITY</b>	<b>P12</b>
<b>3.1 LIDAR MAPPING AND CULTURAL HERITAGE INTERPRETATION (I)</b>	<b>P12</b>
3.2 Project Volunteers (i)	P14
3.2 Project Volunteers (ii)	P16
3.3 Public Engagement (i)	P17
3.3 Public Engagement (ii)	P18
3.3 Public Engagement (iii)	P19
3.3 Public Engagement (iv)	P21
3.3 Public Engagement (v)	P22
3.4 Formal Learning (i)	P24
3.4 Formal Learning (ii)	P25
3.4 The Development Of Guidance And Best Practice (i)	P26
<b>4. PROJECT SUCCESSES</b>	<b>P28</b>
<b>4.1 LIDAR MAPPING AND NEW CULTURAL HERITAGE UNDERSTANDING</b>	<b>P28</b>
4.1.1 Effective Planning from the Outset	P28
4.1.2 Adopting an Ambitious Approach	P28
<b>4.2 VOLUNTEERING</b>	<b>P30</b>
4.2.1 The Scale and Appeal of Volunteering	P30
4.2.2 The Impact of Volunteering	P30
4.2.3 Improvements to the Volunteer Ranger Service (VRS) Induction	P32
4.2.4 Volunteering Legacy	P32
<b>4.3 CONTENT CREATION</b>	<b>P32</b>
4.3.1 Archival Research	P32
4.3.2 Oral History Research	P33
<b>4.4 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>P33</b>
4.4.1 Secrets Of The High Woods Exhibition	P33
4.4.2 Secrets Of The High Woods – Revealing Hidden Landscapes Book	P34
<b>4.5 A LEGACY OF NEW PRACTICE AND UNDERSTANDING</b>	<b>P34</b>
4.5.1 New Governance and Oversight Structures	P35
4.5.2 Greater Inter-Departmental Cooperation	P35



<b>5. PROJECT CHALLENGES</b>	<b>P37</b>
<b>5.1 TECHNICAL CHALLENGES</b>	<b>P37</b>
<b>5.2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES</b>	<b>P37</b>
5.2.1 Project Team Structure	P37
5.2.2 Integration and Alignment into NPA Resources	P38
5.2.3 Project Governance and Oversight	P38
5.2.4 The Impact of Staff Churn and NPA Restructures	P39
5.2.5 Workload Management	P40
5.2.6 Volunteer Management and Fulfilment	P40
5.2.7 Incorporating Specialist Project Roles	P41
5.2.8 Knowledge Retention	P42
5.2.9 Financial Management	P42
<b>5.3 COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES</b>	<b>P43</b>
5.3.1 Delivering the Public Programme	P43
5.3.2 Communicating and Marketing the Public Programme	P43
5.3.3 Creating A Holistic Approach to Communications	P45
<b>5.4 LEGACY CHALLENGES</b>	<b>P46</b>
5.4.1 Developing and Maintaining Partnerships	P46
5.4.2 Ensuring Maximum Longitudinal Impact	P46
<b>6. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>P48</b>
<b>6.1 USING NEW TECHNOLOGIES</b>	<b>P48</b>
<b>6.2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>P48</b>
6.2.1 Enhance Project Management Skills and Capacity at SDNPA	P48
6.2.2 Ensure Appropriate Project Team Skills and Experience	P48
6.2.3 Project Team Composition	P49
6.2.4 Integration into the NPA Staff Team	P49
6.2.5 Adopt the Product Development Cycle	P50
6.2.6 Use Evaluation as a Driver for Improvement	P51
6.2.7 Continue To Develop Project Governance and Oversight	P51
6.2.8 Improve Workload Management	P52
6.2.9 Develop Financial Management Processes	P52
6.2.10 Develop the Volunteer Offer	P52
6.2.11 Maximise Volunteer Potential	P53
<b>6.3 COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>P53</b>
6.3.1 Ensure Effective Internal Communications	P53
6.3.2 Ensure Effective Event / Exhibition Management	P54
6.3.2 Build Digital Prominence	P54



<b>6.4 BUILDING LEGACY</b>	<b>P55</b>
6.4.1 Build SDNPA Capacity and Capabilities	P55
6.4.2 Ensuring Legacy	P55
<b>7. APPENDICES</b>	<b>P56</b>
<b>7.1 VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME EVALUATION – SUMMARY EXTRACT</b>	<b>P56</b>
<b>7.2 AUDIENCE EXHIBITION FEEDBACK QUESTIONS</b>	<b>P58</b>
<b>7.3 CONTRIBUTOR LIST</b>	<b>P59</b>



## 1. INTRODUCTION

This short document provides a summative overview of the Secrets of the High Woods project. It focuses upon key achievements and explores what lessons can be learned and how these might be best applied to future large scale multi-partner projects within the South Downs National Park.

The Secrets of the High Woods (SHW) was a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funded project led by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) in partnership with Chichester District Council and Historic England that ran for three years between 2014 and 2017.

The project uncovered the archaeology and history of a heavily wooded part of the South Downs that runs from the river Arun to the A3 road. Archaeological sites that were difficult to see were revealed using LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) – a method that uses a laser to scan the landscape from an aircraft flying overhead. LiDAR is capable of providing data that when processed removes trees and foliage to reveal the ground beneath.

Over three years more than 200 volunteers were recruited to work on the project. Many worked in the SHW project area *ground truthing* various locations of interest identified by the LiDAR survey – verifying and classifying landscape features; a number undertook archival research – examining historical maps and documents to help inform the interpretation of key sites; some volunteers collected oral histories – meeting with local residents to record their stories about how the SHW landscape had changed during their life time.

The LiDAR data and subsequent work by volunteers created a mass of new information and knowledge. This was used as the basis of the public engagement element of the project. A wide range of new resources were created including a touring exhibition that visited locations bordering the SHW area; a book containing new research about the cultural heritage of the South Downs; an education programme aimed at young people; and a series of walks and trails.

The following pages outline the project achievements and the challenges faced throughout the three years. There are certainly lessons to be learned but what was clear throughout was the genuine interest and passion people have for their local historic landscape; and in particular how the SHW project acted as a prism helping people to relate to earlier generations that inhabited this part of Sussex.

Shaun Romain – Project Evaluator.



## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This brief summary outlines the key observations and recommendations in relation to each of the following chapters.

### 2.1 ACTIVITY

- 2,298 sites were identified of which almost three-quarters were not previously recorded in the county-held Historic Environment Record databases or the National Record for the Historic Environment.
- All data was added to the relevant HERs. (Chichester District; East Sussex County; Hampshire County; West Sussex County; Winchester City).
- 203 volunteers were recruited, with well over half being active contributors throughout the life of the project. This far exceeded the original target of 71 volunteers.
- They undertook 73 ground truthing sessions, equivalent to a contribution of 530 days.
- 26 volunteers were trained as archival researchers, 5 volunteers were trained as oral historians.
- Volunteers produced 15 articles, three more than originally envisaged and they collected 52 interviews with people that had lived or now live within the Secrets of the High Woods area. This far exceeded the original target of 20.
- The exhibition travelled across the South Downs National Park and to nearby locations over a 158 day period usually spending between 2 - 4 weeks at each venue: Arundel Museum; Weald & Downland Museum; Butser Ancient Farm; Fishbourne Roman Palace; Petersfield Museum; Portsmouth City Museum; Worthing Museum; QE Country Park; Haslemere Museum; West Sussex Record Office.
- Audience feedback was very positive, scoring 8.9 or above (out of 10) when visitors were asked to rate the exhibition against a set of pre-defined statements.
- The *Secrets of the High Woods – Revealing Hidden Landscapes* book that accompanied the exhibition had 40 contributors of new research and interpretation of the area including professional archaeologists, project team members and volunteers.
- 500 hard copies were printed; many gifted to volunteers; all remaining copies have either been sold or donated to local library collections.
- 34 volunteers participated in 2 excavations working with the professional archaeologists supplied by Cotswold Archaeology. Whiteways had its own public open day. Unfortunately due to security concerns at the Goodwood Estate the East Dean dig didn't have an open day.
- In all 38 people attended the Whiteways event – somewhat short of the target figure of 200.
- Six two hour Archaeological Finds Workshops were hosted by project partners.
- It was originally hoped that these six workshops would attract 120 participants, they attracted just over half this number.

- Archaeology Activity Days were planned at each venue; families could participate in hands-on archaeology themed activities free of charge.
- 6 activity days were held at Arundel Museum, Weald and Downland Museum, Butser Ancient Farm, Fishbourne Roman Palace and Secrets of the Heath (HLF Project); with two planned activity days at Worthing Museum and Queen Elizabeth Country Park replaced with Finds Workshops.
- Archaeological Outreach Sessions – 52 people from Parkinson groups based in Midhurst and Bognor Regis and an Alzhiemers group in Chichester took part in these sessions – 22 more than the target in the original activity plan.
- SHW aimed to deliver a series of 6 guided walks. Activity was lower than envisaged. There were two guided walks through Stansted Forest in March 2017 attracting a total of 14 participants.
- The Hidden Past Festival – hosted by Portsmouth City Museum for a day during August 2016 attracted approximately 200 visitors; far less than the original target of 2,500.
- 41 Public Presentations – 17 by volunteers and partners; 24 by the project team.
- These talks and presentations received almost 1,000 attendances.
- The end of project conference in September 2016 was attended by 150 delegates including landowners, local government staff, academics, curators, volunteers, archaeologists, social historians and SDNPA staff.
- Working with *Past Participants* SHW created a range of school centred educational resources that focus upon two key stages – KS2 (7 to 11) and KS4 (14 to 16).
- New guidance was produced and launched March 2017 at an event attended by 36 local forestry workers and land managers.

## 2.2 PROJECT SUCCESSES

- The project team worked with English Heritage to write the technical specification and sought advice from the New Forest National Park Authority as they had previously commissioned two LiDAR surveys.
- From the outset the use of the LiDAR data was very ambitious. The Secrets of the High Woods project adopted a number of innovative approaches.
- The LiDAR archaeological mapping demonstrated what archaeologists had long thought – that the known sites were part of a much wider archaeological landscape.
- The volunteering element of the project was very strong – demonstrating the value of cultural heritage to a range of different people. Elements such as archival research and oral histories proved particularly attractive to people experiencing restricted mobility and for those with a historical or sociological rather than a biodiversity or environmental interest in the landscape.
- One of the key aspirations of the volunteering element of the project was to test whether it could enhance people's perceptions of their own state of health and well-



- being. For each of the metrics tested volunteers scored on average more than 7.0 out of 10.0. The year one overall average score of 7.8 (across all metrics) grew by 0.3, an increase of just under 4%, by the end of the project.
- One of the most tangible legacy outcomes of SHW is the establishment by 47 project volunteers of the Cultural Heritage Volunteer Group.
- This was the first-time the SDNPA had created and toured an exhibition to multiple partner venues. The response from partners and the public was extremely positive.
- Secrets of the High Woods was shortlisted in the Landscapes, Forests, Nature Reserves, Parks and Gardens category of the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI) 2017 Discover Heritage Awards ( *for excellence in cultural and natural heritage interpretation in Britain and Ireland*).
- A set of new robust governance structures are one of the key legacies of this project. *Heathlands Reunited* is benefitting from these which ensure the project keeps on track, that it reflects the NPA's pertinent priorities and importantly remains closely tied into corporate processes and procedures.
- While inter-departmental working has not developed as rapidly as governance it has made important progress compared to 2014 when SHW started.
- Importantly, the NPA now has continuity in the form of a small number of permanent staff that have been involved with both projects. This allows for greater knowledge transfer and reduces the risks associated with an all contract project team.

### 2.3. PROJECT CHALLENGES

- It is important to note that this project achieved a considerable amount, but there are certainly a number of key lessons to be learned, some of which have already been adopted and applied by SDNPA in their current *Heathlands Reunited* project.
- The key challenge faced in relation to LiDAR and subsequent data analysis centred upon the ambition to blend a number of untried but potentially beneficial platforms and methodologies.
- This phase significantly overran its allocated budget, illustrating the risks associated with developing new technology and associated practices in a live setting. That said, the achievements were significant and were proof of the principle that live data exchange is possible and that fieldworkers and analysts can enter into a profitable dialogue that enhances both data currency and its accuracy.
- SHW was clearly a complex and multi-faceted project that required a range of skills and experience to successfully deliver the ambitious activity plan. The structure of the project team in relation to its composition and shape reflected a series of compromises from the outset. These inherent weaknesses had a lasting impact upon the project.
- SDNPA was in its infancy when it started SHW. It was the first time it had undertaken a volunteering and public engagement project of this size and complexity and consequently chose to rely upon contracted staff to deliver SHW. Integration was a challenge for the organisation – a range of SDNPA departments and staff were required



to support the project team, but the mechanics to make this happen had not been formalised prior to the launch of the project. This led to significant time and resource pressures being placed upon the project team and the project becoming siloed during its first year.

- Arguably the Project Team, the Steering Group and SDNPA management lost track of the overall programme focus for SHW towards the end of year one (spring 2015) until it was taken back in-house during the summer of 2016.
- It is unclear as to where exactly checks and balances existed in the first half of the project, or where responsibility sat outside of the project team.
- There are numerous examples of early decisions that continued to negatively impact upon the project as it progressed.
- With no permanent staff involved directly in project delivery this left SDNPA vulnerable to contract staff moving onto new opportunities during the life of the project. This is indeed what happened.
- SDNPA struggled to free-up permanent staff with the requisite skills and knowledge to delivery this type of project. The loss of the contract staff created a very significant challenge for the NPA, which led to an inevitable loss of momentum over time, as permanent staff were required to pick up the workload towards the end of the project.
- A severe strain was placed upon the project team and their delivery systems – in particular volunteer management and communication. This in turn had a knock-on impact upon day-to-day management and later the delivery of public facing elements of the programme such the broader engagement activities aimed at a range of different communities.
- Volunteer over-subscription affected the project team’s ability to consistently communicate with all participants – exacerbated by the systems being employed (designed to be used with smaller numbers and less complex projects).
- Records of expenditure and reconciliation against specific budget codes were impossible to achieve once a financial year had passed.
- Many of the problems were due to the absence of a recognised fit-for-purpose financial management system coupled with a lack of consistency due to having three project managers during the life of the project.
- The short lead time due to an over emphasis upon fieldwork meant little was produced in the way of marketing materials and very little resource was allocated for promotion and marketing.
- SDNPA’s restrictions on the use of social media combined with minimal promotional activity by tour partners led to small number of intentional attendees.
- SDNPA’s CRM database lacks currency and was missing many essential contacts including exhibitors, craftspeople, performers, musicians and food producers – all essential when curating public events.
- Currently there appears to be only a few ways by which the public can establish a digital relationship with the NPA.
- Social media covers a broad spectrum of subject matter, very little of it appears to be



targeted in ways that appeal to particular audience groups. The lack of dedicated project feeds make specific output often difficult to identify and the absence of prominent shared spaces for co-production and debate ensure a distance between the people and the National Park Authority.

- In terms of longitudinal legacy there are a number of key challenges the NPA faces:
  - Firstly, the vast amount of LiDAR data created has been deposited in local HERs and the National Mapping Project database. The question remains what are the plans for this information? How will it be effectively signposted and what legacy resources have been allocated for this activity?
  - Secondly, SHW has created a sizeable number of Cultural Heritage volunteers. A group of these has already organised itself into a separate entity. What is the NPA's strategy in terms of volunteering across the National Park and how best can this be effectively and equitably realised?
  - Thirdly, what role will Cultural Heritage play in any future offer of the SDNPA? DEFRA is encouraging NPAs to focus on raising levels of engagement with the countryside and increasing the diversity of participant. Where does Cultural Heritage fit in relation to this?
- Finally if SDNPA is to continue developing its Cultural Heritage offer there will need to be an upskilling and upscaling in terms of permanent staff capabilities and competencies. Only a small number have the requisite skills and arguably no-one currently has the necessary experience to design and deliver a project such as SHW.
- A collegiate approach across departments may be a future solution but with very little archaeological expertise in-house this may prove problematic. There is a real risk that potential Cultural Heritage projects may lose out to other types of public engagement if this area lacks a champion in a decision making role.

## 2.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Part of any future planning and project scoping phase should contain a risk assessment with mitigation strategies where appropriate to reduce critical systems failures and identify additional cost and resource implication.
- It is clear that the adoption of a universal project management system (such as Asana or Prince2 etc.) would make a significant difference.
- In-house departments and staff should always play a central role in future project design and delivery. Ensuring that funded projects are effectively incorporated into SDNPA's day-to-day activity and not siloed.
- It is essential that future project teams contain people with the requisite skills and experience to successfully deliver the programme.
- SDNPA should expect to pay considerably more if it wishes to attract contract staff of suitable quality and experience, or alternatively offer a bonus based upon performance – this should be factored into future budgets and bids.



- Future projects would benefit from much greater administrative support, particularly with regard to volunteer management; promotion and communication; event fulfilment; and any form of production – digital, exhibition, publication etc.
- Involve all relevant departments in the creation of future public engagement projects in order to draw upon their expertise, to guarantee buy-in and future commitment, and to ensure prioritisation of resources at the right time.
- Adopt the tried and tested Development Cycle which will help to re-vision how the NPA engages with audiences and develops new content. The Development Cycle helps to encourage thinking and acting in an audience-focused way by delivering activity and communication using a planned and targeted approach. This provides SDNPA with an overarching framework by which to deliver a new and innovative approach to learning and engagement content development.
- Use evaluation as a driver for improvement.
- Attract a small number of external experts to contribute to the quarterly project steering meetings etc.
- Continue to develop public engagement systems at the NPA and upskill staff to be proficient in their use.
  - Digital communication and engagement is both time and cost effective as much can be automated – spreading effort over time.
  - The adoption of project management software will save time, increase efficiency, potentially spread the workload, and reduce risks associated with staff churn.
  - Ensure any project management systems are universally adopted across the NPA and aren't exclusive to the project team.
- Urgently review current financial systems and procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- Continue to actively explore how best to develop cultural heritage volunteer opportunities, either as part of a SDNPA programme or through partnership projects.
- All future projects should integrate NPA Comms staff into the wider project team.
- It's essential to ensure adequate planning and development time for all types of event. At least six months, longer for larger events is preferable.
- The Hidden Past Festival was programmed and delivered in just over 3 months leaving little time to curate the content and subsequently promote the event. The result was an eclectic mix in terms of quality and relevance with visitor numbers proving far smaller than originally envisaged.
- Digital output should be part of a holistic audience development plan that creates numerous touching points between the project and its potential audience.
- To achieve this there should be greater emphasis on project long digital engagement with podcast content (talking heads / vox pops); volunteer and expert blogging; active links to other content and projects; public fora for debate and discussion (Facebook,

Twitter, Reddit etc.); active use of imagery and video (Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Flickr etc.).

- The current SDNPA website design and content has limited appeal, and the SHW pages are difficult to navigate and have no links to relevant social media channels. SDNPA should look to provide a more stimulating digital experience that incorporates user content and champions discussion, debate and the sharing of ideas, images and video rather than being a one-way (broadcast) channel.
- When planning future projects start with the legacy the NPA wishes to achieve and work backwards. This will ensure the alignment of one-off projects with corporate priorities and a closer fit to other planned programmes.



### 3. SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS – ACTIVITY

Section three of this report focuses upon the key outputs for each strand of the project.

These are:

- LiDAR Mapping And Cultural Heritage Interpretation
- Project Volunteers
- Public Engagement
- Formal Learning
- The Development of Guidance and Best Practice

Each strand and associated activity relates to the original stage 2 plan submitted to HLF. The commentary outlines the volume of activity and how this relates to original targets; notable variations and accompanying explanations where relevant.

#### 3.1 LiDAR MAPPING AND CULTURAL HERITAGE INTERPRETATION (i)

##### **Lidar Study (Survey and Analysis)**

- The project team worked with English Heritage to write the technical specification and sought advice from the New Forest National Park Authority as they had previously commissioned two LiDAR surveys.
- The appointed contractor was Fugro Geospatial ([www.fugro.com](http://www.fugro.com)).

##### **Interpretation of the LiDAR data for the National Mapping Project**

- Undertaken by Historic England and the Cornwall Archaeological Unit
- 2,298 sites were identified of which almost three-quarters were not previously recorded in the county-held Historic Environment Record databases or the National Record for the Historic Environment

##### **Identification of sites for further investigation**

- The extremely high LiDAR data granularity was central to fieldworkers' ability to find and interpret numerous landscape features.
- 6 field work reports completed by volunteers
- 2 sites identified for Community Archaeology Digs
- To view reports go to:  
[www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/fieldwork-with-secrets-of-the-high-woods/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/fieldwork-with-secrets-of-the-high-woods/)

##### **Incorporation into the Historic Environment Record and GIS systems**

- All data was added to the relevant HERs. (Chichester District; East Sussex County; Hampshire County; West Sussex County; Winchester City).
- To find out more go to:  
<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/historic-environment-records/>





### 3.2 PROJECT VOLUNTEERS (i)

#### Recruiting project volunteers

- 203 volunteers were recruited, with well over half being active contributors throughout the life of the project.
  - 108 Field workers
  - 26 Archival researchers
  - 15 Oral historians
  - 11 Exhibition stewards
- This far exceeded the original target of 71 volunteers.

#### Creating a new Cultural Heritage volunteer training module

- As a result of volunteer feedback a new revised version of the Volunteer Ranger Service induction was fashioned with an enhanced Cultural Heritage component.

#### Providing essential equipment for fieldwork, archival research and oral history recording and editing

- SHW has provided the opportunity for the SDNPA to acquire a range of different types of equipment ranging from tablets to cameras and recording software that will be made available to future volunteers involved in Cultural Heritage projects across the National Park.

The training and support provided by SHW was comprehensive and included:

Groundtruthing and fieldwork practice (theoretical and practical)

#### Delivering volunteer training and creating supporting guidance

- 12 volunteers passed St Johns Ambulance First Aid
- Archival research (20 volunteers received Paleography and 19 GIS training; all underwent an induction into research best practice)
- Research best practice (including twelve 2 hour sessions in the use of West Sussex Record Office and other archival sources, delivered by West Sussex Record Office)
- A programme of expert talks (open to all volunteers and SDNPA staff) that included:
  - Place Names (Prof. Richard Coates, UoWE)
  - Military Archaeology of South Downs (Chris Butler, Sussex School of Archaeology)
  - Medieval Deer Parks (Dr Amanda Richardson, University of Chichester)
  - Biodiversity of the High Woods (Henri Brocklebank, Sussex Wildlife Trust)
  - Iron Age and Romans (James Kenny, Chichester District Council)
  - Literary map of the South Downs (Prof. Simon Barker University of Chichester)
  - Overview (Tony Mobbs, VRS Committee)
- Finds training with 38 volunteers (undertaken at the two Community Archaeology Digs by Cotswold Archaeology )
- 13 volunteers trained mid-project as Team Leaders





### 3.2 PROJECT VOLUNTEERS (ii)

#### Delivering volunteer training and creating supporting guidance (cont)

A small number of planned activities didn't materialise:

- Training originally planned to be delivered by West Sussex Library Service into the use of local history collections

#### Volunteer Fieldwork Sessions

- 73 day-long sessions far in excess of the original planned figure
- Equivalent to a total of 530 days contributed
- On average 7.3 days given by each volunteer

#### Archival Research

- 26 volunteers were trained as archival researchers.
- Five structured sessions at the South Downs Centre between May and August 2016 exploring and sharing various local history collections and archives.
- Volunteers produced 15 articles, three more than originally envisaged.
- The results of the archival research undertaken by volunteers can be found at:  
[www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/research/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/research/)

A small number of planned archive related activities didn't materialise:

- Research into other archives, potentially including West Dean Estate, Petworth House, East Sussex Record Office, Arundel Castle and Winchester Record Office resulted in a visit to Arundel Castle and Hampshire Record Office only.

#### Oral Histories

- 15 volunteers were trained as oral historians by Gillian Edom. This was over twice as many as in the project plan.
- They collected 52 interviews with people that had lived or now live within the Secrets of the High Woods area. This far exceeded the original target of 20.
- Their clips were integrated into the project film and 24 individual contributions were used as the content for the exhibition listening tree.
- Three in-depth interviews are also available to listen to on the Oral History page of the project website as is montage with 24 individual contributions. To find out more go to:  
[www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods)
- All of the Oral History recordings have been deposited with West Sussex Record Office ([www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-community/history-and-heritage/westsussex-record-office/](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-community/history-and-heritage/westsussex-record-office/)).

## Exhibition Stewarding

- 11 volunteers also helped to steward the exhibition as it toured venues in and around the SHW's area.

### 3.3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (i)

#### The Touring Exhibition

- The exhibition travelled across the South Downs National Park and to nearby locations over a 158 day period usually spending between 2 - 4 weeks at each venue:
  - Arundel Museum June 2016
  - Weald & Downland Museum July 2016
  - Butser Ancient Farm July 2016
  - Fishbourne Roman Palace August 2016
  - Petersfield Museum August / September 2016
  - Portsmouth City Museum August / September 2016
  - Worthing Museum October 2016
  - QE Country Park November 2016
  - Haslemere Museum January / February 2017
  - West Sussex Record Office February / March 2017
- Audience feedback was very positive, scoring 8.9 or above (out of 10) when visitors were asked to rate the exhibition against a set of pre-defined statements.
- Unfortunately due to a number of coalescing factors (staff illness; delays in starting this element of the programme; limited resources allocated for evaluation and data collection etc.) visit numbers were not collected. While it is impossible to provide a total figure, the overall attendance numbers were (anecdotally) lower than originally envisaged.

#### Exhibition Design

- Jam designed an 'AR'chaeology table with pull out drawers and images about specific sites which triggered animated content via an augmented reality app on tethered tablets. A map of the project area across the top of the table triggered an AR animation of the LiDAR plane surveying the area and revealing a patchwork of point cloud data in its wake.
- To see examples of the CGI go to:
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gucwxe5uuzM&t=205s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gucwxe5uuzM&t=205s)
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH-XT4IzBI4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH-XT4IzBI4)
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=oENFZV8v1\\_k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oENFZV8v1_k)
- A mobile app containing the AR and CGI content was created to allow visitors to take parts of the exhibition away with them.
- A couple of short explanatory films were also commissioned:
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pr1wZrNh1C8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pr1wZrNh1C8)
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVIq9V-0CY4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVIq9V-0CY4)
- A 'listening tree' incorporated a touch screen app playing excerpts from oral history recordings and photographs that had been commissioned for the project.
- To watch the 20 minute film that describes the 'project journey' go to: [jamcreativestudios.com/SOTHW-Project-Film/](http://jamcreativestudios.com/SOTHW-Project-Film/)

### 3.3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (ii)

#### Exhibition Design (cont)

- Secrets of the High Woods was shortlisted in the Landscapes, Forests, Nature Reserves, Parks and Gardens category of the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI) 2017 Discover Heritage Awards.

#### Secrets of the High Woods – Revealing Hidden Landscapes book

- The book is a celebration of the Secrets of the High Woods project. It explores the hidden archaeological and historic landscape and recalls how groups of dedicated people searched the archives, interviewed residents and local workers and battled through the understory to track down the elusive and hitherto unknown monuments.
- This book is as much about those people as it is about what they found. 40 people contributed new research and interpretation of the area including professional archaeologists, project team members and volunteers.
- The book was launched at West Dean in November 2016 at an event attended by 80 people including 44 volunteers.
- 500 hard copies were printed; many gifted to volunteers as a thank you for all of their efforts; all remaining copies have either been sold or donated to local library collections.
- The book is available as an interactive Pdf at: [www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/project-book/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/project-book/)

#### Community Excavations

- As originally planned two digs were undertaken – one at Whiteways, the other at East Dean.
- Cotswold Archaeology was awarded the tender to undertake this element of the project (<http://www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk>).
- 34 volunteers participated in 2 excavations working with the professional archaeologists supplied by Cotswold Archaeology.
- Whiteways had its own public open day. Unfortunately due to security concerns at the Goodwood Estate the East Dean dig didn't have an open day.
- In all 38 people attended the Whiteways event – somewhat short of the target figure of 200.

#### Archaeological Finds Workshops

- Six two hour Archaeological Finds Workshops (aimed at people with an interest in archaeology) were hosted by a number of project partners.
- Two were held at Rother College in Midhurst; one at the West Sussex Records Office; Haslemere Museum; Queen Elizabeth Country Park; and Worthing Museum.
- It was originally hoped that these six workshops would attract 120 participants, they attracted just over half this number.



### 3.3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (iii)

#### Archaeology Activity Days

- As part of the exhibition programme, Archaeology Activity Days were planned at each venue; families could participate in hands-on archaeology themed activities free of charge.
- It was originally hoped that there would be 8 days of activity, one at each host venue.
- 6 activity days were held at Arundel Museum, Weald and Downland Museum, Butser Ancient Farm, Fishbourne Roman Palace and Secrets of the Heath (HLF Project).
- Two planned activity days at Worthing Museum and Queen Elizabeth Country Park were replaced with Finds Workshops.
- A dozen different activities were designed and delivered including: Making and excavating an ancient poo; a Secrets of the High Woods “top trumps” game; and the exploration of a Modern Midden (rubbish heap).
- The Archaeology Activity Days aimed to engage with 800 participants, while exact figures are not known; anecdotally there is an acceptance that the actual figure was far lower.

#### Archaeological Outreach Sessions

- This element of the programme was specifically aimed at community groups and people with specific health or learning needs.
- 52 people from Parkinson groups based in Midhurst and Bognor Regis and an Alzhiemers group in Chichester took part in these sessions – 22 more than the target in the original activity plan.

#### Guided Walks

- SHW aimed to deliver a series of 6 guided walks exploring the archaeology of the survey area with 20 spaces available on each walk.
- Activity was lower than envisaged. There were two guided walks through Stansted Forest in March 2017 attracting a total of 14 participants.
- Three walking trail leaflets are now available in print and online via the project website – focused upon Stansted Forest; Trundle; and Kingley Vale. These can be found at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/walking/>

#### The Hidden Past Festival

- This was one-day event in August 2016 hosted by Portsmouth City Museum.
- It had a varied programme of entertainment and activities.
- Attracting approximately 200 visitors; far less than the original target of 2,500.





### 3.3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (iv)

#### Adult Education Lectures

- The ambitions for this element of the public engagement programme were considerably exceeded. Originally it was planned that 6 lectures be given to local groups and societies and 24 bite-sized talks be presented in support of the touring exhibition programme.
- By the end of the project 41 presentations had been given – 17 by volunteers and partners; 24 by the project team.
- These talks and presentations received almost 1,000 attendances.
- Examples include:
  - SHW celebration day
  - Petersfield Museum
  - Haslemere Museum
  - West Sussex record Office
  - Council for British Archaeology SE Conference
  - Rowlands Castle Historical Society
  - Weald & Downland Museum
  - Talking books for the blind

#### End of Project Conference

- The conference in September 2016 was attended by 150 delegates including landowners, local government staff, academics, curators, volunteers, archaeologists, social historians and SDNPA staff.
- Access to content and increased reach was achieved through the publication of an online short film that showed conference highlights.

#### Community and volunteer feedback events

- The original plan was to undertake three of these at different locations across the SHW project area with the aim of giving people the opportunity to discover more about their area and to celebrate the involvement of local people and volunteers.
- This didn't happen in this way and in part was realised through the End of Project Celebration Event, though this had less reach into the different localities across the project area.

#### End of Project Celebration Event

- This was in addition to the initial project plan.
- It was in recognition of the major contributions made by volunteers, partners and staff.
- 300 people came in September 2016 to take part in a range of activities aimed at children and adults that included Medieval / Renaissance music and dancing; archery; wood coppicing; 'The South Downs Folk Singers'; talks on Roman herbs; illustrated talks about Secrets of the High Woods.



### 3.3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (v)

#### Recruitment of Community Heritage Champions

- The aim was to recruit 8 individuals that would ensure that different communities became aware of the project's findings and opportunities to get involved.
- This ambition was fulfilled in part, but no champions were recruited. It is arguable that this ambition was achieved through the large numbers of volunteers recruited – who actively stewarded the exhibition and advocated its value while on tour.
- The establishment of an independent group (Cultural Heritage Volunteer Group) posts SHW made up of 47 project volunteers offers a pool of champions, but their exact relationship with SDNPA is currently under discussion

#### Targeted Activity aimed at Marginalized Groups

- It was originally envisaged that a number of ground truthing sessions would happen in partnership with 'Drinking Ginger' (an organisation with a focus upon BAME communities).
- Sadly this didn't happen as the organisation developed in a different direction than expected and became more London focussed.

#### Digital Engagement

- Online content can be found at:  
[www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/)
- Originally it was envisaged that SHW would have its own microsite. In reality content generated was added to the Discover section of the SDNPA website.
- The Secrets of the High Woods project landing page features a number of sub-sections:
  - About The Project
  - What Is LiDAR?
  - Secrets Discovered
  - Research
  - Project Book
  - Fieldwork
  - Historic Environment Records
  - Oral Histories
  - Forestry Work and Guideline
- The site hosts a considerable amount of new content produced throughout the project in terms of photographs, reports, recordings and LiDAR data in the form of an interactive map; as well as links to external sites such as the National Mapping Project and local Historic Environment Records (HERs).
- To date the project pages have received 30,569 visits by 23,491 unique users. To put this figure in context, a small volunteer run Sussex conservation charity received over twenty times this volume of traffic during the same period.







### 3.4 FORMAL LEARNING (i)

#### Two School Community Excavations

- This part of the plan was not delivered.
- Staff turnover meant that there were insufficient resources to plan and carry out this activity.

#### Teacher Resource Packs (KS 2 & 3/4)

- Working with *Past Participants* SHW created a range of school centred educational resources that focus upon two key stages – KS2 (7 to 11) and KS4 (14 to 16).
- The resources utilise various elements from the touring exhibition including the CGI, the oral histories, LiDAR data and the project film; integrating them into a variety of activities and field visits that amplify different parts of the national curriculum.  
*“The final product is much better than we had anticipated and we are now focusing on how to get this out to as many schools as possible. The opportunities for involving the volunteers in doing this are obvious and we are working to promote this as an opportunity to all our current volunteers.”*  
SDNPA Staff.
- These resources can be found at <http://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/culture-heritage/>

#### Teacher Training Sessions

- The project aimed to attract 6 teachers to participate in a half-day session.
- Training was held at two network meetings in November 2016 and the South Downs Teacher Conference in March 2017. Together these three events introduced the Secrets of the High Woods projects and associated learning materials to significantly higher numbers – in all 51 outdoor learning providers and ten teachers.

#### Outreach visits to local schools

- A total of five visits were originally envisaged.
- Due to contractor illness this activity was delayed to April 2017.
- Two signed-up schools chose to participate in field visits as part of the KS 2 Teacher Resource pack testing phase.

#### Support for South Downs College A-level archaeology students

- The aim of this strand was to work with 30 pupils and support four with their personal archaeological projects.
- A presentation was given to a class of students at the college; but no students received support with their projects as the opportunities being created through SHW were perceived as being unsuitable for A-level students.



### 3.4 FORMAL LEARNING (ii)

#### Student Placements

- The project originally had a target of 8 student placements. The project team subsequently became aware that HLF didn't fund under / post graduate research, consequently this strand of activity was revised.
- There were two placements by students from The Treloar Trust (one of the country's leading providers of education, care, therapy, medical support and independence training for disabled young people, based in Alton, Hampshire).

*"The young men loved their time with you all and have had a real insight into working life. I must note that your individual support and attention to make this happen was fantastic, you went above and beyond to ensure they all had a very thorough and exciting work experience."* The Treloar Trust.

- Support was also provided for three student's research projects subsequently published on the project website:  
[www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/research/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/research/)

#### Support for Student Dissertations (LiDAR focused)

- A target to support six students.
- The way this was delivered was through the Independent Researcher Groups which met until the LiDAR Officer moved to another post summer 2016.
- Between 2014 and 2016 there were seven meetings.
- A total of eight proposals were received, the project supported three of these.
- These can be found at:  
<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/research/>

#### Support for Academic and Professional Research

- A major contribution to the National Mapping Project.
- LiDAR data added to relevant Historic Environment Records.
- LiDAR data available through the SHW project pages as part of the online map.
- Reports available through the SHW project pages.
- Research Strategy developed and published on the SDNPA website this can be found at:  
[www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Research-Agenda-2017-onwards.pdf](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Research-Agenda-2017-onwards.pdf)

### 3.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICE (i)

#### **Forestry Worker / Manager Training Sessions**

- New guidance was produced and launched March 2017 at an event attended by 36 local forestry workers and land managers.
- To see the various presentations at this event go to: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8htmyUa0Kfvqz\\_V8FOO3zlTc96S\\_PhKg](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8htmyUa0Kfvqz_V8FOO3zlTc96S_PhKg)
- The popularity of the earlier launch led to an additional follow-up event in May 2017 – helping to cement best practice and ensure comprehensive sector exposure; this event created additional value above and beyond the original project plan.
- In tandem with the guidance aimed at forestry workers and land managers a learning module was developed to enhance the knowledge and skills of SDNPA staff.

#### **Piloting community led incorporation of Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP) methodology into the local action plan**

- A number of parishes preparing Neighbourhood Plans were approached with the support of planning colleagues about undertaking a HEAP. Either the timing was not suitable or there was no local champion for heritage. However the potential was highlighted in a presentation to parish councils as part of a Historic England event in Arundel.





## 4. PROJECT SUCCESSES

This section briefly outlines the numerous successes produced as a result of the project – ranging from the touring exhibition and **Revealing Hidden Landscapes** book to activity days and walking trails. One aspect, volunteering, was a key focus of Secrets of the High Wood – throughout the life of the project volunteers played a pivotal role and a detailed summary of this activity, the challenges faced and their notable successes can be found in the Appendices.

### 4.1 LiDAR MAPPING AND NEW CULTURAL HERITAGE UNDERSTANDING

*“LiDAR – It’s the magic bullet we’ve been waiting for all these years ... from the thirties really towards the end of the 20th century when we were quite aware of the potential of the archaeology in woodland in West Sussex, which is some of the most important archaeology in the country because it’s so well preserved, but we’re frustrated by the fact that ... it’s just so difficult to survey, so difficult to visualise.”*

Local Authority Archaeology Officer.

#### 4.1.1 EFFECTIVE PLANNING FROM THE OUTSET

- The project team worked with English Heritage to write the technical specification and sought advice from the New Forest National Park Authority as they had previously commissioned two LiDAR surveys.
- Valuable knowledge was acquired as to how best to contract this type of work and how to ensure the data produced was fit-for-purpose and accessible to all.
- The original project manager was an expert on LiDAR surveys and her experience proved invaluable – revising the angle of the airborne survey and increasing the overlap between transects.

#### 4.1.2 ADOPTING AN AMBITIOUS APPROACH

From the outset the use of the LiDAR data was very ambitious. The Secrets of the High Woods project adopted a number of innovative approaches:

- Traditionally National Mapping Project reports are produced by transcription team(s) working remotely from aerial photos and other surveys, outputting the data as various GIS layers and reports. SHW trialled a more interactive and dynamic experience – creating a new database that held all entries from the 4 Historic Environment Records (HERs) present across the project area.
- The use of a freeware system produced by the Welsh Archaeological Trusts, customized for use on a web-server gave all the NMP transcribers’ access to the local HER data and the project team real-time access to new NMP entries as they were created. Access to real-time changes created numerous opportunities for dialogue and rapid testing and checking of the data as it was produced – what often took weeks to achieve could now be achieved in a few hours.

Volunteers were directed to specific areas previously identified by data transcribers and the project team – where they collected additional evidence through the fieldwork

app in the form of photographs and further onsite interpretation. This significantly enhanced data accuracy and helped to test currently remote interpretation methods.

- The records produced are now available in the form of an interactive map at: [http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/shw\\_site\\_pack/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/shw_site_pack/)
- This approach had been an ambition of English Heritage (now Historic England) for over 20 years – the combination of skilled project staff and the availability of the Welsh HER system made this ambition a reality.

The subsequent data analysis and visualisation produced extraordinary results.

- The mapping phase proved extremely successfully – producing numerous NMP geo-referenced digital transcriptions of the form and extent of all the archaeological features visible on aerial photographs and by LiDAR.

***“The sheer breadth and depth of the archaeology encountered meant that it was a privilege for Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) to work on the Secrets of the High Woods Project.”*** Cornwall Archaeological Unit.

- Many significant sites and landscapes were discovered and surveyed on the ground, often within the woodland. The Secrets of the High Woods project produced a whole new set of perspectives using the LiDAR data. The LiDAR archaeological mapping demonstrated what archaeologists had long thought – that the known sites were part of a much wider archaeological landscape.

***“Outside of Salisbury Plain, the Secrets of the High Woods area may contain the richest known cultural landscape in England.”*** Partner Archaeologist.

- 2,298 sites were identified of which almost three-quarters were not previously recorded in the county-held Historic Environment Record databases or the National Record for the Historic Environment. Of the 2,298 sites identified and mapped, 80% were seen as earthworks – a very high proportion compared to the rest of the South Downs and elsewhere.
- The resulting archaeological interpretations and maps, when viewed in a historic environment record, encourage a layered view of change and continuity in the landscape. Aerial evidence and information from other sources and survey techniques provide glimpses of the changing use of an area over potentially thousands of years. This is an important viewpoint in terms of heritage protection which considers all known aspects of the past land use in the context of managing future change.
- Monument records were created for all sites and a report was supplied by CAU.
- Importantly, the NMP data was fed into the SHW project in a form suitable for community engagement and ongoing research.
- A detailed report – The High Woods from above National Mapping Programme produced by Historic England has been published online and is linked from the project

web pages:

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/fieldwork](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/fieldwork)

- This link has been sent to foresters, land-managers, rangers and archaeologists and is referred to in the Guidelines for the Stewarding of Heritage Assets in Forestry Management, produced as part of the SHW project.

## 4.2 VOLUNTEERING

The volunteering element of the project was very strong – demonstrating the value of cultural heritage to a range of different people. Elements such as archival research and oral histories proved particularly attractive to people experiencing restricted mobility and for those with a historical or sociological rather than a biodiversity or environmental interest in the landscape.

This short section outlines the scale of volunteering and highlights the positive impacts of the project upon those involved. To find out more about volunteering see Appendix One – Volunteering Executive Summary.

### 4.2.1 THE SCALE AND APPEAL OF VOLUNTEERING

- Secrets of the High Woods attracted 203 volunteers – 128 men (63%) and 75 women (37%). This was well in excess of the target of 70.
- Just over half (108) received training as fieldworkers; 26 were trained in archival research; and 15 were taught oral history practice. Targets were exceeded in all areas.
- The combination of archaeological fieldwork and social history excited this group – described as *“adding colour to the dry bones”* as were the unusual opportunities on offer. In particular the use of LiDAR was seen as a very positive and attractive component of the SHW project, as was access to different parts of the South Downs.

*“I had an interest in history and archaeology for years, but when working full time couldn't pursue them. The Secrets of the High Woods project was perfect in giving me a gentle introduction to archaeology, in a friendly and supportive environment. The project has been ideal in helping me achieve these goals.”* Project Volunteer.

- The opportunity to work outdoors proved appealing .... As was the opportunity to meet new people or to expand their circle of friends / peers.

*“My working life has been largely office-based. SHW was a great opportunity to get outside, do things I hadn't done before and develop an attachment to the landscape.”* Project Volunteer.

### 4.2.2 THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING

One of the key aspirations of the volunteering element of the project was to test whether it could enhance people's perceptions of their own state of health and well-being. Using a survey based upon the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale participants were



asked to rate a series of statements out of 10 (with 10 strongly agreeing and 1 strongly disagreeing) at the beginning and end of their involvement.

- There was an average 17.4% increase in volunteers feeling closer to people and there was a 10.2% increase in them becoming more interested in other people.

*“I’ve met loads of people who’ve been willing to share their enthusiasm and expertise as well as some who’ve become good friends.”* Project Volunteer.

- Confidence increased marginally (+6.0%) and importantly peoples’ sense of feeling useful grew noticeably, up 7.6%.

*“Public speaking was not my strong point but I have given one talk about the SHW project and I have committed to giving another.”* Project Volunteer.

- Just over half of those sampled stated that involvement in the project had positively contributed to their physical fitness.

*“The project came at the perfect time for me, as I was scaling back from full-time work, so it offered opportunities to continue being active in mind and body and also socially.”* Project Volunteer.

*“I’ve definitely become fitter. There’s nothing better for the mind and body than getting involved with the environment.”* Project Volunteer.

- For each of the metrics tested volunteers scored on average more than 7.0 out of 10.0. The year one overall average score of 7.8 (across all metrics) grew by 0.3, an increase of just under 4%, by the end of the project.

Another aspiration for the project was to increase volunteers’ knowledge of their local heritage.

- There was a clear sense from participants that SHW had achieved one of its core aims – for participants to become more aware of the historic environment they inhabit.
- 62% indicated they had an appetite to continue to better understand the historic landscape, whether that was with the SDNPA or with other organisations.
- LiDAR had proven to be a key element, helping to reveal the hidden past in accessible and engaging ways – acting as a scaffold for subsequent desk research and recorded interviews.

*“The LiDAR at the introduction day appeared so exciting – revealing so much about the landscape under the tree canopy that was currently unknown – I wanted to be involved.”* Project Volunteer.

- Importantly, upskilling in relation to landscape interpretation was a key benefit for those that were involved with the fieldwork element of the volunteer programme. Many (often with previous experience of archaeological practice) were swift to recognise that the fieldwork had helped them to interpret and re-imagine the landscape in new and unexpected ways.





*“The area of the North Lavant Valley is no longer an anonymous place that I pass on my way to Chichester. It has meaning to me now – the people that lived there and their history.”* Project Volunteer.

*“I thought I was pretty familiar with the SHW area. The project showed me how much I didn’t know! Field survey work took me to many new, unfamiliar areas and to new, inaccessible parts of places that I thought I was familiar with.”*  
Project Volunteer.

*“When I look out across the landscape, I see the places I have walked and the archaeological features they contain. Secrets of the High Woods has completely changed my view of the area I call home.”* Project Volunteer.

#### 4.2.3 IMPROVEMENTS TO THE VOLUNTEER RANGER SERVICE (VRS) INDUCTION

- The feedback created through the induction of Secrets of the High Woods volunteers into the Volunteer Ranger Service led to a revamping of the cultural heritage elements of this process.

#### 4.2.4 VOLUNTEERING LEGACY

One of the most tangible legacy outcomes of SHW is the establishment by 47 project volunteers of the Cultural Heritage Volunteer Group. This independent group wishes to continue to pursue their interest in the cultural landscape through the different mechanisms established by the project – fieldwork; research and collecting oral histories.

- This group aims to continue to work in partnership with the SDNPA, and is currently exploring different opportunities around how best to pursue their interests.

### 4.3 CONTENT CREATION

At the heart of this project was the new research and content produced by volunteers, partner archaeologists and data analysts and members of the project team. New content was created using a number of approaches, each informed by the mapping produced by the LiDAR aerial survey.

Volunteers undertook archival research focussed upon the collections held in local record offices and archives; they also became oral historians, travelling to different parts of the project area to interview and record residents’ recollections. Many contributed original research to the exhibition and the accompanying book; while others wrote copy for talks and provided insights and information at events or while stewarding the exhibition as it travelled from place to place.

#### 4.3.1 ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

- Volunteers involved in archival research produced 15 archaeological narratives based upon new information provided by the LiDAR data, including:
  - *The Pits at Stansted Forest the mystery solved?* by Mark Seaman
  - *LiDAR – the great archaeological detector! Extraordinary revelations at Goblestubbs Copse, Arundel!* By Sue Brown



➤ *The Canadian Army Battle Drill School Stansted Park 1942* by Brian Tompkinson

- To read the 15 reports go to:  
[www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/research/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods/research/)

#### 4.3.2 ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH

- 15 volunteers were trained in Oral History practice.
- They collected 52 interviews with people that had lived or now live within the Secrets of the High Woods area.
- Their clips were integrated into the project film and 24 individual contributions were used as the content for the exhibition listening tree. Three in-depth interviews are also available to listen to on the Oral History page of the project website:  
[www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/heritage/secrets-of-the-high-woods)
- The Oral History recordings have been deposited with West Sussex Record Office  
[www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-community/history-and-heritage/westsussex-record-office/](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-community/history-and-heritage/westsussex-record-office/)

#### 4.4 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

##### 4.4.1 SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS EXHIBITION

- This was the first-time the SDNPA had created and toured an exhibition to multiple partner venues. The exhibition was conceived and produced by the project team in association with Jam Creative Studios – using much of the content created by the volunteers.
- The exhibition was designed to evoke a sense of woodland discovery, offering something for everyone from traditional interpretation on printed panels to state of the art 360° immersion in virtual environments.

***“We chose to tell stories of ordinary life in a different time so that visitors could identify with the people who have shaped the landscape they know today. Visitors were able to virtually walk through these to experience life in an iron-age settlement, on a medieval hunt and at a WWI Canadian lumber camp. Our oral history ‘listening tree’ was particularly effective at sharing every day tales from the edge of living memory.”*** Jam Creative Studios.

- The 360° CGI experience was delivered via a curved screen and joystick controller. As visitors navigated through the scenes they unlocked audio content describing features of the landscape and of their way of life.

***“Creating the environments has allowed us to challenge common misconceptions about ancient life. For example, it’s easy to assume dwellings might have been drab and basic, but there’s no reason why roundhouses wouldn’t have been painted in bright colours with decorative motifs.”*** Jam Creative Studios,



- Each of the panels told a different part of the project story, with the interior space focussing on the methods and discoveries and the exterior panels telling the community and volunteer engagement story.
- The mixed methods approach to communicating information proved very successful. Interactive displays were very popular with young people, allowing adults more time to concentrate upon the text panels.
- The response to the exhibition was very positive from tour partners.

***“The interpretive outputs for the Secrets of the High Woods project have exceeded our expectations in terms of audience engagement and quality.”*** Tour Partner.

***“Superb exhibition, very, very popular at Worthing Museum with children and adults alike.”*** Tour Partner.

- Audience feedback was equally positive, scoring 8.9 or above (out of 10) when visitors were asked to rate the exhibition against a set of pre-defined statements (See 7.2 Audience Exhibition Feedback Questions for details).

***“Amazing rich resource of information on the local area in days gone by. I’ve learned so much more.”*** Audience Member.

***“A visually stunning display with incredible interactive gizmos. Listening to stories of the Secrets of the High Woods while sitting on a comfortable seat was a joy.”***  
Audience Member.

***“Excellent, fascinating project and exhibition full of information. Interactive features are very clear and absorbing.”*** Audience Member.

- Secrets of the High Woods was shortlisted in the Landscapes, Forests, Nature Reserves, Parks and Gardens category of the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI) 2017 Discover Heritage Awards ( *for excellence in cultural and natural heritage interpretation in Britain and Ireland*).

#### 4.4.2 SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS – REVEALING HIDDEN LANDSCAPES BOOK

- The printed and PDF book was another first for SDNPA.
- It was very positively received by many that read it and was especially important for the volunteers and other partner contributors who received concrete validation of their contribution to the project.

#### 4.5 A LEGACY OF NEW PRACTICE AND UNDERSTANDING

THE SDNPA have viewed SHW as an opportunity to improve many of their project management and oversight processes. During the life of the project and carried forward into the *Heathlands Reunited* project the NPA has created and developed a set of new systems explicitly designed to address some of the weaknesses of the Secrets of the High Woods project.



#### 4.5.1 NEW GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT STRUCTURES

- A set of new robust governance structures are one of the key legacies of this project. *Heathlands Reunited* is benefitting from these which ensure the project keeps on track, that it reflects the NPA's pertinent priorities and importantly remains closely tied into corporate processes and procedures.
- SHW has provided the evidence necessary for the NPA to create an appropriate governance structure that is both light touch yet rigorous.
- There are now three layers of oversight:
  - Weekly project team meetings
  - Monthly project team meetings that include staff members from other departments such as Learning and Comms
  - Quarterly Steering Group meetings that consists of four *critical friends*, representation from the Performance and Comms departments, the project manager; chaired by the Landscape and Biodiversity Lead (Woods and Heaths) at the NPA.
- The intention is to make all project work at the NPA more transparent with a greater sense of co-ownership across different departments. The project manager of *Heathlands Reunited* is actively encouraged to use the Steering Group as a sounding board and as a mechanism for addressing forthcoming challenges before they become too damaging.

The new structure ensures senior managers are now better informed as the project manager also reports into a Theme Programme Board (Woods and Heaths) that has oversight across all activity in this domain and is chaired by a Countryside and Policy Manager.

#### 4.5.2 GREATER INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COOPERATION

- While inter-departmental working has not developed as rapidly as governance it has made important progress compared to 2014 when SHW started. Lessons learned from SHW have led to the communication function of *Heathlands Reunited* being positioned across two areas of the NPA – within the project team and the Corporate Comms department. This ensures information flows between teams and that *Heathlands Reunited* isn't overlooked or demoted in terms of resource or time allocation.
- The first six months communication plan has been shared with project partners and the NPA is actively engaging with them from the start, a lesson learned from SHW. The Learning team have been involved from the start and will play an active role throughout the life of the five year *Heathlands Reunited* project.
- To ensure projects do not get 'siloed' progress is showcased at weekly staff bulletins and more in-depth summaries are presented the three day-long staff days held each year at the SDNPA.



- Importantly, the NPA now has continuity in the form of a small number of permanent staff that have been involved with both projects. This allows for greater knowledge transfer and reduces the risks associated with an all contract project team.



## 5. PROJECT CHALLENGES

Outlined in section are the challenges faced during the lifetime of the project. These focus upon four specific areas: technical; project management; communications and engagement; and legacy. It is important to note that this project achieved a considerable amount, but there are certainly a number of key lessons to be learned, some of which have already been adopted and applied by SDNPA in their current *Heathlands Reunited* project.

### 5.1 TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

- The key challenge faced in relation to LiDAR and subsequent data analysis centred upon the ambition to blend a number of untried but potentially beneficial platforms and methodologies. With all forms of innovation there is a degree of risk and a significant number of unknowns which in turn provide their own R&D challenges.
- The length of time needed for the project set-up stage was underestimated and as a result there was insufficient lead-in time for SDNPA (and Historic England (HE) to resolve a number of methodological issues prior to the commencement of the data translation phase.
- The use of an untried CMS software package proved problematic for Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) who were contracted to transform the raw LiDAR survey data into files that could be added to the National Mapping Project. Even after a four month delay the CMS was still not fully tested and when CAU started work they encountered numerous bugs in the software.
- This phase significantly overran its allocated budget, illustrating the risks associated with developing new technology and associated practices in a live setting. That said, the achievements were significant and were proof of the principle that live data exchange is possible and that fieldworkers and analysts can enter into a profitable dialogue that enhances both data currency and its accuracy.

### 5.2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

#### 5.2.1 PROJECT TEAM STRUCTURE

- SHW was clearly a complex and multi-faceted project that required a range of skills and experience to successfully deliver the ambitious activity plan.
- The structure of the project team in relation to its composition and shape reflected a series of compromises from the outset. There was an absence of project management experience and very little public engagement know how within the team. A choice was made to offset these weaknesses by selecting a project manager with extensive experience of LiDAR analysis and a team with a track record in archaeological fieldwork.
- These inherent weaknesses had a lasting impact upon the project. They struggled to deliver a number of activities and experienced difficulties when undertaking essential

project management processes due to a lack of administrative capacity and expertise. The impact was most strongly felt in relation to the public engagement elements of the project. Most of the engagement targets were not met in terms of numbers of participants and much of the planned content ran out of sync – which meant a critical mass of activity was never achieved (the exhibition, walks; education activity; web content etc. didn't happen con-currently as part of a holistic public programme).

### 5.2.2 INTEGRATION AND ALIGNMENT INTO NPA RESOURCES

- SDNPA was in its infancy when it started SHW. It was the first time it had undertaken a volunteering and public engagement project of this size and complexity and consequently chose to rely upon contracted staff to deliver SHW. Integration was a challenge for the organisation – a range of SDNPA departments and staff were required to support the project team, but the mechanics to make this happen had not been formalised prior to the launch of the project. This led to significant time and resource pressures being placed upon the project team and the project becoming siloed during its first year.

The impact of this was primarily upon the project team's workload, specifically in relation to volunteer communication and management. The team had to develop and establish their own ways of working and associated mechanisms. Expertise present in other parts of the organisation was not fully exploited (which had been the original intention) which led to a skills and resource deficit amongst the project team. When combined with greater than expected volunteer numbers this created a knock-on effect over the life of SHW – as volunteer communication and management became more time consuming and resource heavy than originally envisaged.

### 5.2.3 PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

- Arguably the Project Team, the Steering Group and SDNPA management lost track of the overall programme focus for SHW towards the end of year one (spring 2015) until it was taken back in-house during the summer of 2016.
- It is unclear as to where exactly checks and balances existed in the first half of the project, or where responsibility sat outside of the project team. There are numerous examples of early decisions that continued to negatively impact upon the project as it progressed:
  - The most damaging was the over emphasis upon *ground truthing* and fieldwork – this consumed valuable staff time and project resources, leading to much of the public engagement and education activity being under developed and weakly promoted.
  - Examples of this include: the reduction in time apportioned to exhibition and book production and the subsequent strain this placed upon the project team; a decline in outputs linked to promotion and audience development; an absence of concurrent activities such as walks and talks alongside the exhibition tour etc. that would have contributed towards creating a critical mass of activity and providing greater visibility.
  - There existed an early opportunity to adopt dedicated project management



software (Aspireview) to aid efficient project management but this was viewed by the project manager, at the time, as adding an unnecessary administrative burden. In retrospect the use of Aspireview would have made a significant difference. This decision can be best attributed to the project manager's inexperience abetted by the weaknesses present with the governance structures.

- Was the Project Steering Group composition fit for purpose? Selection of participants would have benefitted from adopting a skills, knowledge and experience audit to create suitable selection criteria and aid the effectiveness of this group.

In reality the Project Steering group wasn't particularly successful in the role of *critical friend*. Even when they highlighted potential threats these weren't necessarily acted upon, which led to serious problems further downstream.

- Many of those involved in the delivery of the project noted that senior management at the SDNPA were extremely interested in results but had little appetite for, or understanding of the processes necessary to ensure success and maximise impact. For example procurement was identified as lacking agility compared to the private sector – a result of SDNPA's compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations of 2015 – this proved frustrating for contract project management staff unaware of pre-existing protocols and procedures; the use of social media channels was severely restricted.

#### 5.2.4 THE IMPACT OF STAFF CHURN AND NPA RESTRUCTURES

- With no permanent staff involved directly in project delivery this left SDNPA vulnerable to contract staff moving onto new opportunities during the life of the project. This is indeed what happened, none of the contract staff remained in post until the end of SHW.
- In addition, throughout the life of the project the SDNPA underwent two restructures which ultimately meant it lacked the necessary extra capacity to always support the project team. SHW become one of a number of competing corporate priorities which in turn led to delays due to the reduction in available assets. With limited institutional support processes became under resourced which was compounded by the complexity of the project and the larger than planned for numbers of volunteers.

SDNPA struggled to free-up permanent staff with the requisite skills and knowledge to delivery this type of project. The loss of the contract staff created a very significant challenge for the NPA, which led to an inevitable loss of momentum over time, as permanent staff were required to pick up the workload towards the end of the project. This transition was unplanned and required a short hiatus as they became familiarised with the detail.

- Throughout the project the fulfilment of volunteer management systems including managing volunteer bookings proved extremely challenging as did ordering goods and services and paying invoices. In the latter stages was a considerable administrative burden when working with multiple partners and suppliers to create and deliver the exhibition tour and produce the Revealing Hidden Landscapes book.



- That said, the final iteration of the project team (comprising SDNPA permanent staff) were able to use budget previously allocated to contract staff to fund dedicated administrative support which proved crucial to the success of the final stages of the project. *Heathlands Reunited* (another SDNPA HLF funded project) has learned from SHW's experience and appointed a dedicated support officer to the project team.

### 5.2.5 WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT

- Offering numerous opportunities during weekends was an intrinsic part of the public engagement strategy for Secrets of the High Woods. This decision was explicitly designed to avoid discrimination against those that were employed or facing other weekday related barriers.
- The unintended consequence of this choice was that the project team accrued large amounts of time-off in lieu due to the high numbers of hours they were working. At busy times it was essential that they took time off in order to avoid burn-out, which often denuded the project of personnel at critical moments.
- The large numbers of resource hungry volunteers and the relatively small number of project staff combined with their collective inexperience contributed to a culture of long hours and gradual burn-out. A key contributing factor as to why none of the contract staff completed their tenure.

### 5.2.6 VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT AND FULFILMENT

- Volunteer recruitment was incredibly successful. Recruiting through local Archaeological Societies and History groups attracted an incredibly active, enthusiastic and capable group of volunteers; but being overly popular can be as great a burden as being under-subscribed. The project was originally designed to run with significantly fewer volunteers and suffered accordingly.
- A severe strain was placed upon the project team and their delivery systems – in particular volunteer management and communication. This in turn had a knock-on impact upon day-to-day management and later the delivery of public facing elements of the programme such the broader engagement activities aimed at a range of different communities.
- Volunteer over-subscription affected the project team's ability to consistently communicate with all participants – exacerbated by the systems being employed (designed to be used with smaller numbers and less complex projects).

For example the use of a web-based booking tool to sign up for shifts was easily *gamed*; leading to a small number dominating the opportunities on offer. Fortunately this was easily remedied when volunteers were asked to police themselves.

- Managing expectations is a difficult task. This group of volunteers was intelligent, articulate and enthusiastic, which made them naturally hungry for more opportunities. For a variety of reasons, SDNPA was not in a position always to deliver these.

The impact of this is still developing. Volunteers have spoken about the project



'fizzling-out' as it lost momentum and that there was a need for a 'strong and compelling set of legacy opportunities' that appealed to this group and people similar to them. Volunteering in this area is highly competitive, with numerous high quality heritage related activities. This cohort of volunteers is well connected and actively looking for their next opportunity. They could potentially dissipate or shift their loyalty quite rapidly if a similar type of offer isn't provided through the NPA.

- The loss of the project team towards the end of the project negatively affected many of the personal relationships developed over the past years. Volunteers had a high degree of trust and respect for the project team, something that was difficult to replicate in the relatively short-time afforded the permanent staff.

Fortunately this change occurred near the end of the project – what is of more concern is the mid to long-term impact upon volunteers' perceptions of SDNPA.

- The induction process was perceived by many volunteers as being too generic and disconnected from the project.
- Volunteers reported that in the second half of the project, (which sought to converge the fieldwork, archival research and oral history) the project team struggled to manage their input and maximise their contribution. Clearly this was in part a capacity issue, the result of a communication deficit and the result of a change in emphasis from the collection and interpretation of evidence to its public exhibition. As a result there was a perceived loss of momentum and lack of clarity about what volunteers could do to continue to contribute.
- Cross fertilisation between workstreams was an area that volunteers thought might have been more fully exploited. The use of Facebook was seen as real success. Fieldwork was strongly represented on Facebook, but the other two strands less so.
- The capture of information far outstripped the project teams' ability to collate and review what had been gathered. Many volunteers believe that this was a weakness of the project – that it became too *successful* to be sustainable.

### 5.2.7 INCORPORATING SPECIALIST PROJECT ROLES

- A number of roles were overlooked when the composition of the project team was originally envisaged and budgets allocated: a professional photographer to record the work in the field and community related activity; book production roles including an editor and picture editor, a copy editor and an indexer; and interpretation and engagement specialists.
- Images are an incredibly powerful tool for communicating the value of a project and the library of photographs produced for SHW was used for press coverage, as exhibition content, on the web and in social media output. Although there had originally been no budget allocated for this activity, project savings were used to fund this element (lessons learned mean that the *Heathlands Reunited* project contracted a photographer from the outset).
- As with the photography a number of key book production roles had been overlooked

when the project was originally budgeted. While the project manager created much of the text and sourced many of the images the production of the various interpretative elements of the exhibition proved to be an extensive task.

- The size and scale of this endeavour placed significant strain on the project team which led to the NPA's part-time Interpretation Officer being added to the team to lessen the workload and add much needed expertise and capacity.

The limited availability of interpretive and engagement expertise within the SDNPA is a challenge, especially if the NPA undertakes more public engagement projects in the future. Without more provision there exists a strong possibility that some of the public facing challenges experienced by SHW will be encountered again.

### 5.2.8 KNOWLEDGE RETENTION

- The project team significantly benefitted from different training opportunities throughout their involvement (including the annual training meeting of Historic Environment officers of the UK National Parks) but this new knowledge resided with contract staff and little filtered back into the NPA's permanent team.
- One clearly identified risk was that the LiDAR officer might leave as the post was not funded for the entirety of the project. Unfortunately there existed very few mechanisms by which to capture her knowledge and experience and to feed this into current staff understanding. When she left so did much of the LiDAR related learning generated through the project.

### 5.2.9 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- HLF requires detailed costs to be identified to secure funding. SDNPA broke the initial costs into 18 budget lines equivalent to their current local authority Classification Codes. This was managed with the assistance of the service accountant.
- These translated well with HLF reporting headings used to manage grant reporting and quarterly draw downs. When these budget headlines were further broken down into 117 activity budgets lines they became too complex to manage or record using standard financial management systems.
- This level of detail hampered effective planning and proved too involved to maintain for the duration of the project. It was unclear as to the purpose of having such detail and who was authorised to make amendments and changes to this system.
- Records of expenditure and reconciliation against specific budget codes were difficult to achieve once each financial year had passed. The SDNPA finance system provided under contract by Brighton and Hove City Council is mainly designed to manage revenue budget, under the CIPFA SERCOP guidelines and is not designed for project management. This limitation proved challenging – particularly when managing a project's budget over the five year period.
- Tracking costs is a normal function undertaken by a Project Manager and can be achieved through the use of budget reporting systems. To do this accurate financial

records must be kept; this is particularly important when making retrospective grant claims. SHW failed to create and maintain accurate financial records from the very beginning. To receive the final stage payment SDNPA had to painstakingly reconstruct (over a couple of months) the project's expenditure history.

- With no clear system set in place to record authorised changes from the commencement of the project or a definitive budget record changes were often made without consideration to the whole project or in light of previous changes resulting in unnecessary amends to budget lines. A change management process was introduced during the project as there was no corporate system to adopt.
- Many of the problems were due to the absence of a recognised fit-for-purpose financial management system coupled with a lack of consistency due to having three project managers during the life of the project.

### 5.3 COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES

#### 5.3.1 DELIVERING THE PUBLIC PROGRAMME

The complexity of the exhibition created a number of challenges.

- The exhibition's installation often proved challenging – the set-up and take down were both complex and time consuming and even though there had been exploratory site visits finding enough sockets / extensions to power all of the exhibits was often difficult.
- The short length of time that the exhibition stayed at each venue meant there was a short window of opportunity in which visitors could bring back their friends and family.
- Many people from the South of England and even those from Hampshire, Sussex and Surrey did not necessarily know the extent of the South Downs National Park. The addition of a large map of the area, added later to the exhibition proved very helpful, particularly as it was in direct response to audience feedback.
- It is often assumed that project partners are as equally invested as the lead partner. This is in fact quite uncommon, particularly amongst young or untested partnerships. An assumption was made by the project team that exhibition tour partners would enthusiastically programme events and activities to wrap around the exhibition when it visited. The reality was that they viewed their role as host and not co-producer. Without genuine partnership and co-ownership this behaviour was inevitable.

#### 5.3.2 COMMUNICATING AND MARKETING THE PUBLIC PROGRAMME

- The short lead time due to an over emphasis upon fieldwork meant little was produced in the way of marketing materials and very little resource was allocated for promotion and marketing.
- SDNPA's restrictions on the use of social media combined with minimal promotional activity by tour partners led to small number of intentional attenders. This is true for almost all parts of the public programme from the exhibition to the walks to the community digs etc.

- The absence of some of the planned online content designed to run con-currently with the physical exhibition meant the opportunity to add value was lost. The reach of the exhibition became limited to physical visitors as there was little in the way of digital engagement available for those people that had no intention of ever visiting the exhibition, or were unable to do so.

There were a number of intrinsic weaknesses in how SHW's was promoted and communicated to potential audiences.

- Firstly the disconnect between the corporate comms team and the project team as outlined below (see also 5.2.2 and 5.2.3).
- Secondly the absence of a comms specialist specifically tasked with promoting all elements of the project to a range of target audiences through the reframing of content and use of appropriate communication channels – maximising the project's visibility and subsequent impact.
- Thirdly the relatively small volume of marketing material and messaging actually produced.
  - For example the leaflet produced to promote three of the largest events only had a print run of 5,000 to cover the whole of the South Downs National Park.
  - The leaflets were predominantly distributed via partner museums which inherently limited their reach. A much larger print run, distributed via a distribution company through tourist attractions, restaurants, shops, pubs, hotels, etc. would have ensured Secrets of the High Woods reached a broader potential audience.
- SDNPA's CRM database lacked currency and was missing many essential contacts including exhibitors, craftspeople, performers, musicians and food producers – all essential when curating public events.
- Currently there appears to be only a few ways by which the public can establish a digital relationship with the NPA. The online newsletter doesn't appear to be actively promoted on the website and it is unclear as to what the benefits are to signing-up.
  - There was no attempt to actively recruit exhibition attenders as volunteers or sign people up to the SDNPA e-newsletter. While we must acknowledge that this was not a priority, the exhibition did offer a potential recruitment instrument for the NPA – particularly as it had physically reached into communities living within and bordering the National Park.
- Social media covers a broad spectrum of subject matter, very little of it appears to be targeted in ways that appeal to particular audience groups. The lack of dedicated project feeds make specific output often difficult to identify and the absence of prominent shared spaces for co-production and debate ensure a distance between the people and the National Park Authority. Where content is available it is difficult to find or identify.
- For example SHW content available on Youtube is often labelled with just a number in the description and nothing else making it impossible for search engines to find.

- Evaluation proved problematic, with very low returns of the self-completion postcards. The value of the collected responses remains questionable due to the low numbers.

Without robust audience feedback it has proven difficult to ascertain their response to the exhibition and the impact it may have had upon them.

### 5.3.3 CREATING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO COMMUNICATIONS

- At the beginning Secrets of the High Woods lacked dedicated communications, marketing and specialist interpretation team members as it was believed that these elements were insufficiently large enough to warrant inclusion in the team structure. The Project Board did contain a member of the NPA Comms team and in year 2 an interpretation staff member was added to the project team.
- Prioritisation and allocation of resources was a key challenge for SHW.

It was envisaged that these roles would be delivered by SDNPA permanent staff as part of their day-to-day work. The reality was somewhat different and the lack of spare capacity across the Authority and competing priorities proved decisive, as did the ‘siloeing’ of the project so that it was no longer perceived as being the responsibility of relevant SDNPA departments.

***“It was hard to champion the project when we often learned about activities and milestones via the local press. We did ask for press releases to be sent to us as well but this never happened.”*** Project Partner.

Lessons were learned as the project developed and in the second half there was closer cooperation between the relevant departments and the project team. Had this been present from the start many more opportunities for public engagement would have been created and communicated.

- The differences between the management of SDNPA’s corporate brand and how public perceptions of Secrets of the High Woods were managed is evident. The limited support for SHW (particularly in years one and two) and an over reliance on an inexperienced and ill equipped project team definitely affected the reach and impact of the project – as can be seen in relation to the discrepancy between the original estimated attendance figures and the actual ones.
- Early cooperation during the Stage 1 application process proved fruitful and successful. This though appeared to have lessened once the project team were in place as roles and responsibilities became less clear. At times there was a clear mismatch between the needs of a relatively small yet rapidly evolving project and managing and communicating the SDNPA brand.
- The NPA’s aversion to risk was evident in relation to its social media outlook. This placed significant constraints on the project’s ability to reach out and build an audience for cultural heritage. Secrets of the High Woods never had a public Facebook or associated Twitter account; instead it used a closed Facebook account to communicate with volunteers which only went live half-way into the life of the project.

This not only caused considerable frustration for the project team (one of whom had been writing a public blog for the Welsh Royal Commission for Historic Monuments in her previous job) but also proved vexing for the project volunteers; many of which had considerable managerial / professional experience and couldn't understand why the project wasn't making more use of the web or social media.

- What is clear is that Secrets of the High Woods has acted as a catalyst for change, helping to highlight some of the NPAs weaknesses and to subsequently act as a testbed for new ways of working across different departments.

## 5.4 LEGACY CHALLENGES

### 5.4.1 DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

- Managing relationships often became a secondary consideration due the volume of work being undertaken. This meant that a number of opportunities were overlooked and with such little time for partnership cultivation, relationships weren't necessarily developed as much as had first been envisaged.
- This impacted in a number of ways. Some of the activity outlined in the original HLF funding application as being delivered as an in-kind partner contribution failed to materialise (e.g. West Sussex Record Office) resulting in unexpected expenditure or subsequent revisions to the project plan.
- Opportunities to learn from partners were often unrealised as was adding value by working closely in partnership – particularly with regard to audience development and meeting the expectations and needs of land owners.

### 5.4.2 ENSURING MAXIMUM LONGITUDINAL IMPACT

- In terms of longitudinal legacy there are a number of key challenges the NPA faces:
  - Firstly, the vast amount of LiDAR data created has been deposited in local HERs and the National Mapping Project database. The question remains what are the plans for this information? How will it be effectively signposted and what legacy resources have been allocated for this activity?
  - Secondly, SHW has created a sizeable number of Cultural Heritage volunteers. A group of these has already organised itself into a separate entity. What is the NPA's strategy in terms of volunteering across the National Park and how best can this be effectively and equitably realised?
  - Thirdly, what role will Cultural Heritage play in any future offer of the SDNPA? DEFRA is encouraging NPAs to focus on raising levels of engagement with the countryside and increasing the diversity of participant. Where does Cultural Heritage fit in relation to this?
  - Finally if SDNPA is to continue developing its Cultural Heritage offer there will need to be an upskilling and upscaling in terms of permanent staff capabilities and

competencies. Only a small number have the requisite skills and arguably no-one currently has the necessary experience to design and deliver a project such as SHW. A collegiate approach across departments may be a future solution but with very little archaeological expertise in-house this may prove problematic. There is a real risk that potential Cultural Heritage projects may lose out to other types of public engagement if this area lacks a champion in a decision making role.





## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report suggests a range of recommendations that respond to the successes and challenges experienced during the Secrets of the High Woods Project.

### 6.1 USING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

- Using new and untried technology or combinations of new technologies and methodologies have a high degree of inherent risk. Part of any future planning and project scoping phase should contain a risk assessment with mitigation strategies where appropriate to reduce critical systems failures and identify additional cost and resource implications (such as additional training, additional R&D resources, the need for a testing period and the on-costs of such a decision etc.).
- Ideally SDNPA should maintain relevant technology expertise (in this case LiDAR and data transcription) in-house, within the permanent staff team. If this is not a viable option it would pay dividends to establish an ongoing relationship with an expert company / individual who could supply this expertise and fill the NPA's knowledge gaps – this would at least ensure continuity and reduce risk over time.

### 6.2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

#### 6.2.1 ENHANCE PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND CAPACITY AT SDNPA

- SHW is an illustration of how ongoing development can benefit SDNPA. It is clear that over time the NPA has become more adept at delivering this type of project – particularly when contract staff were no longer available. Closer involvement of different departments made a significance difference, providing access to the organisation's inherent pool of talent and expertise. Two key recommendations concern back-room systems and corporate support.
  - Firstly, it is clear that the adoption of a universal project management system (such as Asana or Prince2 etc.) would make a significant difference – ensuring consistency, best practice, information sharing and the ability for trained staff to move between projects where resources are most needed.
  - Secondly, in-house departments and staff should always play a central role in future project design and delivery. Ensuring that funded projects are effectively incorporated into SDNPA's day-to-day activity and not siloed.

#### 6.2.2 ENSURE APPROPRIATE PROJECT TEAM SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- It is essential that future project teams contain people with the requisite skills and experience to successfully deliver the programme. The SHW project development phase clearly expressed the skills and experience required but the recruitment phase was unable to attract staff that met these expectations.
- Attracting an experienced and effective project manager is by far the most important priority with regard to recruitment. Don't focus on subject specialists for this role, focus upon attracting people that have managed and delivered a range of different public

engagement projects of a comparable size.

- It is important to acknowledge that any project based in Midhurst has its own set of intrinsic barriers – a small town in a rural setting, with poor public transport links and no train station; limited accommodation provision with high rental values etc. This means that quality project managers will only consider leading a project if they already live locally or if the post can be incentivised to a level that proves attractive.
- SDNPA should expect to pay considerably more if it wishes to attract contract staff of suitable quality and experience, or alternatively offer a bonus based upon performance – this should be factored into future budgets and bids.
- In addition SDNPA should continue to actively upskill contract staff as part of their staff development programme – focussing upon project and financial management skills alongside public engagement and communications.

### 6.2.3 PROJECT TEAM COMPOSITION

- While the quality and capabilities of the project manager are key, it is essential that the team itself has the requisite skills and experience. Public engagement in whatever form is time consuming and requires sufficient back office support to ensure a high quality experience.
- Future projects would benefit from much greater administrative support, particularly with regard to volunteer management; promotion and communication; event fulfilment; and any form of production – digital, exhibition, publication etc.
- Specialist project staff such as archaeologists, exhibition designers, editors, photographers etc. all have a major part to play and it would be advantageous to recruit the full plethora of required expertise at the beginning of a project. This ensures that this expertise and knowledge can be drawn upon from the start, significantly speeding up later production and broadening the team’s knowledge base.
- Audience development is a weakness at the NPA (as opposed to marketing and communications). Audience development expertise would significantly enhance the capabilities of future project teams that have a strong focus upon public engagement. This would be best achieved through contracting an external person experienced in developing engagement strategies and the systems to deliver them. The fulfilment could then be undertaken by the core project team.

### 6.2.4 INTEGRATION INTO THE NPA STAFF TEAM

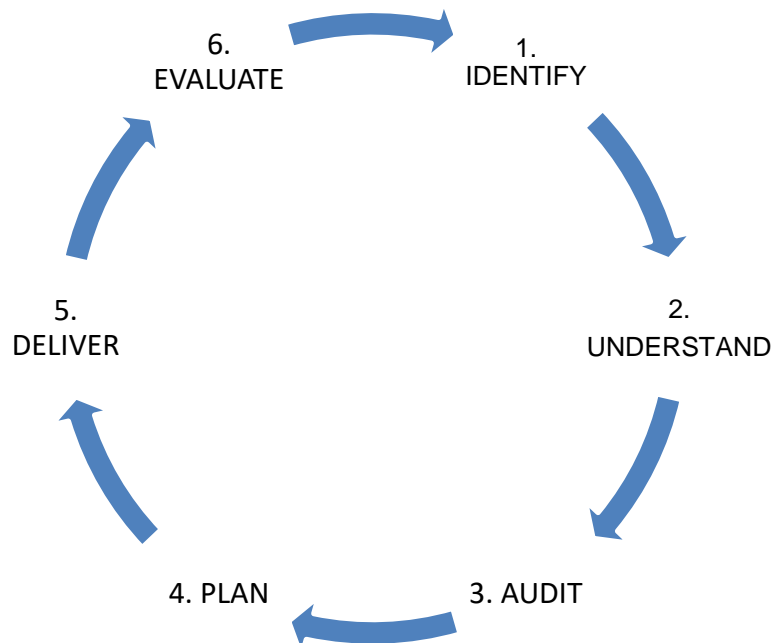
- Much has already been learned from SHW’s and implemented in the *Heathlands Reunited* project. Recommendations closely follow current practice at the NPA.
- Where possible place project staff across departments, not siloed exclusively within the team.



- Timetable staff time well in advance across different projects and programmes to ensure resources are targeted at time critical activities (such as a targeted communication campaign).
- Involve all relevant departments in the creation of future public engagement projects in order to draw upon their expertise, to guarantee buy-in and future commitment, and to ensure prioritisation of resources at the right time.
- Actively explore the added value provided by individual projects and how they can help to realise broader corporate programmes. If there are opportunities for coalescence co-opt project team members into staff teams and vice versa.
- Physically mix project staff with permanent staff by spreading their work spaces throughout departments.

### 6.2.5 ADOPT THE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

- To ensure the SDNPA is equipped in the future to meet the needs and expectations of the full-spectrum of potential audiences it will be essential to reinforce the way the organisation works. Public Engagement will need to continue to work innovatively and collaboratively, both internally and externally but is currently hamstrung due in part to project management and content development structures being under-developed.



- The tried and tested method of adopting the Development Cycle method will help to invigorate a process that re-visions how the NPA engages with audiences and develops new content. The Development Cycle helps to encourage thinking and acting in an audience-focused way by delivering activity and communication using a planned and targeted approach. This provides SDNPA with an overarching framework by which to deliver a new and innovative approach to learning and engagement content development.
- Each stage has its own distinct set of components that feed into the intelligence



gathering and decision making associated with subsequent stages in the cycle. The cycle is also virtuous; the knowledge generated in stage six feeds into stage one as the sequence continues.

### 6.2.6 USE EVALUATION AS A DRIVER FOR IMPROVEMENT

- When designing future evaluation think about:
  - Having a clear proposition you wish to test – what exactly do you want to find out? Using a logic model approach will help clarify thinking.
  - Having a clear sense about who the target groups / segments are (it would be advantageous to articulate these in relation to SDNPA’s audience insight profiles etc.)
  - Who you need to sample and in what numbers so findings are both replicable and trustworthy
  - Which approach to adopt – think about timing, resource allocation, size of sample, and importantly data / evidence analysis
  - Developing a standardised approach to testing specific aspects of each programme – use a set of core questions alongside bespoke ones pertinent to a particular project or activity
  - Always contextualising findings and understanding methodological strengths and weaknesses prior to starting an evaluation – what caveats are in play?
  - Designing data capture methods that are low-resource, automated where possible and capable of rapidly re-presenting data as intelligence – currency can be an issue when adopting an *agile* approach to programme development and delivery
  - Actively building upon existing knowledge – how can new intelligence be shared across the NPA, what will be the outcome of the evaluation in terms of reports, statistics, findings etc.?
  - Finally, how will project managers and decision makers use this information?
- In the future there would be merit in exploring the value of involving professional market researchers to gather robust and meaningful user insights. This would require greater investment and should be thought of as an essential element of the product development cycle – ensuring greater impact and reach through ongoing testing and product evolution.

### 6.2.7 CONTINUE TO DEVELOP PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

- Again many lessons have already been enacted with regard to this subject. One recommendation is that the NPA attract a small number of external experts to contribute to the quarterly project steering meetings. Ideally these would be totally independent (not a NPA partner or stakeholder) and would have experience of public engagement, evaluation, audience development, digital engagement, archaeology, event and exhibition production etc. Areas of expertise that are currently under-represented within the staff team,



### 6.2.8 IMPROVE WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT

- Public engagement projects are time consuming and have long intense periods of activity. It's important to plan ahead and identify the *pinch points* in future projects and allocate resources accordingly. That may mean more people and higher costs.
- Ideally projects should have quieter periods alongside the more intensive ones, allowing staff to recover their energies and maintain their focus.
- Continue to develop public engagement systems at NPA and upskill staff to be proficient in their use.
  - Digital communication and engagement is both time and cost effective as much can be automated – spreading effort over time.
  - The adoption of project management software will save time, increase efficiency, potentially spread the workload, and reduce risks associated with staff churn.
  - Ensure any project management systems are universally adopted across the NPA and aren't exclusive to the project team.

### 6.2.9 DEVELOP FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

- Urgently review current systems to ensure they are fit for purpose. Areas for exploration include:
  - Establishing at the start of a project a change record that would record all significant changes including financial ones and would include the protocols for making changes and the level of authority necessary to do so.
  - Managing budgets by task which can be clearly identified by classification code matched to HLF reporting / project plan headings.
  - Maintaining projects budget records using established best practice utilising standard budget records and avoiding any unnecessary effort or duplication.
  - Capturing historical information on a separate forecast of costs which could serve to record the status of all transactions. This record would also provide a check against the monthly budget and transaction reports. The level of detail and need will depend on the complexity of the project finances.
  - Consistently adopt and use fit-for-purpose project management tools
- Review staff training to ensure continuity and alignment between NPA corporate financial systems and one-off project ones.
- Review authorisation procedures.
- Explore how best to make financial management (and procurement) of fast moving projects less bureaucratic and time consuming.

### 6.2.10 DEVELOP THE VOLUNTEER OFFER

- Build upon the Cultural Heritage element of the VRS induction and actively consider if a variety of different inductions are required; or after the initial generic VRS induction subsequent ones can be undertaken that focus upon specific volunteering programmes.



- Future volunteer programmes should:
  - Adopt a flexible approach (this was very important to participants, rather than being specific times and dates or a minimum level of commitment etc.).
  - Ensure the project management team are well regarded from the outset (and throughout the duration) and are capable of demonstrating a high degree of commitment and expertise.
  - Focus upon communication as an essential ingredient for success. Effective systems are essential, as are the human resources necessary for content generation and distribution.
  - Have tangible outcomes (like the book and touring exhibition) that help to publically validate volunteers' commitment and provide an end of project focus.
  - Maintain momentum. It's important to decide when volunteers will be involved – will it be throughout the project or only for discrete parts?
  - Provide access to rare opportunities.
  - Have a memorable name that is a strong draw – be intriguing and exciting, help the project to stand out from other volunteer opportunities.
  - Ensure consistent access to expertise to maintain quality and progression.
  - Revisit and reinforce aims and objectives throughout the lifetime of the project – as there is always a degree of participant churn.

### 6.2.11 MAXIMISE VOLUNTEER POTENTIAL

- Adopt a skills and competency audit as part of any future induction process to discover the range of experience and expertise on offer.

Many SHW volunteers had extensive experience of project management, communications and business administration, all of which would have proven invaluable to the project. This group of individuals brought with them considerable capital, which was not exploited for mutual benefit. It is highly likely that this is also true for all current volunteers, regardless of their relationship with SDNPA.

- Democratisation of the delivery of future projects would pay dividends – through giving volunteers greater direct involvement, providing suitable training and sharing responsibility. Pro-actively support a volunteer think-tank – a sounding board and ideas generation forum that adds value, articulates benefit and allows SDNPA to walk in the shoes of your volunteers.

## 6.3 COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

### 6.3.1 ENSURE EFFECTIVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- As has occurred with *Heathlands Reunited* all future projects should integrate NPA Comms staff into the wider project team. This would ensure access to the necessary expertise and systems (databases, social media platforms, CRM systems etc.) and allow for more effective and timely support and resource allocation.

Internal communication to volunteers is a key challenge for future projects and it is clear that the integration of the central Comms team will lead to a more robust, better



resourced and consistent approach to managing their expectations and information needs.

### 6.3.2 ENSURE EFFECTIVE EVENT / EXHIBITION MANAGEMENT

- It's essential to ensure adequate planning and development time for all types of event. At least six months, longer for larger events is preferable.

The Hidden Past Festival was programmed and delivered in just over 3 months leaving little time to curate the content and subsequently promote the event. The result was an eclectic mix in terms of quality and relevance with visitor numbers proving far smaller than originally envisaged.

- From the outset adopt a focussed set of ambitions and targets. This approach will help to reduce extraneous effort and ensure that all involved have a clear sense of what needs to be achieved.
- When using external event organisers and programmers it's important to have a clear understanding of all the details. It's unlikely, especially if they only have a short period of development time that they will have an exhaustive understanding of any issues, operating processes or procedures unique to the SDNPA.
- Move towards a co-production model rather than recruiting tour venues partners.

### 6.3.2 BUILD DIGITAL PROMINENCE

- The use of the SHW's digital content was disappointing. Digital is no longer a separate entity but an intrinsic part of how the public engages with content.
- Digital offers reach and access, but without effective promotion, a changing offer of relevant and stimulating material and ease of access it will be out competed by other online content. Clearly future projects require significantly higher volumes of content output through social media / digital platforms to drive ever greater participation.
- This output should be part of a holistic audience development plan that creates numerous touching points between the project and its potential audience.
- To achieve this there should be greater emphasis on project long digital engagement with podcast content (talking heads / vox pops); volunteer and expert blogging; active links to other content and projects; public fora for debate and discussion (Facebook, Twitter, Reddit etc.); active use of imagery and video (Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Flickr etc.).
- The current SDNPA website design and content has limited appeal, and the SHW pages are difficult to navigate and have no links to relevant social media channels. SDNPA should look to provide a more stimulating digital experience that incorporates user content and champions discussion, debate and the sharing of ideas, images and video rather than being a one-way (broadcast) channel. To do this will require far greater resources being attributed to this activity and ideally the use of a project specific microsite with its own identity (either a sub-brand of SDNPA or totally different

depending upon project and target audience).

## 6.4 BUILDING LEGACY

### 6.4.1 BUILD SDNPA CAPACITY AND CAPABILITIES

- It is essential that SDNPA builds the necessary expertise and capacity within the current / future staff team to successful delivery of future volunteer programmes (regardless of the programme). The potential for volunteering is immense, particularly as we continue to experience a growth in retirement aged individuals, many with significant skills that would benefit SDNPA's historic environment aspirations.

In essence there is a need to increase the in-house public engagement and project management capacity to ensure continuity and consistent quality.

### 6.4.2 ENSURING LEGACY

- The significance of projects doesn't end once the funding has finished.

The vast amount of new information and evidence that had been collected across the different project strands should be actively shared and used – so it has continuing public benefit. This requires ongoing legacy planning and the allocation of resource.

- When planning future projects start with the legacy the NPA wishes to achieve and work backwards. This will ensure the alignment of one-off projects with corporate priorities and a closer fit to other planned programmes.





## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1 VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME EVALUATION – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EXTRACT

#### 2.1 VOLUNTEER DIMENSIONS

- 203 volunteers – 128 men (63%) and 75 women (37%).
- Two-thirds of the men and just under three-fifths of women were aged between 55 and 74.
- Over half of the men and more than a third of the women were retired.
- Educational attainment and qualifications were extremely high – over two-thirds had a first degree or higher, almost three times more than the national average.
- Just over half (108) received training as fieldworkers; 26 were trained in archival research; and 15 were taught oral history practice. Targets were exceeded in all areas.

#### 2.2 MOTIVATIONS TO JOIN

- Bringing together the archaeological fieldwork and social history elements of the project excited this group – described as adding colour to the *dry bones*.
- The volunteers were intellectually inquisitive and often came with a range of relevant skills and prior knowledge.
- The use of LiDAR was seen as a very positive and attractive component of the SHW project, as was access to different parts of the South Downs.
- The unusual opportunities on offer proved a strong motivation for many.
- The opportunity to work outdoors was appealing.
- .... and the opportunity to meet new people or to expand their circle of friends / peers.
- Some also felt that they had something to contribute.

#### 2.3 MOTIVATIONS TO CONTINUE

- The commitment and effort of the project team was recognised by the volunteers as being central to the success of the project.
- It was clear that they recognised the skills and expertise of those leading the project and were very complimentary about their individual and collective contribution.
- The project responded to the volunteers by establishing new Y2 opportunities. A Facebook page was established and a number of volunteers were invited to be ground-truthing leaders.



## 2.4 HEALTH & WELLBEING

Using a survey based upon the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale<sup>1</sup> participants were asked to rate a series of statements out of 10 (with 10 strongly agreeing and 1 strongly disagreeing).

- Overall the scores are very positive, with no average below 7.0. The overall 7.8 average score for year one grew by 0.3, and increase of just under 4%.
- 17.4% higher when it comes to feeling closer to people and there was a 10.2% increase in feeling more interested in other people.
- Confidence increased (+6.0%) and importantly peoples' sense of *feeling useful* grew noticeably, up 7.6% over the two years.
- Just over half of those sampled stated that involvement in the project had positively contributed to their physical fitness.

## 2.5 CHANGES IN PERSONAL CAPABILITIES & OUTLOOK

- Across all of the other categories tested, change was slight, ranging from 3.2% to 4.5%. Average change was slight, but for some it was fundamental. A relatively small number of volunteers (just over 10%) noted a major difference in relation to their own confidence and willingness to try new things.

## 2.6 BUILDING CONNECTIONS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THEIR RESIDENTS

- How volunteers connected with their own communities scored the lowest average score for year one, 6.4 out of a maximum of 10.

## 2.7 BUILDING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LOCAL HERITAGE

- There was a clear sense that SHW had achieved one of its core aims – *for participants to become more aware of the historic environment they inhabit.*
- In terms of legacy SHW has had a considerable impact upon many participants. 62% indicated they had an appetite to continue to better understand the historic landscape, whether that was with the SDNPA or with other organisations.
- LiDAR was a key element, helping to reveal the hidden past in accessible and engaging ways – acting as a scaffold for subsequent desk research and recorded interviews.
- Upskilling in relation to landscape interpretation was a key benefit for those that were involved with the fieldwork element of the volunteer programme. Many (often with previous experience of archaeological practice) were swift to recognise that the fieldwork had helped them to interpret and re-imagine the landscape in new and unexpected ways.

<sup>1</sup>The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being scale was developed to enable the monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. WEMWBS is a 14 item scale with 5 response categories. The items are all worded positively and cover both feeling and functioning aspects of mental wellbeing. (<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>)

## 7.2 AUDIENCE EXHIBITION FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

**Your views are important to us**

To help us inform future heritage projects we would be grateful if you could answer the following questions.

Venue/location: \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1-10 how successful has the exhibition been in helping you to gain a better understanding/appreciation of the following:

The heritage of the South Downs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The lives of people who lived in this area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How the local landscape has developed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Archaeology and our hidden past	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Your gender:            Male     Female     Other     Prefer not to say

Your postcode: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please note we are unable to identify your home address from your postcode)

Please turn over

Which part of this exhibition/event have you found most informative or engaging?

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe this exhibition/event to your friends if you had to do so in one sentence?

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you

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### 7.3 CONTRIBUTOR LIST

- Anne Bone (formerly SDNPA)
- Colin Carre (SDNPA)
- Peter Crow (Forest Research – Forestry Commission)
- Amanda Elmes (SDNPA)
- James Kenny (Chichester District Council)
- David McOmish (Historic England)
- Rebecca Osborne (SDNPA)
- Abigail Rice (SDNPA)
- Stephen Sibbald (SDNPA)
- Stephanie Swann (Stephanie Swann Events)
- Alice Thorne (formerly SDNPA)
- Helen Winton (Historic England)
- Project partners – Arundel Museum, Butser Ancient Farm, Fishbourne Roman Palace, Haslemere Museum, Petersfield Museum, Portsmouth City Museum, Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Weald & Downland Museum, West Sussex Record Office, Worthing Museum
- The numerous volunteers that contributed to the evaluation of the volunteer element of SHW.

