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Iford Whole Estate Plan

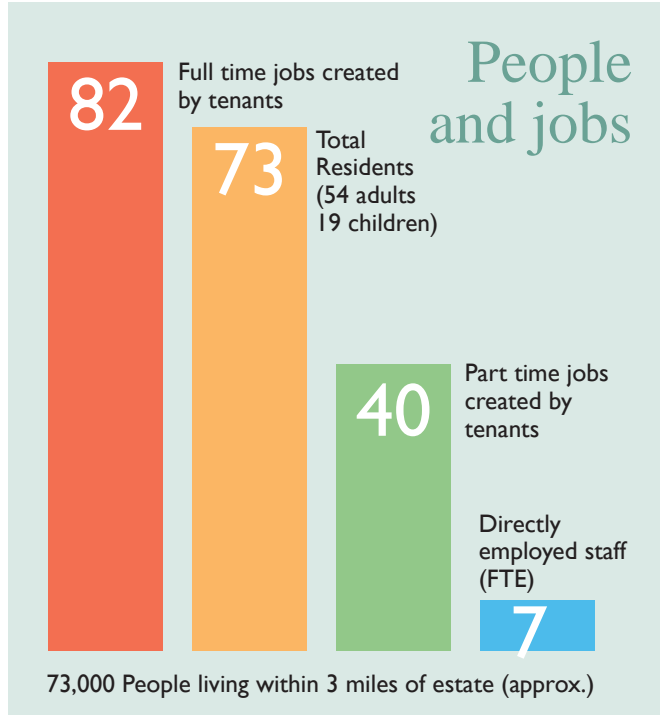
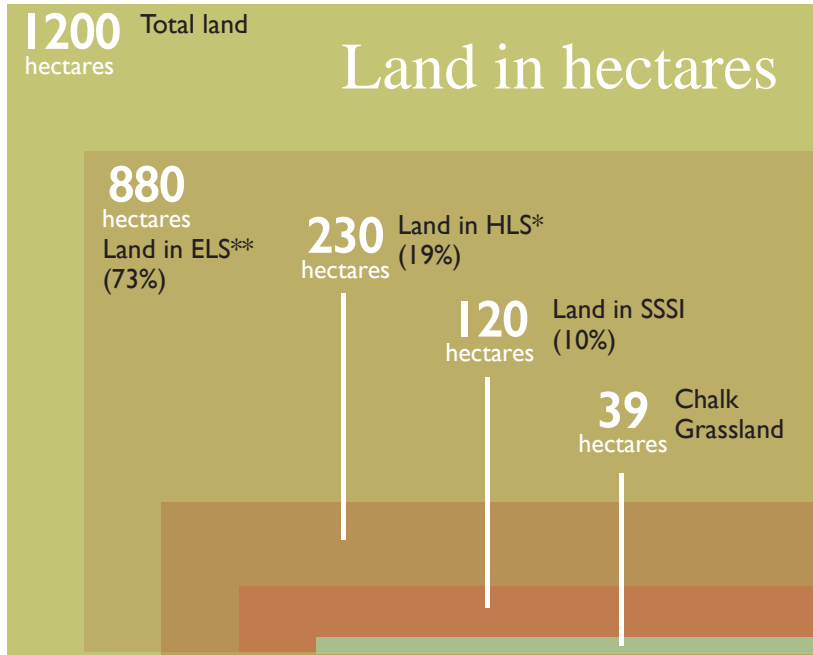
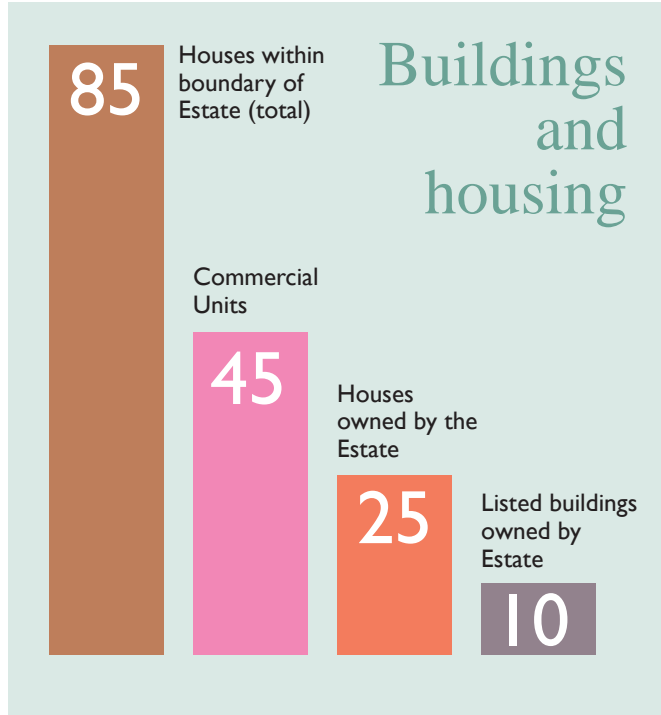
2018-2033



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Iford Estate at a glance



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My grandfather Joseph Colgate Robinson founded the Iford Estate in 1895 when he bought Iford Farm. He was a Quaker and philanthropist and his values of thrift and social responsibility have defined Iford ever since – all employees and widows having a rent-free house for life being just one example of this.

As well as continuing to farm in accordance with these values, my father Henry Colgate Robinson was a passionate and knowledgeable naturalist and conservationist and this led him to introduce a way of environmentally sensitive farming that set him apart from many of his contemporaries.

These two men, my predecessors, have shaped the estate and communities that we have today – cottages and farm buildings rubbing shoulders with plenty of green space and views out into an exceptional landscape. Farm workers live with their families for most of their lives in the village and in many cases children follow on from their parents. In the last 20 years three workers have retired after each spending nearly 50 years working on the Estate. This stability in the community helps to make the village such a special place, but that stability does not stand in the way of social progress. Farm employees today are highly skilled and, happily, much better paid than their predecessors.

I am proud to be the third generation of my family to farm here, and to continue to farm in accordance with the values and principles established by my father and grandfather. But there have been many challenges since I joined the business in 1970, and in this time we have seen more change in the agricultural industry than at any time in previous history – with vast improvements in technology and a consequent dramatic reduction in labour requirement.

There are however more people working at Iford today than at any time previously, mostly working for small local businesses occupying redundant farm buildings that we have converted over the last 30 years. As well as bringing extra life to the village, these businesses provide an important income stream to assist the Estate in its principal activity of farming. This diversification is likely to become even more important after Brexit.

One of the challenges that we face now is how to manage the concrete and asbestos buildings that we put up in the 1960s to house long-gone dairy herds in Iford, and those we inherited when we acquired Swanborough Farm in 2014. These buildings have exceeded their design life and are falling to pieces but are not worth repairing as they are too small for most of our machinery. Many of them are also badly located, either being difficult to get to, or being too close to people’s homes.

My vision for 2030 is that all farming activities are centred on one site, in purpose-built buildings that can be used and accessed safely and without disturbing our neighbours. I also want to see the village continue to be a place with life, community and employment, with redundant sites sensitively re-shaped to provide employment space, holiday accommodation and, where needed, new homes.

Above all, I would like to hand over to my successors at Iford a place that my grandfather and father would both recognise and approve of. This Whole Estate Plan is an important step in that direction, and would not have been possible were it not for the help and assistance offered by the National Park Authority (NPA) and my friends and neighbours in Iford and Swanborough. I am very grateful for their help.

Foreword

John Robinson, Owner



Main image: Sons Henry (HCR) (l) and Harris (JHR) (r) with father Joseph Robinson (JCR) at the South-East Shorthorn Breeders Association Field Day, 11 October 1949.

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Our Approach to Farming

Ben Taylor, Managing Director



It is unusual to find a place quite like Iford, and to find custodians quite like the Robinson family. Their stewardship of what is now called the Iford Estate is rooted in the history of their family and their sense of duty to the land, landscape and place they have custody of often comes before a short-term profit. The evidence is all around us and, in a small way perhaps, contributed to the recognition of the inspiring landscapes and environment that came with the designation of the South Downs National Park.

However, without profit the Estate is unsustainable, and sadly when profit is challenged, it is things such as enhanced conservation that suffer. You can’t be green when you’re in the red! The agricultural industry is rapidly coming to a crunch point. The challenges we face on a global, national and local scale are greater than they have been for many decades – perhaps ever. And it is these challenges we will highlight within this document, along with potential solutions.

Funding for the future has changed. Back in the 1960s and 70s, when we saw the last wave of major investment in farm infrastructure, such things as new buildings and drainage schemes were funded largely with grants and incentives from a Government that wanted to increase food supply. Those investments facilitated a profitable business which in turn allowed the core ethos of conservation and stewardship to continue. Today, with those buildings reaching the end of their lives and grants for new infrastructure no longer available, all capital expenditure must come from either profits, borrowings or the release of capital elsewhere on the farm.

We cannot know what the future holds but there are some things we can be pretty sure of. Climate change will affect our environment; and there will be demands on us to enhance the natural and built environment that we are responsible for. We are less certain on issues such as future access to the chemicals and medicines we need, the ability to market our produce to our key consumers in Europe, and the role of agriculture in our society. This uncertainty makes it vital that any strategy for the future includes ambitions to increase the amount of revenue from diversification.

I am confident that we can maintain a vibrant, modern and dynamic business in the future, one that is both sustainable and resilient to the challenges, and one that respects the sense of place that has guided the business thus far. This document sets out the ways in which this can be achieved. It identifies what we do well at the moment and the areas we can improve upon. It provides a strategy for how both the farming and non-farming enterprises can support and sustain each other for the next 20 years and beyond.

Main image: Combining at Houndean Farm with Lewes and Newhaven behind.

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1. Estate Vision



By 2033 the Iford Estate will be a place where:

- a sustainable and resilient farming enterprise continues to flourish and innovate, having met and overcome the challenges faced by the sector, and which is well placed to continue for many years to come
- the special landscapes that make up the Estate are secured for future generations, with many opportunities having been taken to enhance the landscape setting of the Estate – both for its own sake and to continue to provide an inspirational backdrop to people’s lives
- biodiversity is improved across the Estate, through continued innovations in environmentally-focused farming practices, the creation of new habitat features on previously farmed land, with every opportunity having been taken to improve existing areas
- the local rural economy thrives, with high quality holiday accommodation, land-based recreation and a rural creative industries hub having been provided. As well as supporting the estate financially, these businesses have provided rural employment and start-up opportunities to many local people
- the quality of life for our community of residents and workers is enhanced through maintaining community facilities, improved access and communications, and the protection and enhancement of our cultural heritage assets
- Ecosystem Services is embedded into our management principles so that all decision making takes place in the context of its influence on our Natural Capital



Iford and Swanborough villagers gather together for the annual tug-o'-war against Kingston. All bar two of the Iford team are Estate staff – and, perhaps unsurprisingly, they usually win!

Main image: Looking across flooded fields and dykes on the Brooks.

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2. History

As part of the process of producing this Whole Estate Plan, the heritage of the Estate was examined in some detail. This included a map regression analysis which helped to identify origins and historical importance of known heritage assets, better understand areas of likely archaeological and architectural sensitivity, and formulate an understanding of the evolution of the villages, in terms of morphology and pace of change.

The history and origins of Iford and the Iford Estate – and the evidence of this important heritage, are set out below:

Stone Age

The discovery over the years of stone tools and many burial tumuli indicate a Stone Age presence in Iford.

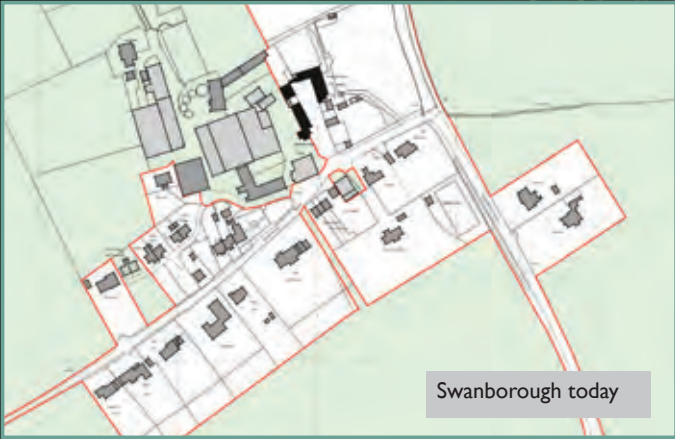
Roman

Sussex Pastfinders – a team of archaeologists – have found many Roman artefacts indicating a possible Roman settlement in the area.

Norman

In 1086 ‘Niworde’ is mentioned in the Domesday Book, with its Norman church built shortly afterwards. At this point, it would have been a fishing village on the edge of a large estuary.

The Swanborough Farm site is highly sensitive in heritage terms owing to the neighbouring Grade I listed Swanborough Manor – a former monastic grange which, in part, dates from the 13th century. It is considered likely that the eastern portion of the farmyard will have archaeological interest resulting from the fact that this part contained the demolished west wing of the Manor. In addition, the northern part of the farmyard, which currently houses the livery sand school, is considered to be important to the setting of the Grade I listed building.



History

continued 2



Main image: Shorthorn cows in Norton Barn yard. The yard is now home to a swimming pool.

Above: Mr Blaber on Iford farm in the 1930s.

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Mediaeval

The tidal water receded to the east leaving what we now know as the Brooks – small water meadows bounded by drainage ditches which were all dug by hand. The village was formed as two manors: Norton (north) lying within the Manor of Swanborough and historically owned by the Earl de la Warr Estate, and Sutton (south) within the Manor of Northease and owned by the Abergavenny Estate. The land between the Brooks and the Chalk Downs contains a ribbon of Lower Greensand which is the most fertile land in the area. In mediaeval times it was divided into narrow strips called ‘laines’ under various ownerships.

This area is very sensitive due to the adjacent listed buildings and the preceding historical development, including likely mediaeval occupation. The map shows a house on a now vacant site and the re-routing of the roads in this part of the village.

Georgian

The river Ouse is restrained with 10-foot high engineered banks constructed to stop the tidal sea water flooding the valley. This helped to increase the productivity of The Brooks, and make farming here more predictable.

The area now housing the grain drier is shown on the 1790 map as having a barn range comprising three spurs of which the small barn to the north-west of the site is a remnant.

Victorian – The origins of the Estate

The Iford Estate was founded in 1895 with the purchase of Norton Farm from the Rosseter Family by Joseph and Henry Robinson (who are the J & H in the company name) for Henry’s son Joseph Colgate Robinson (JCR) to farm. At the time of the initial purchase, Norton Farm was a long thin strip of land which stretched from the river Ouse in the north east, through the Brooks, most of the village of Iford and up and over the Downs towards the back of Rottingdean. The story goes (which may be apocryphal) that the Downs area, which at the time was largely scrub and gorse, was added free of charge to the main lot, in order to get rid of it.

The listed stone barn at Iford Farm is currently negatively impacted upon by adjacent post-war farm buildings.

Edwardian

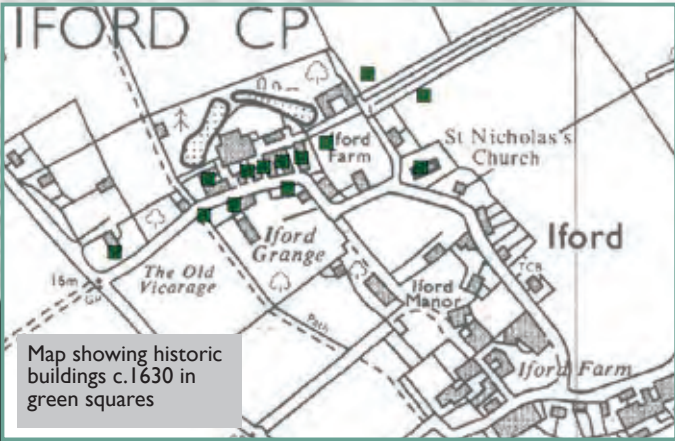
In 1912 JCR purchased Sutton Farm at Iford from the Ridge Family.

Interwar

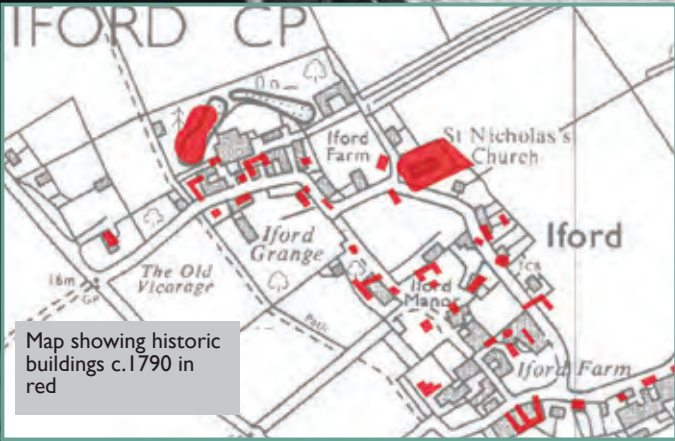
Rise Farm, near the river south of Lewes, was purchased in 1929. JCR became well known as the breeder of the Iford Herd of Pedigree Shorthorn dairy cattle – the largest such herd in the country. At one time, JCR exported one bull a week to all parts of the world and Iford-bred Shorthorns held the world lifetime milk yield record. JCR was also one of the first producers of Tuberculin Tested milk in the country. Milk was bottled on the farm and distributed from dairies in Hove and Norwood in London. He also established a pedigree Guernsey herd to improve the fat content of the bottled milk.

Postwar

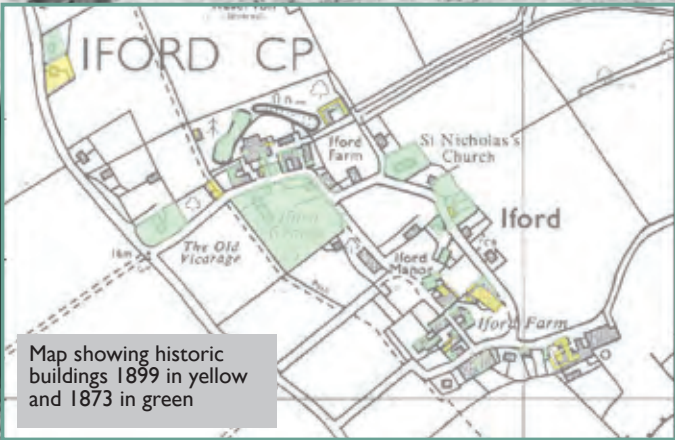
The farm – now totalling 2,500 acres – was farmed by JCR with his younger son Henry from the war onwards. Henry cleared the Downs of gorse and scrub and brought anything that was possible to plough into cultivation, as he was being encouraged and incentivised to do. Several miles of concrete road were constructed on the Downs and a mains water system installed.



Map showing historic buildings c.1630 in green squares



Map showing historic buildings c.1790 in red



Map showing historic buildings 1899 in yellow and 1873 in green



Comparison map showing Iford Farm today

History

continued 3



1960s

JCR was made a Freeman of Lewes for his philanthropic contributions, which included giving several public buildings to the town. Henry continued to modernise the farms by replacing the cowsheds with milking parlours and changing the breed to Red and White Friesians. He also tile-drained all the brook land to improve and extend the grazing period and also allow arable crops to be grown. Henry also started to make a positive impact on the natural environment, planting hedges throughout the Brooks and trees over the Estate. He also created ‘undeveloped’ natural areas and, through his sensitive farming practices, was responsible for creating the Iford Downs SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest. He was also very keen on preserving the built environment, refusing to infill gaps in the village with houses and also putting a covenant on one central area of grass in order to prevent it being developed in the future.

1970s

Henry’s son John – the current owner of the Estate – joined the business in 1970, at which time the family still owned almost every house in the village, occupied by employees or by retired workers and relatives. This was a period of intensification, with all the herds being expanded.

1980s

Improvements in technology and machinery meant that crop yields were increased and the labour requirement reduced. As a result, the need for housing gradually reduced and cottages started to be let to third parties. In 1987 the company bought Henry and John’s brother and sister out of the business, which involved selling off several properties in the village in order to raise the funds required. In the same year Houndean Farm, where the Estate had been tenants, was purchased: it lies to the western edge of Lewes and within the boundary of the old Lewes Racecourse. In 1989 John created an RSPB-designed 2.5-acre lake and hide on the Brooks, funded privately with no grant aid. It demonstrated that conservation and intensive arable farming could co-exist and is well used by members of the Sussex Ornithological Society.

1990s

Ben Taylor joined the business in 1997 as a student. Following a period at the Royal Agricultural College, he returned as the Estate’s Assistant Manager in 2000.

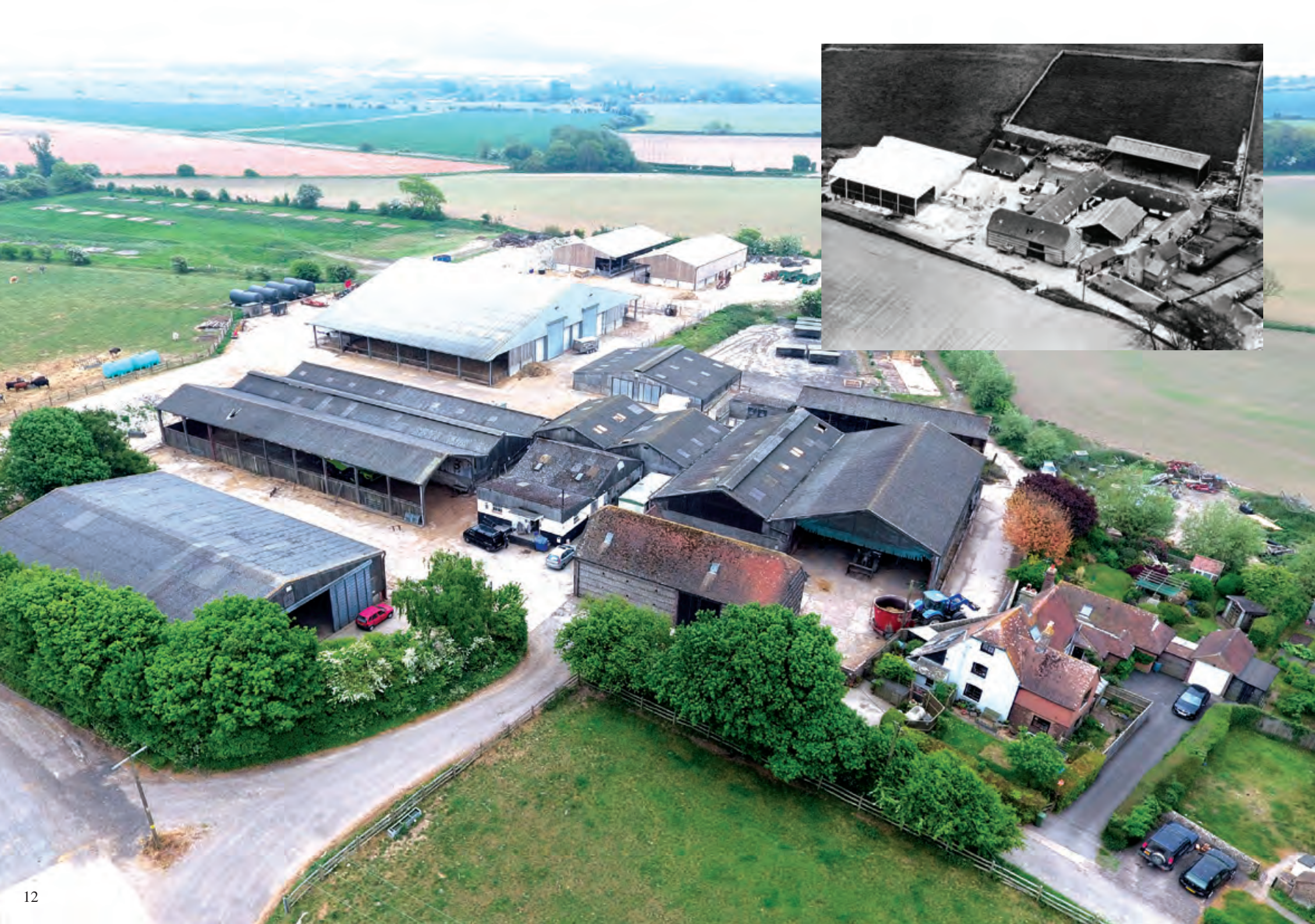
2000s

In 2007 John became semi-retired and Ben was appointed Managing Director. Under his management the business continued to grow, not least through the provision of contract farming services to neighbouring farmers as they retired. In 2008 John was awarded the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) Woodpecker trophy for his work promoting the natural environment. In 2014 the adjoining 800-acre Swanborough Farm was bought, bringing the total owned acreage to about 3,000 acres and the total farmed area to about 4,500 acres.

Main image: Iford farm today and, inset, as it was in 1962.

Above: The Red and White Friesians.

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3. Our Shared Inheritance

How the Iford Estate contributes to the Seven Special Qualities of the South Downs National Park

The Estate forms an important element of the patchwork of farms, estates, towns and villages that make up the South Downs. This section provides a snapshot of the Estate today – summarising and introducing the important underlying aspects of what makes the Estate such a special and inspirational place today.

Main image: Lapwings fly over the flooded Wildlife Pond and RSPB bird hide. The chalk cliffs of Lewes can be seen in the background beneath which flows the river Ouse.

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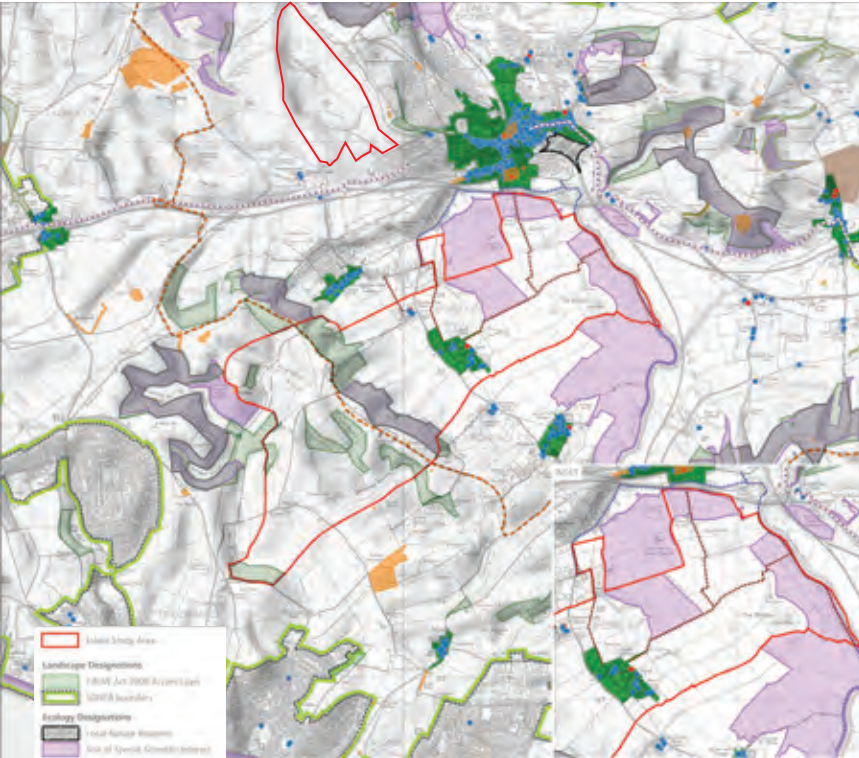
1. Diverse, inspirational landscapes and breathtaking views

The Iford Estate contains a rich variety of landscapes, on both a macro and micro scale. The Lewes Brooks beside the river Ouse, the green sand ridge and spring-line villages, and the chalk scarps of the Downs themselves are visible from far and wide and help define the landscape of this part of the National Park, but on a smaller scale you can find a small copse with a breathtaking view of the Downs, a quiet field corner rich in wildlife, or an avenue of lime trees.

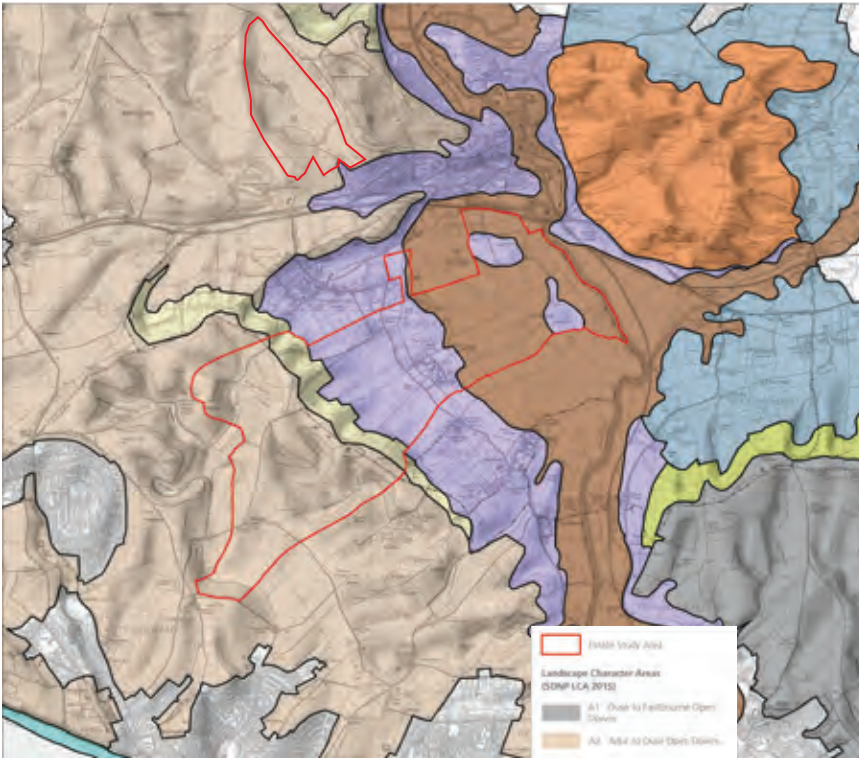
It is this combination of secluded intimate spaces and majestic landscapes which have inspired the many generations of artists and writers who have been drawn to this part of Sussex. The local area is now synonymous with the Bloomsbury Group – with Charleston Farmhouse (the home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant) and Tilton House (JM Keynes) being a few miles east of Iford at Firle and Virginia Woolf living next door to Iford at Rodmell. The area immediately surrounding Iford also provided inspiration to Eric Ravilious who painted the local landscape extensively and, a few years earlier the then village of Rottingdean just over the hill from Iford was home to Rudyard Kipling, his uncle Edward Burne-Jones and William Nicolson.

The Estate considers itself lucky to be surrounded by such distinctive landscapes and takes pride in managing the land in a way that protects and enhances their character. Such management is often unnoticed and can be subtle. It is almost always unrewarded financially, but our reward comes from the enjoyment we get from the place where we live and work. We have always strived to do our best to enhance the landscape, from planting trees and hedges to managing the rich flora on Iford Hill through careful grazing, and a hundred things in between.

We are committed to continue this work, and it forms a key part of our Vision for the Estate and this then feeds through into a range of commitments and deliverable outcomes found in the final section of this document.



Map showing landscape designations of the whole Estate



Map showing landscape character areas of the whole Estate



Birds recorded on the Brooks

Barnacle Goose	Firecrest	Little Grebe	Sedge Warbler
Barn Owl	Gadwall	Little Ringed Plover	Shelduck
Bewick's Swan	Gargany	Long-eared Owl	Short-eared Owl
Blackbird	Golden Plover	Long-tailed Tit	Shoveller
Black-headed Gull	Goldcrest	Magpie	Skylark
Blackcap	Goldfinch	Mallard	Snipe
Black-tailed Godwit	Grasshopper Warbler	Marsh Harrier	Song Thrush
Blue Tit	Greenfinch	Meadow Pipit	Sparrowhawk
Brent Goose	Great Black-backed Gull	Merlin	Spotted Flycatcher
Buzzard	Great Grey Shrike	Mistle Thrush	Starling
Canada Goose	Great Tit	Moorhen	Stock Dove
Carrion Crow	Great White Egret	Mute Swan	Stonechat
Cattle Egret	Green Sandpiper	Oyster Catcher	Swallow
Cettis Warbler	Greenshank	Peregrine Falcon	Swift
Chaffinch	Green Woodpecker	Pheasant	Teal
Chiffchaff	Grey Heron	Pied Wagtail	Tufted Duck
Collared Dove	Greylag Goose	Pintail	Turtle Dove
Common Gull	Grey Wagtail	Pochard	Water Rail
Common Sandpiper	Hen Harrier	Raven	Whimbrel
Coot	Herring Gull	Red-backed Shrike	White-fronted Goose
Cormorant	Hobby	Red-legged Partridge	Whitethroat
Corncrake	Jackdaw	Red Kite	White Wagtail
Crow	Kestrel	Redstart	Wigeon
Cuckoo	Kingfisher	Redwing	Winchat
Curlew	Lapwing	Reed Bunting	Willow Warbler
Dabchick	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Reed Warbler	Wood Pigeon
Dunlin	Lesser Whitethroat	Ringed Plover	Wood Sandpiper
Dunnoch	Linnet	Robin	Wren
Egyptian Goose	Little Egret	Rook	Yellow Wagtail
Fieldfare		Sand Martin	Yellowhammer

Recorded 2015–2017



2. A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species

The Iford Estate is well recognised as being a place where important habitats are found and, as with the landscapes discussed in the previous chapter, these habitats come in a variety of scales.

The Lewes Brooks SSSI supports a wide range of invertebrates, with water beetles being particularly well represented. The drainage ditches there vary in salinity due to the proximity of the tidal river Ouse and this leads to greater diversity of species, including several rare snails, flies and moths. During the second half of the 20th century the Brooks were intensively farmed arable fields, but in 2005 the vast majority of the Brooks were grassed down with support from Environmental Stewardship Schemes, and have since become a haven for wildlife. Water levels are controlled to provide flooded areas in the winter to attract overwintering waders, while in the summer certain areas are stocked at lower levels to provide tussocky patches of grass in which those birds can nest. The rich habitat created on this part of the farm attracts birds in huge numbers, and in huge variety. The Wildlife Pond – a large freshwater area created by the Estate in 1989 – has a bird hide that is freely available for use by appointment to members of the Sussex Ornithological Society; visitors record the species seen, and records for the last three years alone indicate that 102 species of bird have been spotted here.

The Iford Hill SSSI in the centre of the farm is particularly valued for its flora and is one of the few sites in the country where Round Headed Rampion flourishes. It provides important areas of chalk grassland, a habitat which is becoming increasingly rare and one which supports a wealth of invertebrates including the Wart-biter cricket and the Adonis Blue and Small Blue butterfly. These species are particularly threatened both locally and nationally and the Estate is keen to help provide the habitat these species require to thrive.

The game cover crops provided by the two shoots on the farm provide a key habitat for increasingly rare farmland birds. By providing habitat for the partridges and pheasants, they have also created a perfect habitat for a wide variety of birds, and a total of 64 were counted in the summer of 2017, as described by the gamekeeper Jamie Horner on the next page.

As well as the large landscape scale habitats described above, the Estate has many small-scale habitats which, although less visible are equally worthy of mention. These range from hedgerows (of which we have 13km) to field corners, rough banks that are not disturbed from one year to the next, buffer strips alongside watercourses, ditches, small woodlands and fields that have never been fertilised or sprayed. These features are discussed in more length later in this document and, again, form part of our guiding principles and commitments in the final chapter.



Round Headed Rampion

Our Shared Inheritance

continued 2



Main image: Short-eared owl – one of the rare birds seen over the Brooks.

Inset: Chalkhill Blue butterfly.

Above: A wild bird seed crop.

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Main image: Stone curlew nest on the Downs above Swanborough with one of the youngsters being ringed by the RSPB officer (inset).

Above: Gamekeeper Jamie Horner.

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CASE STUDY

Jamie Horner
Gamekeeper and RSPB Project Officer with the Peak District Birds of Prey Initiative

I’ve been involved with shooting and conservation since the age of 12 in my home county of Yorkshire. To many people’s surprise, both activities work hand-in-hand together perfectly.

One of my many jobs is as Field Officer for the Peak District Bird Of Prey Initiative. My role is to help resolve the bird of prey conflict with grouse shooting and quash the illegal persecution of protected birds in and around the Peak District National Park.

Earlier this year I was asked by a friend if I’d like to be a gamekeeper for three months and run his shoot down at Iford in East Sussex. I’d always wanted to try my hand at gamekeeping but never wanted to do it full time. I was also a little dubious about moving down south, having been told “They don’t even say ‘good morning’ down there!” and “There’s no wildlife” and “You’ll not get many ticks on your yearly birding list!”

How wrong they all were. On my first day at Iford, at the end of July, I bumped into a breeding pair of stone curlew. Not just a year’s tick – that’s what we call a lifer in birding circles. The same evening I was sitting out on the Saltdean side of the estate where I counted 20 to 30 calling cock quail. This tiny game bird is unique due to the fact that it migrates from Africa each year to breed in the UK.

Each day my list grew. Peregrine falcons, hobby, barn owl, buzzards, hen harriers, Montague harriers and merlin – the last being one of the birds I monitor as part of the Bird of Prey Initiative. I’ve often wondered where they overwinter after breeding on the moors of the Peak District. Most days I see five individual merlin; they’re here due to the high population of their favourite food – meadow pipits and skylarks which thrive here at Iford due to the mosaic of habits created by the farming methods and the crops that are specially planted for the shoot to hold the partridge that we release.

So far, my list of birds is up to 63 species. I’ll never tire of seeing the hundreds of corn buntings all around the estate, and wheatear too, as they gather in large numbers to feed on the abundant insect supply before their long crossing of the Channel on their way back south for the winter. I’ve also seen two Greenland wheatear: these amazing little birds breed right up on the west coast of Canada and all around Greenland before heading back to sub-Saharan Africa. Iford Estate is a uniquely special place for wildlife. It’s a rural oasis for numerous species and an extremely important stopping-off point for our migrating birds. I’m already looking forward to next season, and hoping to get my list to 64!

Birds recorded on Iford Hill

Barn Owl	Golden Plover	Linnet	Skylark
Blackcap	Goldcrest	Magpie	Sparrowhawk
Blue Tit	Goldfinch	Marsh Harrier	Starling
Buzzard	Green Woodpecker	Meadow Pipit	Stock Dove
Chaffinch	Greenfinch	Merlin	Stone Curlew
Chiffchaff	Great Tit	Montagues Harrier	Swallow
Corn Bunting	Grey Heron	Nightjar	Swift
Crow	Hobby	Peregrine Falcon	Tawny Owl
Curlew	House Martin	Raven	Twite
Dotterel	Jackdaw	Reed Warbler	Wheatear
Duncock	Jay	Rook	Whitethroat
English Partridge	Kestrel	Sand Martin	Wood Pigeon
Garden Warbler	Lesser Whitethroat	Sedge Warbler	Yellowhammer

Recorded Summer 2017

Our Shared Inheritance

continued 4



Main image: Overlooking the village of Swanborough, with Lewes in the distance.

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3. Tranquil and unspoilt places

The Estate makes an important contribution to dark night skies and is a particularly tranquil place. Many people are drawn to the Estate because it is relatively unaffected by modern development.

4. An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise

Over the millennia the influence of farmers has created the landscape we enjoy today. This started with the efforts of Stone Age man to clear the forests on the dry hill ground, the Mediaeval monks draining the Lewes Brooks and, more recently, the scrub clearance in the postwar period that led to the arable landscape we experience today. All these interventions have been focused on increasing the productivity of the land under our feet but, in doing so, they have shaped the landscape into something that is essentially manmade.

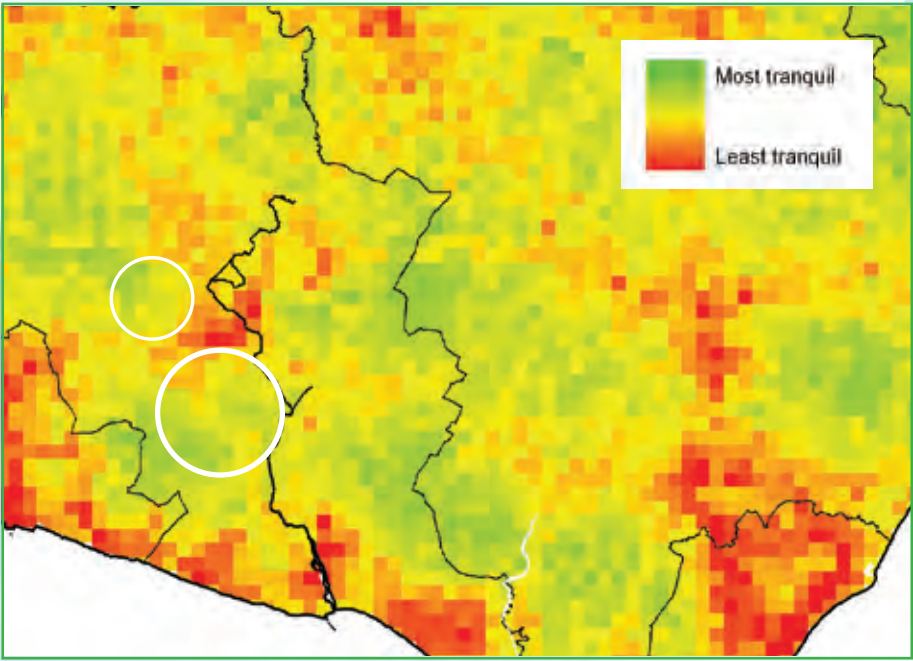
The ability of the land to provide the Ecosystems Services that as a society we value is therefore intrinsically linked to farming, and without it many of these services will cease. That is not to say that modern farming only has a positive influence on the environment: some very intensive types of farming are linked to declines in many key measures of environmental wellbeing. Even so, without farming the environment we enjoy today would be unrecognisable, and almost certainly the worse for it.

The ability of the farming enterprise found at Iford to contribute positively to the environment is the key theme of this document, it underpins many of the core principles which guide us, and informs our vision for 2033.

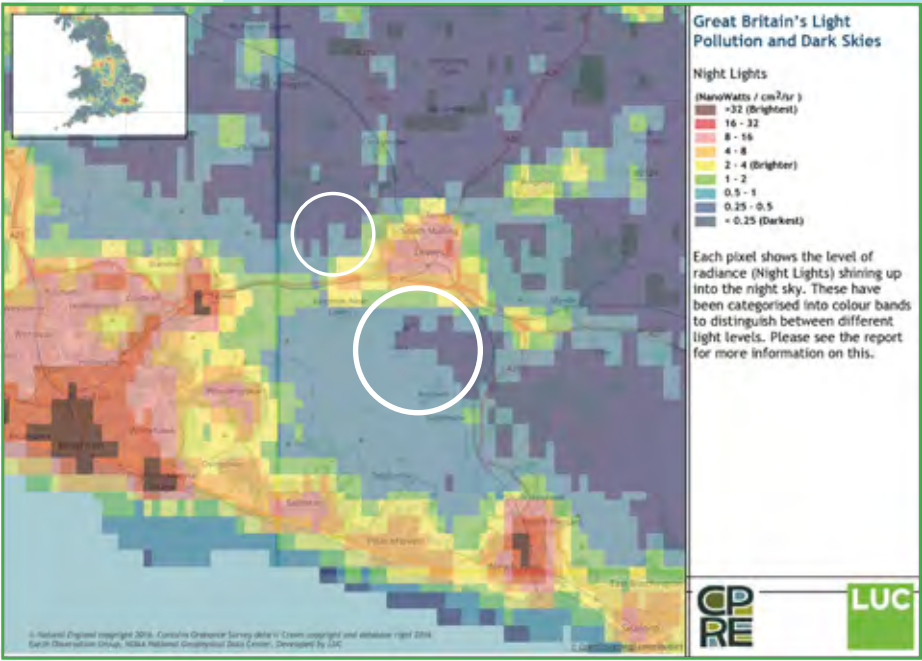
Farming forms the central ethos which underpins all of the Estate’s activities and is its main source of income. The core of this enterprise is the modern arable operation, with livestock grazing on those parts of the farm where cropping is not achievable or desirable. The Estate has responded over the years to changes in agriculture and this has resulted in an evolving landscape – as was ever the case. A prime example of this is dairying – once the core of the farm, but now non-existent.

In addition, the ebb and flow of agricultural economics over the years has led to substantial changes in the nature of the business, and inevitably over the last 20 years this has resulted in diversified enterprises making use of buildings and land that once were solely agricultural. These buildings have been developed into a number of commercial offices and workshops which are let to a wide range of local businesses. The main concentration of these is within the traditional Upper Stalls buildings, once home to the prize-winning dairy herd, and which were converted in 2000. Commercial space is also situated within the nearby Reading Rooms, at Swanborough Farm and at Rise Farm, as well as other smaller properties on the Estate. Taken together, these businesses employ 79 people (based on Full-time Equivalent or FTE).

© Campaign for the Protection of Rural England



Tranquility Map
Map of Light Pollution and Dark Skies



© Natural England copyright 2016

Our Shared Inheritance

continued 5



Main image: Open Farm Sunday gives villagers and local residents a great opportunity to see the farm in action.

Above: Iford Hall.

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5. Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences

The Estate sits within an exceptional landscape which provides significant opportunities for rural leisure pursuits, heightened by its relative accessibility. In addition to cycling and countryside walking in and around the Estate (there are 2.7km of the South Downs Way within its boundaries) it plays host to the following activities:

- Swanborough airstrip – a well-used facility with an active aero club.
- Swanborough Lakes – beautiful freshwater environments stocked with tench, carp and chub and managed by the Estate in-hand. Adjacent to these lakes, we are in the process of building a number of holiday lodges – a significant investment.
- Iford Downs and Swanborough Shoots – these shoots, let to tenants, offer some of the best partridge shooting in the South East, as well as providing some of the key habitats across the Estate.
- Swanborough Livery – a small DIY yard at the existing farm which currently uses the traditional threshing barn to stable a small number of horses and the sand school and paddocks to the north of the yard.

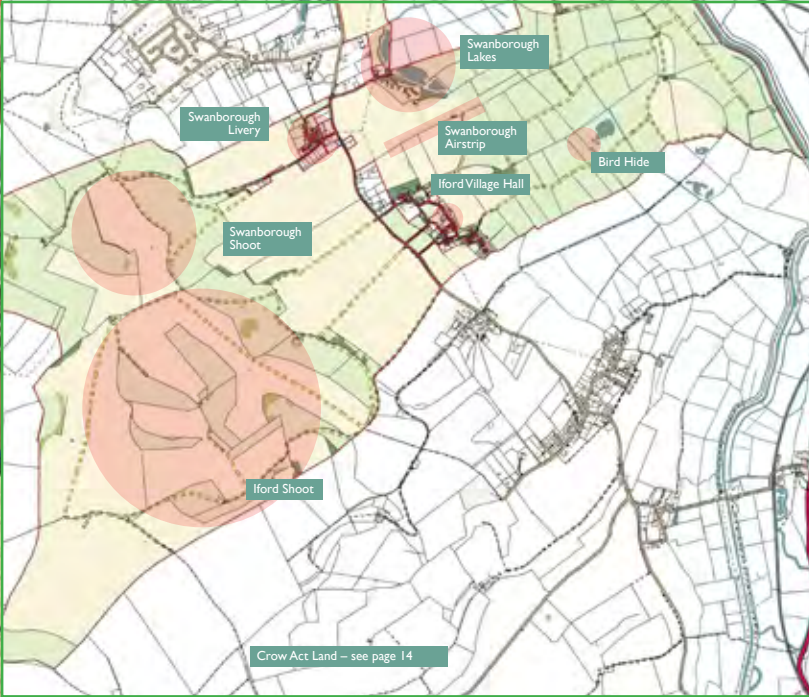
These all form an important part of the diversification income of the Estate, but the Estate facilitates a number of activities and venues that do not produce an income, but are part of our commitment to the community. This includes the following:

- The Estate owns and maintains the Iford Hall (www.ifordhall.co.uk) which was built in 1931 by Joseph and Marion Robinson in memory of their daughter Audrey who died at a young age. The hall is located in the northern part of the village, near the church. The Estate makes the hall available free-of-charge for all non-profit-making village events in Iford and Swanborough and it is used for a large number of community events, including village meetings. The hall is also made available for public hire, particularly as a wedding venue.
- Local residents are free to enjoy access over many of the internal roads and tracks on the Estate, including a walking route to Lewes and a route to the South Downs Way above Iford.
- The bird hide on the wildlife pond is available to members of the Sussex Ornithological Society.
- The Estate also provides large swathes of Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) Open Access Land, sited in blocks across the top of Iford and Swanborough Downs. Here members of the public enjoy enhanced levels of access, which is a real benefit to those living, working and visiting the local area. Some of this Open Access Land will overlap in places with the Iford Downs SSSI.
- The farm plays an active role in the agricultural community, with a variety of meetings and events taking place, such as a Police Training Day (looking at aspects of rural crime) and a Livestock Buildings Day (looking at best practice in livestock building design). The Estate also participates in Open Farm Sunday, a national event with farms across the country opening their doors to visitors.

The continued provision of these facilities is an important element of the Estate’s vision for the next 15 years, and one of its key commitments.



Map of key recreational facilities



Our Shared Inheritance

continued 6



Main image and above: Iford village today and in about 1900.
Below: The Iford Estate 4-page newsletter.



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6. Well-conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage

The Iford Conservation Area covers all of the built-up part of the village, together with areas of open ground in and around the village (notably bounding the C7 Lewes to Newhaven road). The heritage study completed in the preparation of this Whole Estate Plan has identified key listed buildings on the Estate – of which there are many.

The conservation area and listed building designations seek to protect and enhance the historic pattern of development and cultural heritage. In addition to the buildings owned and maintained by the Estate, the local area contains a large number of historic and cultural assets which contribute to the quality of life for residents and the people who work here. This helps to create a strong sense of place.

7. Distinctive towns and villages, and communities with real pride in their area

The twin settlements of Iford and Swanborough – which operate as a joint ‘parish meeting’ – enjoy a particularly strong sense of community. Both villages are ‘off the beaten track’ so that the only people you see are there for a reason, rather than just passing through. This reinforces the strong sense of community – a place where most people know each other. The Estate also provides a good deal of housing to people with a local connection, including current and retired workers, their widows or widowers and other people working locally.

In recognition of the importance of communication, the community is kept informed about what the Estate is doing through the publication of a local newsletter, *Iford Estate News*, and occasionally through meetings and workshops at the Iford Hall. This has been particularly important for the residents of Swanborough which has only been part of the Estate since 2014.

This half yearly newsletter has been produced by the Estate at its own cost since the winter of 2014 and carries regular features about the farming activities of the Estate, local wildlife and village history. It is sent to every household in Iford and Swanborough villages as well as more remote houses within the Parish and other key stakeholders in the area. The newsletter has been well received by villagers who are keen to learn more about how the Estate operates and, in doing so, form a deeper connection with the landscapes and historic buildings that surround them. The newsletter has also proved to be a useful medium for keeping people in the Parish informed about the Estate’s progress on its Whole Estate Plan, and the feedback received from Parishioners is that they have welcomed this.

Map of conservation area and listed buildings



4. Sustainable and Resilient Farming



4

Main image: Cultivating on Swanborough Hill with suckler cows on the hillside above.

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The farming enterprise is based around four key elements; land which is cropped or grazed; the herds of cattle and sheep; the farming infrastructure (buildings and machinery); and the people who farm and manage the Estate. All of these elements work in synergy to create a successful farm that creates wider social and environmental benefits.

These are covered in more detail within the Ecosystems Services section, but it is important to recognise that the use of the land for agricultural production cannot be separated from the special qualities of the landscape in which that farming takes place. Indeed, the very character of the landscape on the Iford Estate is directly attributable to the farming and land management practices which have a direct bearing on the capacity of the environment to accommodate wildlife habitats.

The farming operations create multiple benefits for local residents and visitors to this part of the National Park. But there are also more direct benefits to the local area – chiefly in terms of the employment that this use provides. Currently, the direct employees of the Estate comprise:

- 1 Estate Manager
- 1 Foreman
- 2 tractor drivers
- 2 stockmen
- 1 general agricultural worker
- 2 estate workers
- 1 part time harvest student

In addition to this direct employment, a number of key services are contracted out, ranging from agronomy consultancy to fencing and straw baling. This provides further employment in the local area.

KEY FACTS

The Farm

Total acreage	1200ha
Arable Farmland	700ha
Grazing Land	400ha
Land not farmed	100ha
Additional land farmed under contract	500ha
Cattle on farm	1050
Sheep on farm (lambs/year)	500

Production

(Average production/year)

Milling Wheat	3500t
Malting Barley	2100t
Oilseed Rape	800t
Seed Peas	250t
Feed Barley	600t
Beef carcasses (approx. 115t)	350
Breeding sheep	500

Sustainable and Resilient Farming

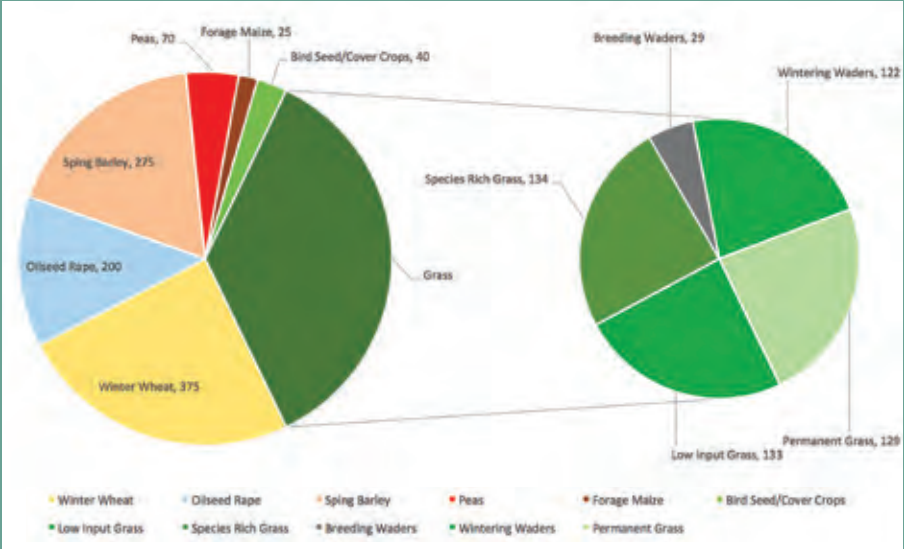
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4



Land Use – Hectares



Note – The area of grassland on the Estate is split into the following Stewardship categories:

- Breeding Waders – Grassland managed for wading birds to breed, lower stocking rates and kept wetter during the summer
- Wintering Waders – Grassland kept wet during the winter to provide habitat for wading birds
- Species Rich Grassland – managed with no fertilizer to maintain or restore chalk grassland
- Low input grassland – very limited amounts of fertilizer applied

The land farmed by the Estate ranges from heavy clays near the river Ouse to thin chalk on the South Downs. Much of this land was cropped for the first time during the war and during the postwar drive to increase arable production. The farming estate is split across four farms:

- **Iford Farm** – centred around Iford village and extending west to the back of Rottingdean and East to the River Ouse.
- **Rise Farm** – located to the eastern end of the Estate and largely made up of low-lying land situated along the western bank of the river Ouse.
- **Houndean Farm** – west of Lewes (north of the A27) and separated from the main body of the Estate.
- **Swanborough Farm** – acquired by the Estate in 2014 and centred around the settlement of Swanborough, to the south of the larger village of Kingston.

Of the total arable acreage, in any year about 400ha (1000 acres) is cropped for wheat, the majority of which is grown for bread making – providing a link back to the Robinson family’s milling roots. The fertile soils around the village of Iford provide good opportunities to achieve high yields and a good quality product.

In addition, the Estate grows barley for malting (most of which is exported to Europe), oilseed rape (which is crushed at Erith in Kent to make LEAF-assured (Linking Environment & Farming) vegetable oil that is used in making Hellmann’s mayonnaise) and seed peas for Birds Eye.

A small area of land is used to grow maize for feeding the Estate’s beef herd. The diagram opposite shows the arable and grassland areas of the farm.

Whilst the Estate aims to achieve high arable yields, this does not come at the expense of the environment. Fertiliser and sprays are carefully selected by our agronomist and accurately applied; and the use of artificial fertiliser is reduced by the use of manure and other organic material. This helps to build the organic matter in the soils, reducing the susceptibility to erosion of the Estate’s most important asset and adding to the Estate’s production of Natural Capital. Fertiliser is applied using variable rate techniques to tailor inputs to crop requirements across the field.



Sustainable and Resilient Farming

continued 3



All of the Estate’s frontline machinery is coupled to tractors that employ GPS, automatically steering the tractor to an accuracy of 2cm. This technology minimises overlaps thus reducing fuel use and minimising the carbon footprint of the arable farming business. The Estate also operates a ‘minimum tillage’ system whereby most of the soil is not ploughed but more lightly cultivated instead. As well as improving the biology of the soil and increasing retention of organic matter, this type of farming once again reduces fuel usage.

As well as farming its own land, the Estate provides a number of contract farming services to local farmers, ranging from one-off jobs, such as cutting grass for silage and hay making, to complete farming and land management. This helps to spread fixed costs by putting employees and machinery to work across a wider area of land, increasing the sustainability of the enterprise. This also enables the positive influence of the Estate’s land management ethos to be spread wider than the land it directly controls.

The Estate also lies within the Eastern South Downs Farm Cluster Group and plays an active part in this grouping. The Estate hosted a visit from Cluster Group members in early 2018, examining the use of wild bird food crops on the Estate, and another visit is planned for Summer 2018 as a BBQ and bird walk. The Farm Cluster provides a useful framework for helping to spread best practice, and this gives the Estate an opportunity to broaden its positive influence over the landscape beyond its own boundaries. The Cluster Group is also likely to be ever more important as a vehicle for generating innovative new approaches to agricultural subsidies that operate on a large landscape scale – for example those that might be related to the capturing of Natural Capital and other public goods.

Main image and above: Combining at Iford.

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Challenges

The current farming model on the Estate has grown up in reaction to, and been driven by, successive approaches to agricultural subsidies. Current discussions on the future of these subsidies following Brexit is creating a great deal of uncertainty in the farming sector, and this is a cause for significant concern.

Support payments received by the Estate, both direct (The Basic Payment Scheme) and indirect (Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)/Countryside Stewardship) account for a significant proportion of farm income – currently greater than the total profit generated from farming. The current HLS scheme at Iford expires later this year and direct support is only guaranteed until 2019 after which it is likely the level of support will be capped. The need to secure non-farming income – for example through the capturing and monetisation of Natural Capital generated by farming is therefore greater than ever as agricultural production becomes ever more insecure.

At the same time, we need to ensure that the farm is as effective as it can be – and a large part of this means needing to ensure it is provided with the infrastructure it needs to survive the expected challenging times ahead. Previous rounds of investment – much of which was grant-funded – has meant that the farm has been able to adapt to wider drivers in the agricultural market place. However, many of the buildings are now beyond the end of their useful life, either because they are too small to accept modern agricultural machinery or because they were designed for dairying, which has not been carried out on the farm for some years now. In addition, having the main farming infrastructure on the Estate spread across five different yards makes it extremely difficult to be able to manage the Estate effectively.

Scope for improvement

The Estate has identified that operating with reduced subsidy income will mean that it will need to seek out opportunities for generating income through other means. This might include investigating innovative ways through which the Natural Capital generated by the Estate can be turned into income – as is currently being suggested as a possible replacement of the land-based subsidy regime – but it will also require the Estate to explore opportunities for increasing its share of income derived through diversification activities (covered in detail in Section Six of this Plan).

But increasing the share of income generated by non-farming activities will not on its own be sufficient. It is vitally important that investments are made now to secure an effective and viable farming enterprise that can support itself even without subsidy.

The Estate has identified an urgent need to invest in new buildings that are more suited to the current farming activities and to relocate all activities onto a single site, from where the farm can be managed in the most effective and cost efficient way possible. This investment will not only make the farm more productive, but will permit the Estate to increase its ability to farm in a socially and environmentally responsible way.

Sustainable and Resilient Farming

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Main image: Stubble cultivations encourage weeds to germinate prior to sowing.

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Sustainable and Resilient Farming

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4

CASE STUDY

Upholding the tradition of grazing livestock at Iford

The Iford Estate’s herd of about 350 suckler cows continues a long tradition of farming cattle at Iford. Previous generations have of course focused on dairying and the Robinson family is committed to maintaining livestock on the Estate.

All of the calves produced by the suckler herd are fattened at Iford, using silage and cereals grown on the farm. These cattle spend most of their lives on grass and are brought inside at about 18 months old to finish during the winter.

At any one time the Estate have about 1000 head of cattle on the farm, and these are a mix of breeds. A proportion are traditional Sussex cattle, which are well suited to grazing the rough pastures on the South Downs and are happy to be grazed outside for most of the year. The rest are a mixture of crosses between different breeds, but are selected both for their milk production and their ability to calve easily, as well as producing a high quality carcass in their calf.

The herd utilises both the steeper and wetter parts of the farm which are not suitable for arable production. Many of these areas are within SSSIs and the grazing is specifically managed to allow the wild flowers and plants to flourish. The cattle also graze the Castle Hill National Nature Reserve, and the Estate is working with Natural England to improve the rare chalk grassland through careful grazing at key points in the year.

The mix of poor grassland and good grazing suits the system very well, with plenty of good quality grassland on the Brooks to grow and fatten youngstock, and poorer quality grazing on the hill which can be utilised by older animals. We are currently experimenting with keeping the breeding herd outside for longer, grazing them on forage crops grown on stubbles from the arable enterprise. This reduces the need to keep cattle in barns which should help improve herd health and at the same time build fertility and organic matter on the arable land.

The management of chalk grassland, where herbicides cannot be used and the sward cannot be controlled mechanically, also needs sheep grazing. Sheep are very good at opening the sward up, allowing flowers and herbs to flourish free of competition, and at the same time controlling pernicious weeds like Ragwort. Without the presence of sheep, cattle alone would not be able to provide the type of grazing required to maintain the chalk grassland. To this end we also have a flock of lambs that are grown on for sale as breeding ewes, and these are supplemented by keep sheep where necessary.

Main image: Cows and calves graze on the Downs above Swanborough.

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Our Vision for Sustainable and Resilient Farming

By 2033 the Iford Estate will be a place where:

- a sustainable, viable and resilient farming enterprise continues to flourish and innovate, having met and overcome the challenges faced by the sector during that period and which is well placed to continue for many years to come.

Our Commitments

Through the Whole Estate Plan, and the actions and projects that flow out of this process, the Iford Estate will work with key stakeholders:

- To modernise the building infrastructure to improve the efficiency of the farming operation.
- To continue to adopt new technologies, particularly those that reduce the use of fuel, fertiliser and sprays.
- To maintain the presence of grazing livestock on the Estate.
- To continue to participate in environmental schemes, particularly on the more sensitive parts of the Estate.
- To fully consider landscape and biodiversity whenever new practices or techniques, buildings or machinery are introduced.
- To continue to participate in the Farm Cluster Group, and through this grouping investigate innovative ways of capturing Natural Capital values.

Each of these commitments underpins the Plan Outcomes set out in Section 9 of this document.

Sustainable and Resilient Farming

continued 6



Main image: The Iford Estate team came away with three bits of silverware – ‘Best farm 2000 acres and over’, ‘Best field of wheat’ and ‘Best corn sample’ at the 2016 Laughton & District Agricultural Society annual ploughing match.

Above: How it used to be done on the Estate.

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5. Landscape and Biodiversity



The Estate takes particular pride in managing the land in a way that protects and enhances the landscape and local ecology. This is evidenced by the various improvements that it has often chosen to carry out with no external incentives.

The Estate contains two SSSIs and other important ecological assets and whilst they do not currently support the main farming enterprise in a direct way, they do serve to make the Estate a more attractive place to live, work and visit, enhancing the quality of life. These assets will also be central to the Estate’s ability to access farming subsidies in the future, since it is currently likely that the emerging subsidy regime will be more outcome driven, and related to Natural Capital.

The Lewes Brooks SSSI extends to some 340ha, of which Iford Estate owns and manages about 95ha. A further 75ha of land forming part of the Estate is managed using the same principles, i.e. as if it were part of the SSSI. All of this latter land is entered in either Higher Level Stewardship or its successor scheme Countryside Stewardship. The Estate’s management of these areas focuses on two key elements, ditch management and habitat for breeding and overwintering waders.

Ditches are cleaned and shaped in rotation to provide a series of habitats from clear to reed choked, and this mosaic of habitats supports a wide variety of invertebrates. The fields are allowed to flood in the winter to attract over-wintering waders, and some fields are then left wet with a more tussocky sward in the early summer to allow those birds to breed successfully. This means that stocking rates are reduced on those parcels, but cattle can be grazed at a normal level during the summer.

Main image: Flooding over the Brooks in winter affords a wonderful habitat for a large number of water birds.

Above: The Iford Estate team in 2015.

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Landscape and Biodiversity

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Main image: Beef cattle play an important role in the ecosystem.

Above: Barns owls are seen both on the Brooks and the hills.

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The Iford Hill SSSI, as explained elsewhere, is noted for Wart-biter crickets and Adonis Blue butterflies, as well as its species rich chalk grassland. The SSSI covers about 63ha, of which 38ha are managed by the Estate. Management on these parcels focuses on controlled grazing, with both sheep and cattle, to maintain the sward, and to prevent undesirable grasses, scrub and pernicious weeds taking over. No fertiliser or herbicides are applied, and in some places a deliberate decision was taken in the 1970s to never apply fertiliser, resulting in a true chalk grassland. The grazing is typically poor, but free draining, and so therefore provides an element of overwinter grazing. A further 130ha of Estate farmland is managed according to the same principles, and again under the guise of HLS and CS.

The HLS scheme covering all of the old Iford Farm expires in October 2018, and discussions are underway to renew the scheme with Countryside Stewardship.

As discussed above, many other valuable habitats exist on the Estate, from hedgerows to field corners, from field margins to game cover crops. Most of these measures are not driven by environmental schemes, but nonetheless offer excellent habitats to a variety of species.

Hedgerows are deliberately not cut too frequently, and are often allowed to grow out to provide more nesting and feeding opportunities. Field margins are trimmed biannually and provide excellent habitats for small mammals, and the results of this are seen in the numbers of barn owls present on the farm. A series of owl boxes also encourage these birds onto the holding.

Some rough banks on Iford Hill are too remote for grazing, and it is rare that anyone sets foot in them from one year to the next. As well as providing scrubby cover they also harbour pockets of species rich grassland, and could be considered to be “rewilded”.

Lastly, the Estate contains a redundant dewpond at Iford Hill which has been out of use for many years. The Estate recognises the potential benefits of its restoration in landscape biodiversity as well as cultural heritage terms. Restoring dewponds can be a major endeavour however, especially when such sites tend to be quite remote. It should also be recognised that fencing off such features (e.g. for health and safety reasons) can mean that they cannot be used by livestock and the lack of the ‘puddling’ action by hooves means that the clay base on the pond will deteriorate leading to drying out.



© Sarah London Photography

Landscape and Biodiversity

continued 3



Challenges

The Estate is committed to the highest possible levels of landscape and biodiversity enhancement, and does not believe that modern, sometimes more intensive models of farming are incompatible with this aim. However, many activities in this direction come at a cost, and changes to agricultural subsidies might make this more challenging.

Since the level of work that can be carried out on the protection of habitats and landscape is directly linked to the profitability of the Estate, current agricultural subsidies help to offset the costs of maintaining this land to a high standard. Because of this, and unless a new subsidy regime can be put in place that enables Natural Capital of this type to be monetised by the Estate, there is a risk that the relative costs to the Estate for these important activities – including caring for the SSSIs – will significantly increase.

Scope for improvement

As noted above, the presence of a high quality natural environment – including important designations – will bring with it opportunities for the Estate to enhance its diversification activities. These would include the promotion of rural tourism on the Estate and the development of further business premises in response to local need for commercial accommodation. It is also considered that the high quality landscapes and environments serve to increase demand for housing which anecdotally has been boosted following the designation of the National Park. Whilst this carries with it the potential to help drive growth in rental income for the Estate, this needs to be balanced with the Estate’s social objectives and responsibilities to current tenants, including those who work, or have worked, for the Estate.

The activities of the farm, and the related responsible management of the Downland landscapes within the Estate provide an opportunity for the ecosystems services to be promoted more widely within the National Park. Farms and landowners will need to think creatively about how the Natural Capital that they provide can be used to capture values and create income to replace that lost through reduced farming subsidy – for example through biodiversity offsetting. The Iford Estate, already well known for environmentally responsible farming and landscape stewardship, is well placed to explore this.

Main image: A wild bird seed crop will provide a rich source of winter food.

Above: The view towards Iford Hill.

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Main image: Cattle graze on North Hill.
Above: Pyramidal orchid.

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CASE STUDY

North Hill

Chalk grassland is one of the defining characteristics of the SDNP, covering only 4% (5608ha) of the park’s area. Over 1/3 of these sites are less than 1ha. Ideally a site of at least 20ha is required to maintain its resilience to change and damage.

The field we call North Hill could be described as the jewel in the crown of Iford’s SSSI. It is a steeply sloping field on the scarp face of the Downs and extends to about 20ha. The majority of the field is inaccessible to any vehicle, although a seldom used track runs through it to the top of the hill. This field was one of several that never received any fertiliser during the 1970s and 1980s when the common practice was to apply nitrogen by aeroplane to this type of field. This deliberate decision has resulted in the astonishing variety of species that is found here today. The most recent plant count revealed 114 species, including Orchids of the Spotted, Pyramidal, Early Purple and Bee varieties.

However, management of this parcel is a delicate balance between under and overgrazing. Too little grazing results in the encroachment of gorse and undesirable weeds such as ragwort; too much grazing will destroy the flora we are trying to encourage.

In practice, the best results are achieved by relatively heavy winter grazing to remove as much grass growth as possible, followed by a break in the early summer to allow flowering and seed setting. By August the flowers have completed their flowering and it is usually safe to allow stock back on.

Every third year it is also important to keep sheep on for the entire summer. Without this, Ragwort will very quickly take over. Sheep are the only animals that can safely eat ragwort and we have found that, if the cattle have eaten the majority of the grass during the spring, the sheep will very quickly eat the ragwort. If left too late, the plant becomes woody and unpalatable, and this results in a much poorer level of control.

This balance of grazing between sheep and cattle is absolutely vital to maintain these exceedingly rare parcels of land, and to improve those that are in a less favourable condition. The Estate is committed to continuing to graze and manage these areas of the farm, for as long as it is economically viable.





Our Vision for Landscape and Biodiversity

By 2033 the Iford Estate will be a place where:

- the special landscapes that make up the Estate are secured for future generations, with many opportunities having been taken to enhance the landscape setting of the Estate
- biodiversity is improved across the Estate, through continued innovations in environmentally focused farming practices, the creation of new habitat features on previously farmed land, with every opportunity having been taken to improve existing areas.

Our Commitments

Through the Whole Estate Plan, and the actions and projects that flow out of this process, the Iford Estate will work with key stakeholders:

1. To identify opportunities to create a range of new habitats on land hitherto farmed intensively.
2. To investigate opportunities to extend and enhance existing habitat features – including by improving connections between existing habitats to create habitat corridors.
3. To identify any species in decline locally (e.g. Wart-biter cricket) and identify opportunities to arrest that decline.
4. To maintain and enhance valued landscapes for the benefit of all residents and visitors to the National Park.
5. To encourage wider access and appreciation of the high quality landscapes on the Iford Estate.

Each of these commitments underpins the Plan Outcomes set out in Section 9 of this document.

Landscape and Biodiversity

continued 5



Main image: Field margins in the autumn provide a habitat for a variety of species.
Above: Bumble bee on clover.

Current Tenants

The Iron Works <i>Ironing and Laundry business with free collection and delivery</i> Lowerstalls Barn, Iford 3 FTE	Rugged Management <i>Artist Management & Touring Agency</i> www.ruggedmgmt.com Reading Room 2 2 FTE	Rise Joinery <i>Manufacturers of quality bespoke joinery</i> www.risejoinery.co.uk Rise Farm 5 FTE	Furniture in the Making <i>Bespoke Upholstery and Antique Restoration</i> www.furnitureinthemaking.co.uk Covered Yards, Iford 2 FTE	Goodman Wood <i>All aspects of carpentry work, specialising in built-in and freestanding furniture</i> www.goodmanwood.com The Old Fertiliser Barn 1 FTE
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Reading Room <i>“Sussex’s Only Boutique Day Spa”</i> www.readingroomdayspa.com Reading Room 1 3 FTE	Orange Badge Mobility Services <i>UK Specialists in wheelchairs, power chairs, mobility scooters and stairlifts</i> www.orangebadge.co.uk Rise Farm 10 FTE	Steve Kelly <i>Car repairs</i> Covered Yards, Iford 1 FTE	The Costume Store <i>Selling costume accessories for stage, screen and TV</i> www.thecostumestore.co.uk Upperstalls 3 3 FTE	Bimble Solar <i>Suppliers of affordable solar panels and equipment for off and on grid use</i> www.bimblesolar.com The Old Tractor Shed, Swanborough 3 FTE	SDK Woodcrafts <i>Bespoke joinery</i> Covered Yards, Iford 1 FT
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Grain Furniture <i>Manufacturers of bespoke fitted furniture</i> www.grainfurniture.co.uk The Dairy, Iford 4 FTE	Imago Photographic <i>Fashion product photography for ecommerce and print</i> www.imagophotographic.co.uk Upperstalls 2 & 6 6 FTE	Katie Sells <i>Catering for all occasions</i> www.annabelskitchen.net The Old Tractor Shed, Swanborough 1 FTE	South East Metal Services <i>Fine Designs in Metal and Glass</i> www.semetals.co.uk The Old Forge, Iford 1 FTE	Reflex Instruments Europe <i>Reflex is the leader in innovative instrumentation and technology for drilling, data collection and analysis within the global minerals industry</i> reflexnow.com Upperstalls 4 & 5 6 FTE	CMP Studios <i>Mobile Recording Studio</i> Upperstalls 1 2 FTE
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In addition to its main farming activities, the Estate owns and manages a portfolio of residential and commercial properties and other land-based diversifications. In most cases, the Estate has become a landlord accidentally, since all let properties would have once formed part of the day-to-day farming enterprise. However, as the Estate’s own requirements for property and infrastructure have changed, then redundant or under-used assets have been utilised to provide a broad base of diversified income.

This aspect of the Estate is therefore important in helping it to cope with the peaks and troughs associated with farming, and so supporting a successful and sustainable business. It is likely that diversified revenue of this type will become ever more important as farming subsidies reduce as expected.

At the same time, properties are not always let on an entirely commercial footing and the Estate will often allow environmental and social issues to influence the way it lets its properties – for example, by encouraging tenants who will make a contribution to the local community.

The residential element of the Estate’s activities is covered in greater detail within Section 9 of this WEP. It is however important to recognise the role that the income from let cottages plays in supporting the activities of the Estate.

The commercial units help to redress the levels of employment that have been lost in the agricultural sector. At the same time they help to create vitality and activity during the day that would otherwise have been lost. Preventing the villages from being abandoned during the day provides wider benefits to the Estate and community in terms of providing a strong sense of place and supporting people’s wellbeing and quality of life. This then leads to secondary benefits such as increasing demand for cottage lets and commercial space.

6. Local Rural Economy



KEY FACTS Commercial Estate	
Commercial Units	45
People employed (82 full time)	122
Holiday lodges (completed 2018)	12
Diversified Income Growth 2001-2017:	+731%

Main image: Diversified use of one of the converted barns.

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Local Rural Economy

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Main image: Unit 3 Upperstalls.

Above: The farmyard prior to conversion to commercial units.

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CASE STUDY

Upper Stalls, Iford

The Upperstalls is a courtyard of traditional buildings, including two listed ones, in the northern end of Iford. Historically this site was the focus of pedigree bull rearing, and latterly calf rearing. It also housed the farm office, and a traditional Sussex barn. In 1999, with the agricultural industry beginning to look to diversification to secure income against the backdrop of falling commodity prices, the decision was taken to convert the buildings into five high-quality office units.

Planning permission was granted and an ERDP grant was obtained to help fund the conversion. Great care was taken to preserve the traditional features, particularly of the large Sussex Barn, and a second floor was added in a way that didn't affect the flint walls of the building.

Demand for these units was initially strong, and a variety of tenants has occupied them since. However, during the economic downturn of 2007/8 we were left with significant bad debts and vacant buildings following the collapse of one of the tenants. The large barn proved particularly difficult to re-let, in part due to its size, but also because of the high level of business rates for any new tenant.

The demand for these properties has now recovered and in 2015 led to the conversion of an additional unit for an existing tenant who was expanding rapidly.

The experience of the downturn highlighted firstly, the need to not be reliant on any one sector and secondly, the need to consider the flexibility of accommodation when designing new conversions. The ability to easily subdivide or combine buildings makes them a much more attractive prospect for tenants, and we aim to use this principle in all future conversions.





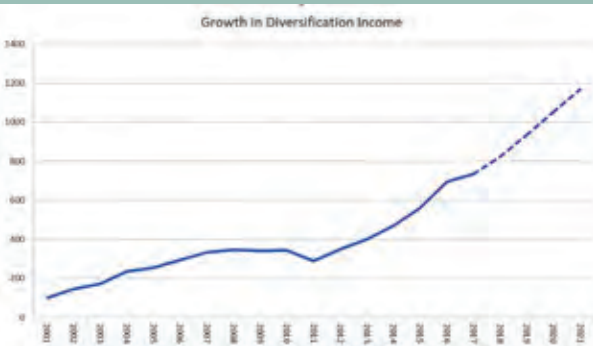
CASE STUDY

Swanborough Lake Holiday Lodges

In 2016 the decision was made to take advantage of the leisure and tourism opportunities following the creation of the South Downs National Park (SDNP). This is a growth sector and one that is somewhat insulated from economic downturns. A planning application was submitted in 2017 for 12 bespoke, high quality holiday lodges and the creation of 1600m of new cycle paths to provide a sustainable development. Permission was granted in February 2018 and, at the time of writing, the park is expected to open in August 2018. Swanborough Lodges represent a significant investment for the Estate but will add additional income, as projected above, and give a new focus to diversification. This initiative provides a good example of how new enterprises can support the objectives of the Estate as well as the SDNP, and also unlock wider benefits for the local community in the form of improved access and safe off-road cycle routes.

Growth in Diversification Income

The rapid growth in diversified income since 2000 shows the success of previous efforts to secure non-farming revenue, and is now a major component of the Estate’s profitability.



The dip in revenue following the financial crisis of 2007-2012 illustrated how reliant the Estate had become on a single sector of the economy – small business units. Efforts were made to seek a more diversified income stream to “diversify the diversification”. The introduction of new shoot tenants in 2010 marked a move into leisure and tourism, which continued in 2014 with the purchase of Swanborough Farm and its associated airstrip and fishing lakes.

Challenges

Although the Estate is considered by those that work there to be a special place, some tenants of more isolated units report difficulty in being able to hire staff due to perceptions about accessibility and daytime vitality. Accessibility is a key theme, as the location and lack of (at present) suitable dedicated cycle routes means that people coming to work here will be reliant on a private car – which many people do not (or do not wish to) have access to. Similarly, many potential staff are put off coming to work at Iford because they worry that there would be less things for them to do during their lunch break.

The Estate strives to achieve a balanced approach in its diversification activities but it is acknowledged that there can sometimes be tensions between different occupants and users of the Estate. Residents can become concerned about commercial units leading to parking issues in the village, or about noise and disturbance as a result of certain activities.

Scope for improvement

Despite identified weaknesses, the high level of demand for commercial properties in this area, coupled with the likelihood of a range of buildings and sites currently used for farming becoming redundant over the period of this plan, helps to create an opportunity for the Estate to make use of these buildings and sites to provide further non-agricultural income, including through new commercial units and tourist accommodation.

The surrounding inspirational landscapes, and the artistic and creative community that has grown up locally, means that it is considered that it would be beneficial to explore the creation of a rural creative industries hub, most likely centred on the village of Iford. This would not only provide additional non-farming income, but would increase daytime vitality in the village which in turn would promote a high quality of life for employees and residents alike. In particular, there is an immediate opportunity to help house some of the businesses being displaced by the North Street Quarter redevelopment in Lewes.

In addition, the presence of rural recreation and leisure activities on the Estate brings with it an opportunity for the Estate to make an additional provision for further facilities, including visitor accommodation. This might also entail refreshing and upgrading existing facilities – for example, at the Livery enterprise – in order to better compete in a demanding marketplace.

Local Rural Economy

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Main image: A lodge similar to those being constructed for Swanborough Lakes.

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Local Rural Economy

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Our Vision for Local Rural Economy

By 2033 the Iford Estate will be a place where:

- The local rural economy thrives, with high-quality holiday accommodation, land-based recreation and a rural creative industries hub having been provided. As well as supporting the estate financially, these businesses have provided rural employment and start-up opportunities to many local people.

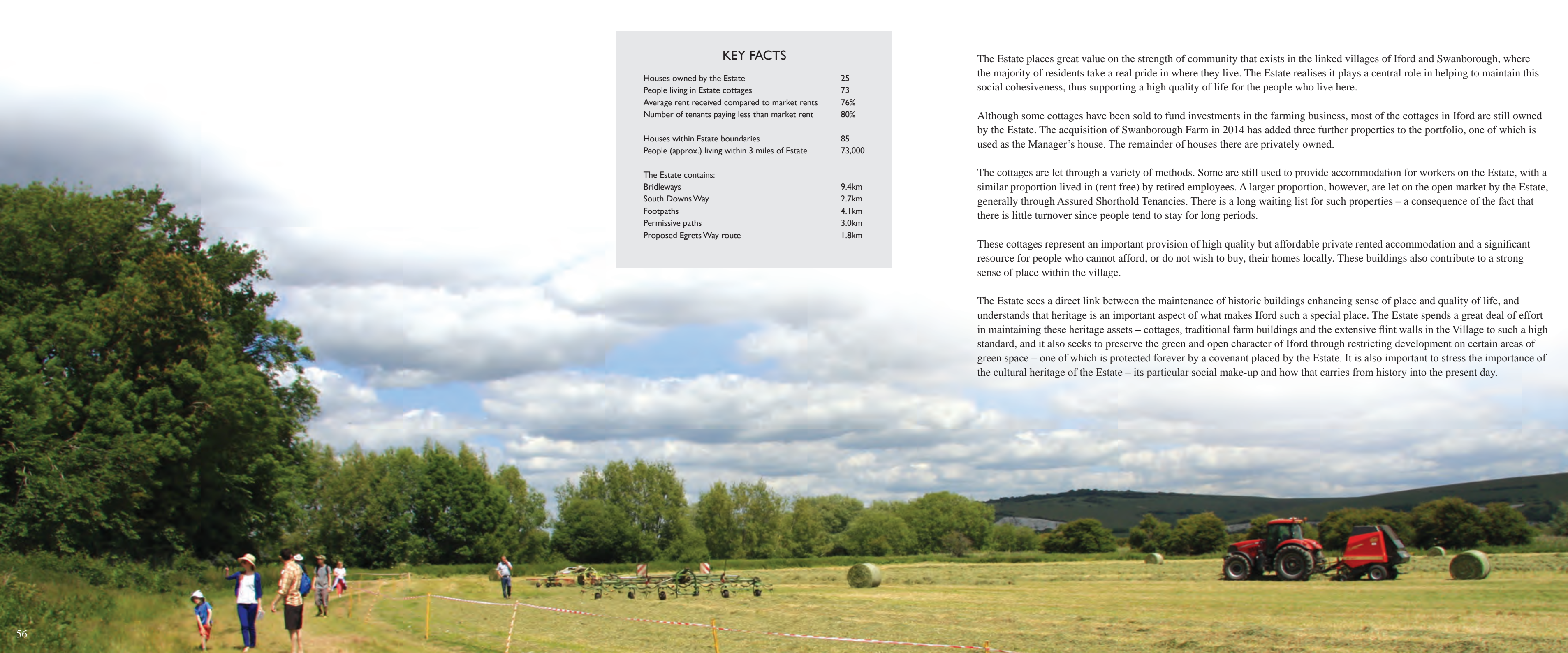
Our Commitments

Through the Whole Estate Plan, and the actions and projects that flow out of this process, the Iford Estate will work with key stakeholders:

1. To sympathetically convert any redundant buildings, with preference given to commercial and tourist accommodations, whilst recognising the need to raise capital to fund these and other projects.
2. To provide a range of non-farming employment opportunities for local people, including for people who want to start their own business.
3. To enhance the daytime vitality of Iford through the provision of workshops and studios.
4. To support the local visitor economy, in recognition of the wider economic benefits that this brings to the local area.
5. To work with SDNPA and ESCC to improve the accessibility of the Estate, including for cyclists.

Each of these commitments underpins the Plan Outcomes set out in Section 9 of this document.

Main image: An angler’s ‘swim’ on one of the fishing lakes at Swanborough.



KEY FACTS

Houses owned by the Estate	25
People living in Estate cottages	73
Average rent received compared to market rents	76%
Number of tenants paying less than market rent	80%
Houses within Estate boundaries	85
People (approx.) living within 3 miles of Estate	73,000
The Estate contains:	
Bridleways	9.4km
South Downs Way	2.7km
Footpaths	4.1km
Permissive paths	3.0km
Proposed Egrets Way route	1.8km

The Estate places great value on the strength of community that exists in the linked villages of Iford and Swanborough, where the majority of residents take a real pride in where they live. The Estate realises it plays a central role in helping to maintain this social cohesiveness, thus supporting a high quality of life for the people who live here.

Although some cottages have been sold to fund investments in the farming business, most of the cottages in Iford are still owned by the Estate. The acquisition of Swanborough Farm in 2014 has added three further properties to the portfolio, one of which is used as the Manager’s house. The remainder of houses there are privately owned.

The cottages are let through a variety of methods. Some are still used to provide accommodation for workers on the Estate, with a similar proportion lived in (rent free) by retired employees. A larger proportion, however, are let on the open market by the Estate, generally through Assured Shorthold Tenancies. There is a long waiting list for such properties – a consequence of the fact that there is little turnover since people tend to stay for long periods.

These cottages represent an important provision of high quality but affordable private rented accommodation and a significant resource for people who cannot afford, or do not wish to buy, their homes locally. These buildings also contribute to a strong sense of place within the village.

The Estate sees a direct link between the maintenance of historic buildings enhancing sense of place and quality of life, and understands that heritage is an important aspect of what makes Iford such a special place. The Estate spends a great deal of effort in maintaining these heritage assets – cottages, traditional farm buildings and the extensive flint walls in the Village to such a high standard, and it also seeks to preserve the green and open character of Iford through restricting development on certain areas of green space – one of which is protected forever by a covenant placed by the Estate. It is also important to stress the importance of the cultural heritage of the Estate – its particular social make-up and how that carries from history into the present day.

7. Community and Cultural Heritage



Main image: The public enjoy a wander around the fields on Open Farm Sunday.

Above: The Pumpkin Patch Nursery School from Brighton using the Spinney on Iford Hill for its Forest School Days.

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The Estate is keen to preserve both physical and cultural heritage as much as possible – and takes its responsibilities in this area seriously. This includes the continued ownership and maintenance of Iford Hall, built by the Estate in 1931, and used free of charge for a large number of community events, including Village Meetings.

A significant contributor to quality of life on the Estate is its proximity to towns like Lewes and Newhaven and the city of Brighton. It is also within easy reach of the trunk road network via the A27. This serves to make the Estate an attractive place to live or work, since people can balance the high quality of life with the convenience of being able to access jobs, shopping and cultural opportunities within these larger settlements. The adjacent village of Kingston is a short walk away from the boundary of the Estate and contains the local primary school – ‘Iford & Kingston School’ – a pub, church and garden centre. In this way, it acts as a local hub to both Swanborough and Iford, with the three villages having a closely linked community.

The Estate is home to a range of footpaths and bridleways, including the South Downs Way and Egrets Way, which connect into a wider and well-used network of public rights of way in the area. The South Downs Way is a well-established and popular recreational resource that has a high local, regional and national profile. The Egrets Way is a partially completed cycle and walking trail that aims to connect Lewes with Newhaven to the south. Part of the designated route passes along the eastern edge of the Estate, through the Lewes Brooks SSSI. Discussions with the South Downs National Park Association (SDNPA) about how the remaining section might be completed are ongoing at the time of writing.

The existence of a bus service to the villages, although infrequent, is an asset, and although it is unlikely to be relied upon in isolation, the ability to access the village and the businesses located there is important. This helps to support existing residents and will also help attract people and business to the area.

Challenges

The high quality of life offered by the Iford Estate will serve to increase demand for housing in the villages, potentially pushing market rental rates beyond the level that would be affordable for many existing members of the community. Most of the cottages are let at lower than market rates and, whilst it is committed to being a responsible landlord, the Estate recognises that this will be hard to maintain if agricultural subsidies are reduced. Put simply, the Estate cannot afford to provide cheap housing if it finds itself operating at a loss. Any forced change to the Estate’s lettings policy will therefore threaten social cohesion.

At the same time, the Estate recognises the challenges it faces in letting historic, often listed, buildings and walls as part of its portfolio. Recent changes to regulations governing the private rented sector have created additional costs and regulatory burdens for the Estate, primarily around Energy Performance Certificates and Gas and Electrical Safety Certification. The need to provide comfortable lettable accommodation and at the same time meet responsibilities around heritage conservation means that the profit on letting and maintaining of older properties will often be very marginal.

Community and Cultural Heritage

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Main image: The Estate lies to the south and west of the county town of Lewes.

Above: A view of Lewes castle across Rise Farm stubble fields.

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Community and Cultural Heritage

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Similarly, the proximity of large settlements such as Brighton and Lewes – whilst providing economic and cultural benefits to residents on the Estate – will also serve to create recreational pressures, as people living in these areas use the Estate for leisure. Being close to large settlements also carries with it increased risks of crime and antisocial behaviour, compared with more remote farm locations. Currently, there is no method for the Estate to recover costs associated with providing recreational and environmental benefits to people living in urban settlements nearby.

The C7 Lewes to Newhaven road, which connects Iford and Swanborough to Kingston and Lewes, is often used by fast-moving traffic and in relatively high numbers, meaning that it is difficult to walk or cycle between them. Currently, there are no formal plans to connect the Egrets Way to Iford, as has been done with Rodmell. Not doing this means that it is hard for the village and Estate more generally to accrue any benefits – both in terms of encouraging visits to the village and achieving better transport links for residents and businesses.

The lack of frequency of the bus service means that it is not able to support significant growth in either residential or commercial provision. In addition, the position of the bus stops at both villages (on the busy C7) has been identified by the local community as being a deterrent to further use.

Scope for improvement

It is considered that the Estate is well placed to ‘capture’ some of the values arising out of being proximate to Brighton and Lewes, in order to help offset some of the increased costs of farming within an urban fringe location. As well as the possible provision of more and better commercial space, residential accommodation and holiday accommodation, as well as better marketing of existing recreational facilities, this might include ways of seeking to monetise Natural Capital created by the Estate that can be proven to create direct benefits to residents of nearby urban areas.

Lastly, it is considered that improving links between Kingston and the Villages of Swanborough and Iford would create a significant benefit to the two smaller communities and help to maintain and drive activity communities there. This will then translate into increased demand for housing and commercial units across the Estate, as well as contributing to a high quality of life. This could also extend to establishing better cycle and footpath connections with the South Downs Way and Egrets Way, which would in itself serve to create cycle connections to the train station at Lewes. It is considered that an improvement in bus frequency and safer bus stops would help to increase bus usage for local journeys.

Main image: Iford village houses and farm buildings.

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Community and Cultural Heritage

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Our Vision for Community and Cultural Heritage

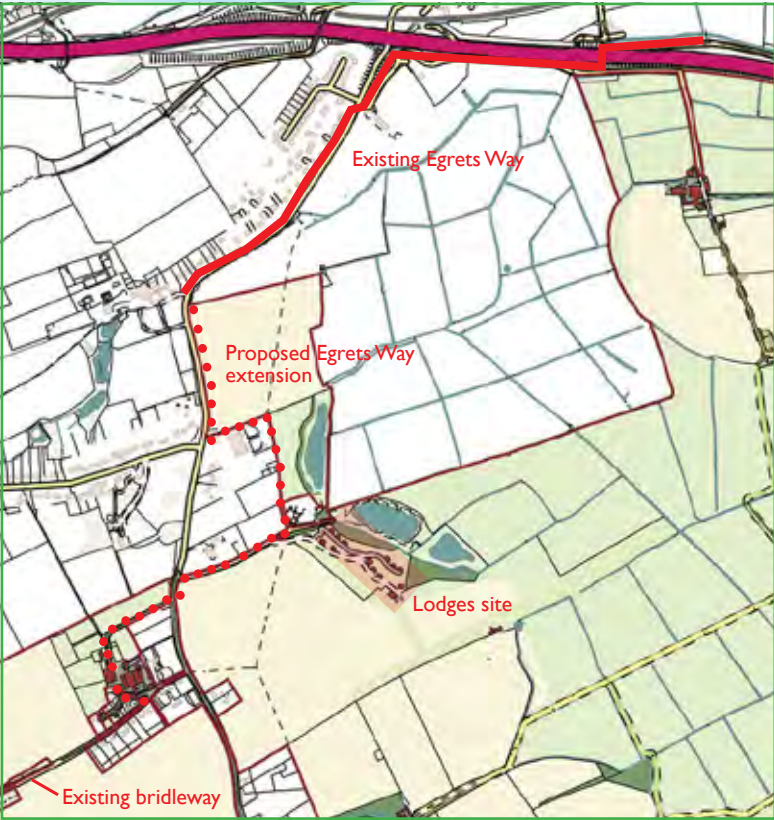
By 2033 the Iford Estate will be a place where:

- the quality of life for our community of residents and workers is enhanced through improved access, communications, and restoration of our cultural heritage assets.

Commitments

Through the Whole Estate Plan, and the actions and projects that flow out of this process, the Iford Estate will work with key stakeholders:

1. To work with SDNPA to ensure there is sufficient housing to meet the needs of local people.
2. To continue to restrict development on important open spaces within Iford and Swanborough.
3. To conserve and enhance historic buildings, walls and landscapes within the Estate.
4. To protect existing community facilities and seek to enhance where appropriate.
5. To promote the creation of cycle links around and through the Estate, to help increase the accessibility and promote sustainable transport choices.



CASE STUDY

Linking Swanborough Lodges to Lewes

As part of the Swanborough Lodges development we have committed to creating an off-road cycle link between the Lodge Park and Lewes, as well as a link to the South Downs Way at Swanborough. In addition to having the benefit of increasing the attractiveness of the Lodge development to potential guests, the link also creates an off-road, safe cycle route for residents of Swanborough and users of the South Downs Way to access Lewes. The new route, due to be constructed in Spring 2018, will become an extension to the Egrets Way Cycle Path.

The route, which is subject to a Section 106 agreement, will involve upgrading two short sections of existing footpath, and the creation of new cycle paths to provide a total of 1600m of new access routes. The scheme came about, in part, in response to residents of Iford and Swanborough requesting safe cycle access to Lewes, a theme which has been discussed at length in parish meetings over many years. Previous schemes focused on running adjacent to the C7, and floundered on the difficulty of securing consent from the various land and home owners involved.

The purchase by the Estate of Swanborough Farm, and the creation of the Egrets Way at Spring Barn Farm has for the first time made the possibility of this route a reality, and this section from Swanborough to Lewes is the first step to linking Iford to the network as well.

Main image: Pine trees planted over the Iford reservoir.

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8. Ecosystem Services

The Iford Estate plays an important role contributing to the special qualities that define sense of place and is central to the provision of Green Infrastructure (GI) within the South Downs National Park. The network of landscapes, habitats, and man-made interventions that make up the Estate provide a range of benefits that together are known as Ecosystem Services.

Our analysis of the Estate carried out during the production of this Whole Estate Plan has concluded that it currently performs a pivotal and important role in the delivery of Ecosystem Services in this part of the National Park, and this is explained in more detail below. It has also become clear through this process that this Whole Estate Plan provides an opportunity of additional Ecosystem Services benefits, or ‘additionalities’ to be delivered by the Iford Estate. The following section explains this.

Supporting Services

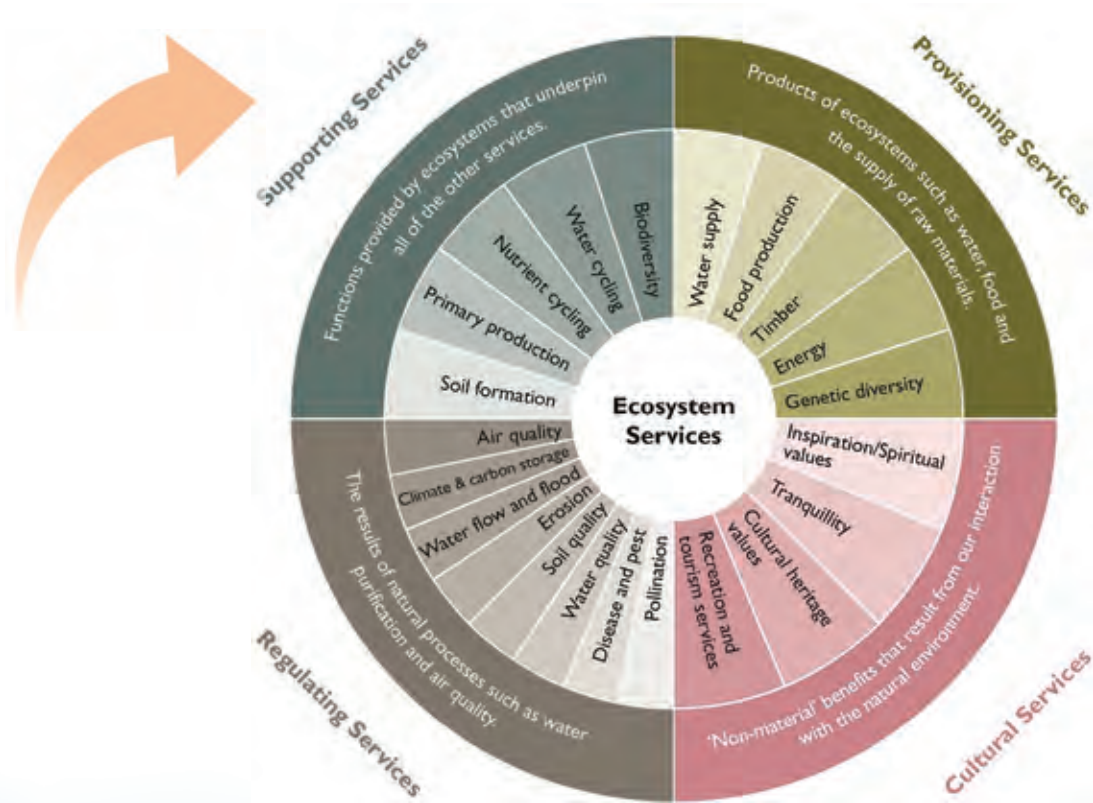
Functions provided by ecoystems that underpin all of the other services.

Soil Formation

Large areas of permanent pasture on the Estate allow the build-up of organic matter, and hence soil. Minimum tillage systems employed on the arable enterprise combined with organic matter applications aim to maximise organic matter content of the soils and, in time, aid the formation of soil.

Primary Production

The production of food is the core of the Estate’s business, and its continuation is a key part of the Estate’s vision. As discussed throughout this document, all other elements of the Estate’s activities are intended to support the continued operation of the farm, and therefore primary production.



Ecosystem Services Wheel, South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan, 2013



Main image: Tench Lake at Swanborough Fishing Lakes.

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Ecosystem Services

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Nutrient Cycling

Having a mixed livestock and arable farming system allows cattle manure to be spread back onto arable land. Nutrients lost from the removal of straw are replaced, and the reliance on artificial fertiliser is reduced to minimum levels. Furthermore, sewage sludge is spread over as much of the arable land as possible, which further replaces nutrients lost from land though the harvesting of crops. This means that the Estate currently has a limited requirement for artificial sources of phosphate. The Estate’s current experiments with keeping cattle in the field for longer periods over winter bring multiple benefits, including in terms of helping to build organic matter in the soil.

***Potential additionalities:** The ultimate goal of having a completely closed nutrient system could be closer to being achieved through the installation of an energy plant, utilising biomass produced on farm to supply Iford with electricity and hot water, with any surplus exported into the national grid. With such systems, all nutrients are returned to the land with the exception of carbon which is extracted from the atmosphere by photosynthesis and returned to the atmosphere through the production of methane.*

Water Cycling

The Estate is a relatively modest user of water, with no irrigation, and water use being confined to livestock and domestic needs. Water is extracted from private boreholes at Iford and Swanborough and the village of Iford is supplied by a private water main managed by the Estate.

Biodiversity

The provision of wildlife habitats has been a personal priority for each generation of the Robinson family since the Estate was founded in 1895. This has resulted in large amounts of the Estate being designated as SSSIs, where similar neighbouring parcels have not been. In more recent years, the Estate has participated keenly in environmental schemes, starting with ESA (Environmentally Sensitive Area) in the late 1980s and moving into its successor scheme ELS and HLS (Entry and Higher Level Stewardship). The Estate has started a new Countryside Stewardship Scheme on Swanborough Farm, following the expiry of the HLS scheme in 2016.

Extensive records of wildlife are to be found, including bird counts via the RSPB, butterfly walks, botanical counts and farm records of birds observed from the bird hide on the wildlife pond.

The botanical biodiversity found on the farm is intrinsically linked to management through grazing livestock, and the large grazing herd is key to maintaining this rich and diverse habitat. In particular, the rotation of cattle and sheep on the chalk grassland has been specifically designed to maximise the biodiversity benefits of grazing (see Sustainable and Resilient Farming case study, Section 4).

***Potential additionalities:** The position of the farm within the SDNP will help secure ongoing funding for environmental management. During the most recent application for Countryside Stewardship the farm scored highly for the presence of the habitats found on the South Downs and being within the National Park adds further credibility to scheme applications.*

Main image: Tortoiseshell butterfly on a thistle.

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Ecosystem Services

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Provisioning Services

Products of ecosystems such as water, food, and the supply of raw materials.

Water supply

The Estate has always strived to minimise its impact on the Environment, with water pollution, both of surface and ground water, being one of the biggest risks. To achieve this, buffer strips abut all the water courses on the estate, and manure and fertiliser applications are carefully managed with qualified advisors overseeing applications.

***Potential additionalities:** Several elements of the farming operation, although acceptable from a regulatory standpoint, present a risk to the water supply. These include the sprayer filling facilities that are situated close to farm drains, and silage storage, either as round bale silage or storage in silage pits which were constructed in the 1950s. The ongoing modernisation and reorganisation of the farm brings with it the opportunity to address these matters.*

Food Production

Food production is the core focus of the Estate’s business and agriculture is seen as being the primary generator of revenue for the Estate in future generations. Sufficient wheat is produced to make 3.5m loaves of bread each year – enough to provide 35 loaves each year for every resident of the National Park. That is more than half the bread eaten within the Park every year. The estate also grows a wide range of other crops and grazes beef cattle and sheep on areas where it is not possible or desirable to cultivate.

***Potential additionalities:** The modernisation of the farming infrastructure brings with it scope for increasing the productive efficiency of the farm, without needing to take more land into production (and out of habitat schemes).*

Timber

The Estate has no commercial forestry.

Energy

The Estate currently produces 50,000kWh of electricity each year from roof-mounted solar panels. Farming is a large consumer of energy, principally using fossil fuels, but efforts have been made, and will continue to be made, to reduce energy consumption per unit of production, through more efficient machines, higher yields and operator training and awareness.

***Potential additionalities:** The erection of new farm buildings as part of the planned reorganisation of the farming infrastructure brings with it the opportunity to delivery further roof-mounted solar panels. The creation of an energy centre would enable the use of biomass for energy production, bringing with it the opportunity for the farm to further increase its contribution to the generation of power from renewable sources.*

Genetic Diversity

The Iford Estate contains a range of landscapes – the chalk scarp Downs, the central greensand areas around the villages and the Brooks wetlands alongside the western bank of the river Ouse. These diverse landscapes provide a broad range of habitats, several of which are recognised as being particularly special though SSSI and other designations. These varied habitats therefore mean that the Estate contains significant levels of genetic diversity within its borders.

Main image: Morning sun filters through the lime tree avenue.

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Ecosystem Services

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Regulating Services

The results of natural processes such as water purification and air quality.

Air Quality Regulation

The areas of permanent pasture within the Estate enable the capture of carbon dioxide and play an important role in the regulation of air pollution. This acts as an important buffer against the emissions from nearby urban centres at Brighton and Lewes, and the transport corridor of the A27 to the north of the Estate.

Climate Regulation and Carbon Storage

The plants and trees on the Estate have a positive influence on climate regulation and the storage of carbon in the atmosphere.

Water Flow and Flood Regulation

The eastern part of the Estate is formed by the low-lying Brooks which, although drained, provide an important area of flood water storage. The controlling of water levels in this area during winter months creates flooded areas which allow for water storage but also provide important habitats for overwintering birds.

Erosion Regulation

The Estate has a minimum tillage approach to its cultivation of arable land which serves to limit soil erosion. In addition, the grazing regime adopted on the Downs has been designed to ensure minimum soil erosion.

Soil Quality

Where intense arable cultivation takes place, everything possible is done to limit impact on the quality of its most valuable asset: the soil. This is achieved through minimum tillage (which improves soil biology), by limiting the introduction of artificial fertiliser and sprays through the addition of organic matter wherever possible, and the use of GPS-based automatic steering on all front line machinery. As noted above, the approach to grazing of cattle and sheep is designed to maximise the quality of soils, without the need for inputs of artificial fertilisers.

Water Quality

The above mentioned measures that are designed to protect soil biology also serve to reduce the potential for impacts on the quality of water in the aquifers underneath the Estate. Being situated both on a chalk aquifer and within the catchment of the river Ouse, the supply of clean water is tightly controlled from a regulatory perspective through Nitrate Vulnerable Zone legislation as well as the Water Framework Directive. The Estate controls nutrient leaching through enhanced farming systems (such as minimum tillage), targeted fertiliser applications and by increasing organic matter levels across the farm. The Estate owns the western bank of a large stretch of the river Ouse south of Lewes, and so needs to take great care in terms of making sure that farming activities here do not impact on the water quality within the river.

Disease and Pest Regulation

The Estate takes care to control pests within its boundary and prevent the spread of diseases into the Estate.

Pollination

The Estate needs bees and other insects and small animals to pollinate its food crops. It takes care to avoid overly intensive arable farming methods which might act to reduce the number and spread of important pollinators. A beekeeper keeps his hives at Iford.

Main image: Willows and sedges provide important habitats for many species around the Estate.

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Cultural Services

‘Non-material’ benefits that result from our interaction with the natural environment.

Tranquility

Iford is considerably more tranquil than many places nearby, with less noise and light pollution from urban centres and roads.

Cultural Heritage Values

The Estate nestles in the fertile valley between the hills and escarpments of the South Downs and the flood plain of the river Ouse, and this has supported human activity for millennia. As a testament to its ancient roots, the Downs above Iford are peppered with the remains of burial tumuli and ancient field systems preserved in the landscape. The continuation of farming by the Estate continues this human relationship with the land that spans hundreds of generations here.

The range of listed buildings on the Estate makes an important contribution to the cultural and heritage values – and this is enhanced by maintenance of the buildings to a high standard. At the same time, the continued occupation of Estate cottages by a stable community makes a valuable and important contribution to the cultural heritage of the village. The Estate is keen to maintain this.

Lastly, Iford Hall is an important facility that acts as a focus for the community within Iford and Swanborough. It contributes hugely to the culture of village life, hosting weddings, birthday parties and parish meetings.

Potential additionalities: The reorganisation of the farm provides an opportunity for mechanised farming to be removed to a part of the farm where it will not impact on heritage assets, including listed houses and traditional farm buildings. This will improve the impact that the Estate has on heritage, without needing to change the fundamentally traditional farming culture of Iford.

Recreation and Tourism Services

The landscape that makes up the Estate has been used for recreation for as long as people have lived in the area, and the landscapes here have long attracted visitors to the area. As part of its increasingly important diversification activities, the Estate has developed a range of different recreational services including the Swanborough lodges, airstrip, lakes and livery at Swanborough, and the two shoots.

These activities support local tourism, and the Estate is in the process of developing holiday lodges near the lakes to contribute to the overall provision of tourist accommodation in the area.

The public right of way network within the Estate makes a significant contribution to the provision of Recreation and Tourism Services within this part of the National Park.

Potential additionalities: The Estate has identified a need to grow the amount of holiday accommodation it provides, as part of its overall suite of diversification. Rather than use existing cottages as holiday lets, the preferred approach is to provide this accommodation through the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings and, where appropriate, new build. Each of these commitments underpins the Plan Outcomes set out in Section 9 of this document.

Ecosystem Services

continued 5

Main image: The concrete track from the Downs leading to Iford village, with Lewes and the river Ouse beyond.

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9. Plan Outcomes

This Whole Estate Plan has been produced to achieve the vision set out at the start of this document. Fundamental to that vision is the delivery of an effective and sustainable farming enterprise, and in so doing ensure ongoing enhancements to landscape, habitats and cultural heritage. The Estate is also fully committed to continuing to improve the quality of life of those that live and work on and near it.

This overarching vision – and the potential improvements, commitments and ecosystem additionalities that have been identified through the WEP process – flows into a series of outcomes that this plan seeks to achieve. In turn, these outcomes then flow into a range of projects that will be delivered during the period covered by this WEP (15 years).

The following tables summarise the commitments, outcomes and projects under each of the four themes that this WEP is based around.



CASE STUDY

Iford Covered Yards

Like many farms, Iford Estate has a number of ranges of buildings that are, or soon will be, redundant for modern agriculture. A good example is the buildings known as The Covered Yards. This range of traditional buildings sits in a prominent location in the centre of Iford, and was built in about 1895 following the Robinsons’ purchase of Iford Farm.

The building is much larger than many traditional buildings, and therefore unsuitable for a more commonplace residential conversion. Imaginative thinking is needed to find a new use, with a short term stop gap being storage and workshops.

Longer term a significant investment is required to make the buildings fit for modern use, with the potential for high quality offices or live/work units currently being tentatively explored. Other suggestions have focused on some form of creative hub with studios around the perimeter and communal space in the centre. Regardless of its final use, the Estate is committed to ensuring that the significance of the buildings to the street scene of Iford is not lost, and believes that a sympathetic conversion can significantly enhance the village.



Main image: Picturesque Downland snowscape.







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Our Vision for Sustainable and Resilient Farming

By 2033 the Iford Estate will be a place where:

- A sustainable, viable and resilient farming enterprise continues to flourish and innovate, having met and overcome the challenges faced by the sector during that period and which is well placed to continue for many years to come.



Our Commitments	
To modernise the building infrastructure to improve the efficiency of the farming operation.	
To continue to adopt new technologies, particularly those that reduce the use of fuel, fertiliser and sprays.	
To maintain the presence of grazing livestock on the Estate.	
To continue to participate in environmental schemes, particularly on the more sensitive parts of the Estate.	
To fully consider landscape and biodiversity whenever new practices or techniques, buildings or machinery are introduced.	
To continue to participate in the farm cluster, and through this grouping investigate innovative ways of capturing Natural Capital values.	

Our Projects	
Farm Consolidation All farming infrastructure will be relocated to a central site, in order to provide the Estate with a single base for all agricultural activities. Currently, the preferred site for this growth is Iford Farm. This is the location of existing modern buildings and this area has been identified as having lower landscape sensitivity. It is also outside the village conservation area. This project will be funded through capital release generated by sites where farming ceases through this reorganisation.	
Technological Innovation Ongoing investigations into the role of technology in agriculture.	
Biodiversity-led Grazing The provision of new livestock buildings and facilities as part of the reorganisation of the farming infrastructure Investigate ways that livestock grazing can be monetised as part of the Natural Capital generation.	
Stewardship To participate fully in Countryside Stewardship and successors when existing schemes expire in October 2018 and December 2022.	
Landscape-led farming Work with the Eastern South Downs Cluster Group to devise a strategy for landscape scale improvements that can be delivered through changes in farming practices.	
Natural Capital Adopt a leading role in the Farm Cluster Group and work with SDNPA and other partners to adopt innovative approaches around the monetisation of Natural Capital.	



2033 Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Estate is able to demonstrate that farming in harmony with the landscape and biodiversity can be profitable.• The farm is provided with the farming infrastructure that it needs to be sustainable and viable.• The farm continues to innovate – technologically and in terms of capturing Natural Capital values.	

Plan Outcomes

continued 2

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Our Vision for Landscape and Biodiversity

By 2033 the Iford Estate will be a place where:

- The special **landscapes** that make up the Estate are secured for future generations, with many opportunities having been taken to enhance the landscape setting of the Estate.
- **Biodiversity** is improved across the Estate, through continued innovations in environmentally focused farming practices, the creation of new habitat features on previously farmed land, with every opportunity having been taken to improve existing areas.



Our Commitments	
To identify opportunities to create a range of new habitats on land hitherto farmed intensively.	
To investigate opportunities to extend and enhance existing habitat features – including by improving connections between existing habitats to create habitat corridors.	
To maintain and enhance valued landscapes, for the benefit of all residents and visitors to the National Park.	
To encourage wider access and appreciation of the high quality landscapes on the Iford Estate.	

Our Projects
Habitat Creation All development proposals on the Estate will include the creation of new habitats, and where practical, over and above that required to offset harm resulting from the development itself.
Landscape Scale Habitat Improvement To use Countryside Stewardship schemes and the Farm Cluster Group as an opportunity to work with stakeholders to identify areas where habitat and species decline can be arrested and prevented.
Landscape Enhancement All opportunities to enhance the landscapes will be taken, in particular when considering the redevelopment of existing sites, and the consolidation of farming operations.
Signposting Work with SDNPA to install signboards in and around the Estate to direct people to key habitats such as CRoW land, and public and private permissive rights of way. This will include interpretation boards at the entrance to the Estate on the South Downs Way and Egrets Way, and way finding along walking routes.



2033 Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Estate will be recognised as an important contributor to the maintenance and ongoing enhancement the landscape and enjoyment of the National Park.• The Estate is able to demonstrate biodiversity improvements, both within the boundary of the Estate and at a large scale in partnership with the SDNPA and adjoining landowners.

Plan Outcomes

continued 3

Our Vision for the Local Rural Economy

By 2033 the Iford Estate will be a place where:

- The **local rural economy** thrives, with high quality holiday accommodation, land based recreation and a rural creative industries hub having been provided.
- As well as supporting the estate financially, these businesses have provided rural employment and start-up opportunities to many local people.

Our Commitments

Sympathetically convert any redundant buildings, with preference given to commercial and tourist accommodations wherever appropriate.

Provide a range of non-farming employment opportunities for local people, including for people who want to start their own business.

Enhance the daytime vitality of Iford through the provision of workshops and studios.

Support the local visitor economy, in recognition of the wider economic benefits that this brings to the local area.

Work with SDNPA and ESCC to improve the accessibility of the Estate, including for cyclists.

Our Projects

Iford Employment Hub

This project responds to the identified market for commercial space in Iford, and also to the likelihood of a range of agricultural sites in and around Iford village becoming redundant as a result of the farm reorganisation. This includes the following sites:

- Iford Covered Yards
- Upper Stalls Yard
- Grain Drier Site
- Sprayer Shed

As noted elsewhere, it is considered that the current displacement of businesses out of the Lewes North Street Quarter creates an opportunity to replace that accommodation relatively locally, thereby ensuring that local business connections are not lost.

New Holiday Lets

The consented scheme at Swanborough lakes will be built out and further opportunities for the provision of additional accommodation within Iford Village will be investigated. This will include the conversion of redundant buildings and, where appropriate, new build units. Sites which have been identified as having potential for this use include:

- Sheeppyard
- Old Fertiliser Sheds

New sustainable links

To improve access to the Estate by non-car modes of transport, including cycle and public transport, so that people can come to Iford for work or on holiday without needing to have a car. This will include providing new links between the Estate and Lewes and Brighton, and the completion of the Egrets Way connection.

2033 Outcomes

- The Estate will be a place that offers workers an exceptionally high quality of life.
- The Estate will provide for a range of holiday accommodation and make a valuable contribution to National Park targets for additional bed spaces.

Plan Outcomes

continued 4

CASE STUDY

Cycle Path Improvements

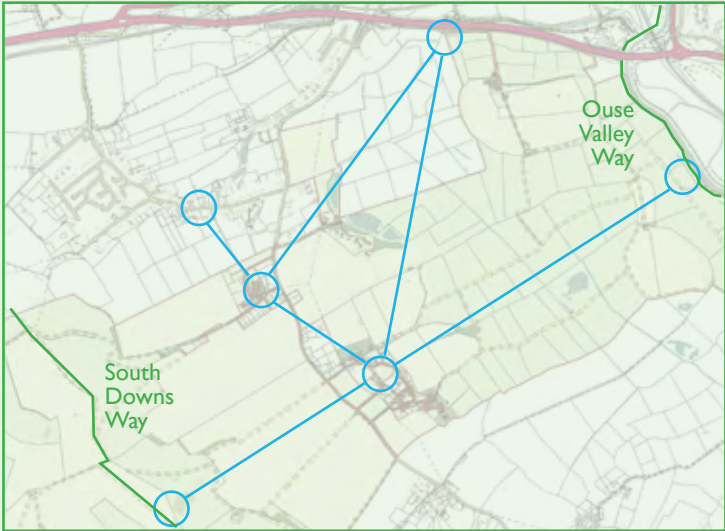
During the production of this Whole Estate Plan (WEP) and the consultations with residents that took place, it became clear that there is a significant demand for new or improved access across the land owned by the Estate in order to create new links to existing and planned paths and facilities – as illustrated on Map 1. Whilst not all are possible or even desirable for the Estate to deliver, there are some that can be provided relatively easily.

One of the key requests, following the planned Egrets Way extension to Swanborough discussed previously, was to improve links between Iford and the Egrets Way, both to its route along the river Ouse and to the new extension to Swanborough.

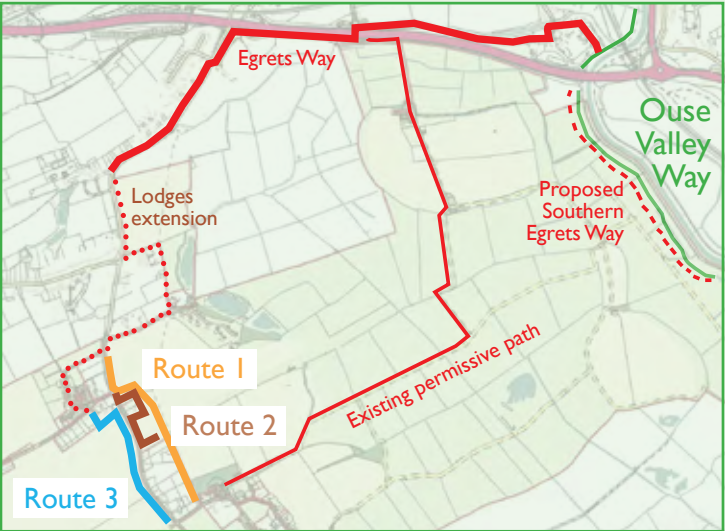
Discussion has taken place with residents about the potential routing of this path, either on the east or west side of the C7, with pros and cons to each. The western route involves two crossings of the C7 but is more direct; the eastern route will mean a detour around the houses situated between the two settlements, unless it follows the route of the existing footpath which results in the field being divided into three small parcels.

The Estate believes that following the existing path is the most obvious route but is less desirable unless a use can be found for the very small fields it creates. The alternative of following the field edge is a more attractive option to the Estate but involves a longer path, and has raised concerns from residents whose gardens it skirts. (*See Map 2*).

The possibility of then linking Iford to the river Ouse section of the Egrets Way is more difficult, and has been discussed with various representatives of the SDNP, however the Estate is happy to commit to delivering both projects during the term of this WEP, although it must be recognised that the expense of creating these routes is not insignificant, and so most likely will need to be done as part of a wider redevelopment scheme or schemes.



Map 1: Links suggested during consultations



Map 2: Alternative links between Iford and Swanborough

CASE STUDY

Iford Playground

Iford playground, which used to be next to the Village Hall, was a facility much valued by local residents and visitors alike, providing a swing and slide set along with other items of equipment aimed at children aged up to 12 years old. It is the only community facility in the parish.

The land the playground sits on is owned by the Estate, with the equipment provided by the parish. During 2017 a safety inspection condemned the equipment, and it has subsequently been removed. The cost of replacing it is prohibitive without grant aid, and applications for grant aid depend on the applicants having control of the land either through ownership or a lease, and the Estate is reluctant to agree a lease on land that is immediately adjacent to the Hall (part of the boundary of the area is one side of the building) as the loss of control over the land could adversely affect the running of the Hall.

During parish discussions about the playground it has become clear that, as well as a facility for small children, there is significant demand for play space for older children and teenagers. The field behind the Village Hall extends to about an acre and is currently subdivided to provide a space to erect a marquee, both for the local flower show and for wedding receptions. The Estate has proposed that, subject to certain conditions, it is prepared to grant a lease with a negligible rent to the Parish Meeting over the north west (and larger) part of this field, allowing not only the reinstatement of the play equipment with grant funding, but also a larger space in which older children can congregate and play.

It is envisaged that the cost of doing this, and the loss of capital value of the parcel of land involved, as well as the loss of grazing land, is funded by other projects within the village, and the Estate is happy to commit to undertaking this project during the period of this WEP.

Our Vision for Community and Cultural Heritage

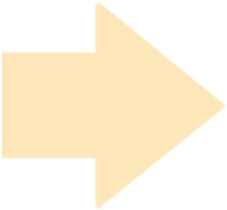
By 2033 the Iford Estate will be a place where:

- The quality of life for our community of residents and workers is enhanced through improved access, communications, and restoration of our cultural heritage assets.



Our Commitments	
Work with SDNPA to ensure there is sufficient affordable housing to meet the needs of local people.	➡
Restrict development on important open spaces within Iford and Swanborough.	➡
Conserve and enhance historic buildings, walls and landscapes within the Estate.	➡
Protect existing community facilities and seek to enhance where appropriate.	➡
Promote the creation of cycle links around and through the Estate, to help increase the accessibility and promote sustainable transport choices.	➡

Our Projects	
Local Needs Housing The Estate will work with the local communities and the National Park to identify local housing needs and how they might be met. This review will include consideration of affordable and rural worker housing needs.	
Protect Village Character Maintain and enhance areas of land protected by covenant and continue the ongoing programme of repairs and restoration of heritage assets owned by the Estate.	
Village Hall The Estate will continue to maintain the Village Hall and make it available for local non-profit-making events free of charge.	
New facilities We will investigate the feasibility of providing a new and enlarged playground and recreation facility in the field surrounding the Village Hall. Opportunities will be investigated to improve the range of services available in the village, including through considering alternative uses of redundant buildings. This might include, for example, a new farm shop, café and cycle repair workshop.	
New sustainable links To improve access to the Estate by non-car modes of transport, including cycle and public transport, so that people can come to Iford for work or on holiday without needing to have a car. This will include providing new links between the Estate and Lewes and Brighton, and the completion of the Egrets Way connection. (See also previously).	
Bus Stop improvements The Estate will facilitate the improvement of existing bus stops at Swanborough and Iford.	



2033 Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Estate will, where appropriate, help to contribute to meeting local housing needs.• Cultural assets in the Village will be protected and conserved (with no ‘at risk’ buildings on the Estate).• Local facilities will be protected and enhanced where possible.• Sustainable links to other settlements and valued landscapes will be provided and/or upgraded.	

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10. Action Plan

The table opposite sets out approximate timescales and next steps for each project identified within the Plan Outcomes section of this Whole Estate Plan. Clearly, much will depend on outside influences including Brexit timetables and likely outcomes, overall economy of the UK and in particular farming, and the timescales associated with obtaining planning permission where needed.

Project	Timescale			Next Steps
	0-5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	
Farm Consolidation				Submit pre-app for farm reorganisation.
On-farm Diversification				Carry out review of buildings made redundant following farm reorganisation.
Technological Innovation				Ongoing review and adoption of best practice.
Biodiversity-led Grazing				Continually monitor biodiversity on grazed areas.
Stewardship				Enter into new Countryside Stewardship in 2018.
Landscape-led Farming				Liaise with SDNPA and Farm Cluster to explore opportunities.
Natural Capital				Liase with SDNPA and Farm Cluster to explore funding / subsidy opportunities linked to the production of Natural Capital.
Habitat Creation				Identify opportunities for habitat creation as part of any site redevelopment proposals.
Landscape Scale Habitat Improvement				Liaise with SDNPA and Farm Cluster to identify next steps.
Signposting				To work with SDNPA to design and install appropriate signage.
Iford Employment Hub				Prepare feasibility study looking at scope for conversion of existing buildings and/or new buildings to replace buildings which it is not desirable to retain.
Swanborough Lodges Holiday Lets				Commence works on Holiday Lodges following receipt of planning permission and prepare feasibility study looking at scope for conversion of existing buildings and/or new buildings to replace buildings which it is not desirable to retain.
New Sustainable Links				Work in partnership with SDNPA and local community to deliver new cycle links, including the Egrets Way connection.
Local Needs Housing				Work in partnership with SDNPA to assess the level of housing need within the settlements of Iford and Swanborough, and formulate strategy for how this might be met.
Protect Village Character				Ongoing maintenance of important heritage assets and character.
Village Hall				Ensure the long term viability of this facility, and investigate scope to enhance recreational outdoor equipment and space.
New Facilities				Investigate scope for new community facilities to be provided as part of the feasibility assessment of redundant sites.
Bus Stop Improvements				Carry out feasibility study which investigates the most appropriate delivery mechanism for this project.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The Estate places great importance on keeping its communities and important stakeholder partners involved and informed about what it does. It believes in an open and transparent approach and makes an effort to tell people what it is doing. This includes the following initiatives:

Iford Estate News

This quarterly newsletter has been produced by the Estate since the winter of 2014 and carries regular features about the farming activities of the Estate, local wildlife and village history. It is sent to every household in Iford and Swanborough villages as well as more remote houses within the Parish and other key stakeholders in the area.

The Estate has been keen to make sure that this Whole Estate Plan is produced in a way that closely involves the local communities so that any projects identified reflect local aspirations and concerns.

Consultation Events

The first WEP workshop was held on the afternoon and evening of Wednesday 16 March 2016, at the start of the process. The consultation boards that were displayed at this event showed a high level assessment of key issues facing the Estate – for example, in relation to heritage assets and landscape sensitivity.

The Estate owner John Robinson and the Managing Director Ben Taylor were on hand to field any questions as were members of the Whole Estate Planning Team, including Architectural, Planning, Heritage and Landscape consultants.

This meeting was well attended, including by representatives of the South Downs National Park Authority who had been invited by the Estate. It was pleasing to see residents so well engaged with the process and the event was useful in helping to harvest data about local conditions and preferences that might otherwise have taken a long time to discover.

The above event was followed up by the Estate presenting some initial ideas to the 16 January 2017 evening Parish Meeting.

Commitments

The Estate is keen to ensure that Community Involvement does not stop with the finalisation of the WEP, and will maintain a regular dialogue with residents and businesses through the delivery of the projects identified in this document. This will include regular updates to the Parish Meeting and within *Iford Estate News*.

