

# ANNUAL REVIEW 2017/18

# A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

**With the national focus on Brexit and getting the negotiations right with Europe, our focus has been on the big Park-wide issues such as the future of farming, but we have also increased our activities on the smaller projects that collectively make such a big impact across the National Park.**

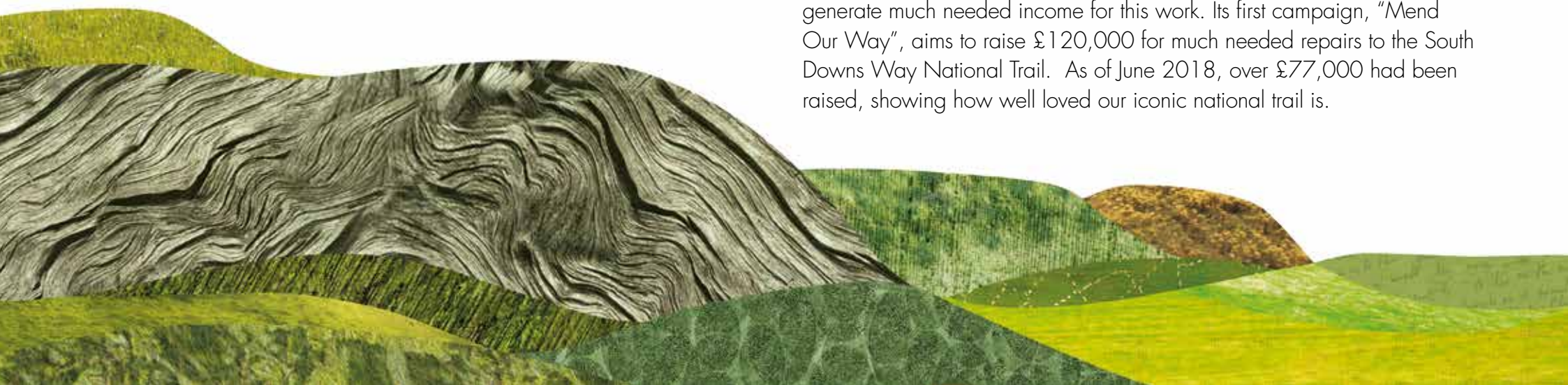
Hard work from our staff, Members and volunteers as well as the support of our many partners has meant that there has been much to celebrate over the last year.

A huge amount of work went into getting the South Downs Local Plan ready for submission for examination, which took place just after the end of the reporting year in April 2018. This first local plan for the entire National Park has generated much local engagement, with the Pre-Submission

consultation receiving 2,460 representations from 568 organisations and individuals. This level of interest is very encouraging and reinforces our goal of community-led planning, best demonstrated by the 50 or so neighbourhood plans developed by communities across the National Park which feed into the Local Plan. When adopted, its 96 policies will replace the over 1000 different policies from 12 different local authorities currently in place, providing a clearer framework for planning in the National Park.

We have continued our vital work on the future of farming, working with our farm clusters to develop a pilot programme which we submitted to Defra as it looks to develop a new post-Brexit farming scheme. Over two-thirds of the National Park is now covered by farm clusters – with farmers working together to develop new and better ways to enhance habitats and wildlife and protect the public services our landscapes provide, while ensuring our farming businesses sit at the heart of our thriving rural communities. We and the farmers of the South Downs are ideally placed, ready and willing to test out the principles that would underpin any new scheme.

As always, our ambitions for the National Park have been big. We want to see more of the land managed for wildlife, more rare habitats protected, greater biodiversity, stronger local economies and more people able to access and enjoy the landscapes. This goes far beyond our current funding and so in October, the South Downs National Park Trust was launched to generate much needed income for this work. Its first campaign, “Mend Our Way”, aims to raise £120,000 for much needed repairs to the South Downs Way National Trail. As of June 2018, over £77,000 had been raised, showing how well loved our iconic national trail is.





This report goes on to detail more of the on-the-ground projects that have happened across the National Park this year. One small but inspirational project is in West Meon where the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service has helped to convert a disused rail depot into a nature reserve for the benefit of the nearby primary school. This 'Nature Station' provides much needed outdoor space for a school in the heart of the South Downs that had little or no outdoor space for children to learn and play.

We hope you enjoy reading about the great work happening across the National Park and we look forward to another successful year of partnership and delivery.



**Trevor Beattie**  
Chief Executive



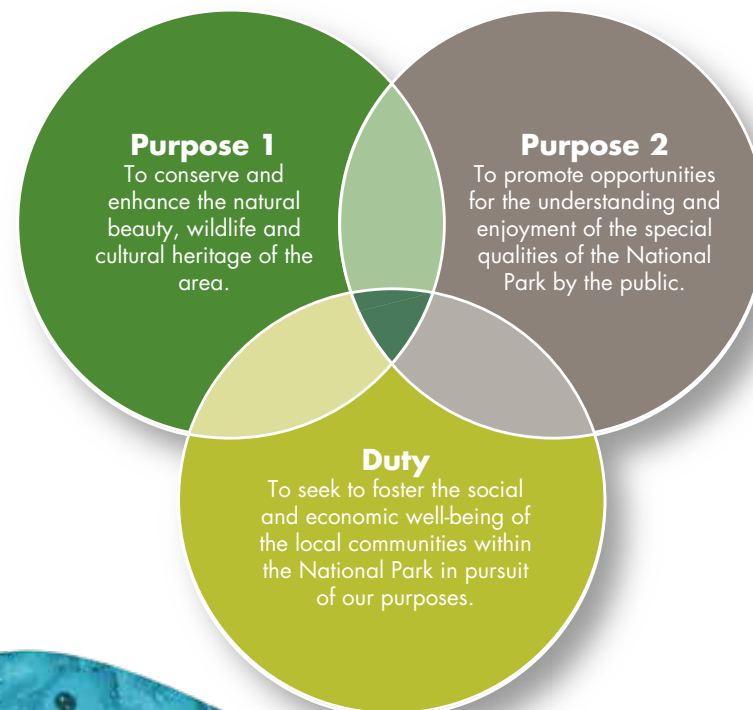
**Margaret Paren**  
Chair

Cover image: © SDNPA – Fertile Ground by Benno White, South Downs Photo Competition 2017–18

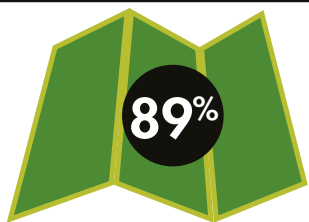
This Annual Review highlights some of our key achievements for 2017/18 which link to the objectives laid out in our 2016–21 Corporate Plan (see [southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/key-documents](https://southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/key-documents) and click on **Corporate Plan 2016–21**)

## PURPOSES AND DUTY

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



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 2017/18



## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

(major, minor and other) dealt with within agreed timescales

## PLANNING

**£710k** secured by section 106 agreements

## SOUTH DOWNS LOCAL PLAN

Pre-Submission consultation ran Sept-Nov

**2,460** representations from

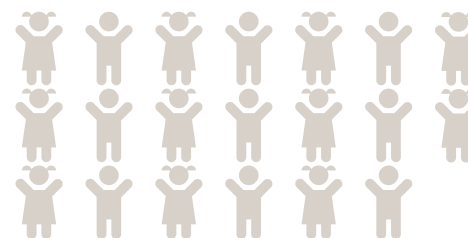
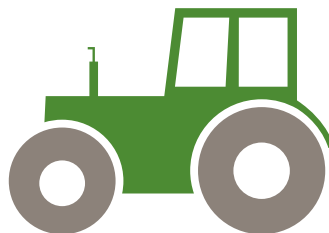
**568** organisations and individuals



## 168 FARMERS IN... FARM CLUSTERS

**6**

covering 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of the National Park



## SCHOOL CHILDREN **2,072**

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



## WHOLE ESTATE PLANS

approved and another 7 in preparation

## HEATHLANDS REUNITED 2<sup>ND</sup> YEAR



**50<sup>ha</sup>**

of heathland created

**500,000+**



PEOPLE reached through our 'Take the Lead' campaign

## NUMBER OF PARTNERS...



...who held events during our Dark Skies Festival in February involving some **3,145** people



...working together with SDNPA on the Heathlands Reunited project

## PROJECTS



...using the National Park shared identity



installed along the South Downs Way as part of an ongoing programme



## OUR 448 SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGERS spent...



DAYS SUPPORTING National Park work



DAYS OF WARDEN SURVEYING on the South Downs Way

**147**

## CHALK GRASSLAND, WOODLAND, HEATHLAND & RIVER SITES

...maintained and enhanced across the National Park



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

We are continuing to work with a variety of partners to deliver key outcomes which conserve and enhance the landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets in the South Downs National Park. We are also managing the impacts of large-scale and cumulative small-scale developments. Progress against our key objectives as laid out in the Corporate Plan are summarised below:

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<b>Prepare for the submission of the South Downs Local Plan</b>	Excellent progress was made on the preparation of the South Downs Local Plan, which was submitted for examination just after the end of the reporting year in April 2018. The main milestones of 2017-18 were the decision at a full Authority meeting in July 2017 to go out on consultation on the Pre-Submission Local Plan and to then submit it for examination if no substantive objections on matters of soundness or legal compliance matters were raised during the consultation. The Pre-Submission consultation ran from September to November and approximately 2,460 representations were received from 568 organisations and individuals.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<b>Develop a Green Infrastructure Framework</b>	Further development of the Green Infrastructure (GI) framework has been on hold as a result of national policy developments such as the 25 Year Plan, and the need to integrate it with ground-breaking SDNPA work on natural capital and ecosystem services and New Forest NPA work on a "green halo". Natural England has offered to assist with marketing of the framework and to promote the benefits of planning for nature at a sub-regional level, and conversations with the Coast 2 Capital LEP have seen these concepts included in its future plans. This work is still ongoing and may also involve some further amendments to the structure of the framework documents yet to be determined.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<b>Implement agreed Heritage Coast Partnership Action Plan</b>	The Heritage Coast Partnership have continued to implement the 5 year action plan and Heritage Coast Strategy – <a href="https://southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/sussex-heritage-coast/">southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/sussex-heritage-coast/</a> . The Partnership has appointed consultants and started the process of consulting with stakeholders and communities to create an Interpretation Strategy and Special Qualities for the area, funded through the Rampion Mitigation Fund. A solid base of evidence is being built up for the different aspects of the area, such as ecology, access, geology and health issues and a project is planned to create an evidence base for the Archaeology on the Edge. A new Marine Conservation Zone for Beachy Head East is proposed, which the Partnership unanimously supports

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<b>Work with farm clusters in the South Downs National Park to produce action plans</b>	The farm cluster groups have adopted an Operational Plan template that provides a consistent approach to development and planning. Working through the Farming Officer, a species/habitats targets and project register has been collated across all cluster groups to identify common themes and opportunities to share ideas/resources
<b>Secure medium-term funding to continue to develop our aspirations around bigger, better, more joined up heathlands</b>	Funding for the Heathlands Reunited project was secured in 2016. See page 12 for more details on the project's very successful second year.





# PROJECTS ON THE GROUND

Here are some highlights of work carried out on the ground across the National Park during 2017–18:

## ACCESSIBLE KISS GATES AT KINGLEY VALE



New accessible kiss gates installed at Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve have opened up this special place for those with special access requirements. Specially designed to allow wheelchairs, mobility scooters and push chairs onto the reserve while discouraging access for bicycles and horses which are not allowed on the footpaths. SDNPA also contributed to surface

improvement work which has transformed the muddy track leading to the field museum. Eager to make the most of this new facility the Disabled Ramblers were soon adventuring up to the Devil's Humps, marvelling at the grove of ancient yew trees and enjoying the wildflowers.

## GLYNDE TO SOUTHERHAM AND ON TO LEWES MILES WITHOUT STILES WALK



Thanks to volunteers, landowners and partners like the Sussex Wildlife Trust and Natural England, we now have a new Miles without Stiles route which can take you from Glynde to Southerham and on to Lewes, through stunning countryside. Two of our rangers worked with local landowners to create a stile-free walking route from the village shop in

Glynde, up to Mount Caburn down into Southerham Nature Reserve and into Lewes. The "Caburn" is the best preserved and most important Bronze Age Hill Fort in Sussex. Classic chalk downland here supports a variety of rare plants and butterflies. It boasts the largest British population of burnt tip orchid and is a great place to spot Adonis blue, silver-spotted skipper and the scarce forester moth as well as the wart-biter cricket which is being monitored here as part of a SDNPA project.

## EVENTS WITH THE COUNTRY TRUST



Western Area rangers, with support from the education team, have continued to work with the Country Trust in their engagement of children who are least able to access the countryside. 2017 saw SDNPA involved in 6 farm visits in Hampshire, where children from all backgrounds learnt more about where their food comes from, as well as how farmers help to support wildlife and

biodiversity. Rangers educated over 550 children on the ecology and behaviour of barn owls.

## HAZEL COPPICE RESTORATION



Members of the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service have helped to manage areas of derelict hazel coppice and bring them back into a planned rotation. This is being achieved by planting new hazel, erecting deer fencing to protect the new growth and removing overcrowding scrub and trees. By restoring the coppice back into a viable condition it is hoped

that the management can be passed on to a traditional coppice worker, helping to support a local business as well as maintain a diverse habitat, home to rare species such as dormice and the pearl-bordered fritillary.

## MIND CONSERVATION WORK



Volunteers from the mental health charity MIND have spent the year visiting Graffham Down to help with conservation work and rights of way management. Once a month the group meet at the bus stop on Cocking Hill, squeeze into a SDNPA land rover and experience a bumpy ride over to the reserve to meet a representative from Graffham Down Trust. The work carried out by

MIND includes hedge laying, assisting with the creation of a geo-cache trail, maintaining ancient barrows, replacing damaged dormouse boxes and building dead hedges to exclude deer from recently coppiced areas. MIND are working towards their John Muir Award at Graffham Down and are taking on the four challenges: **discover, explore, conserve and share.**

## SPARSHOLT STUDENT WORKING WITH WEALDEN HEATH AREA TEAM



Work experience placements are an important part of career progression and provide opportunities for students to find out more about our work and our projects. We are keen to support students wherever possible. In April 2017 we provided a three week opportunity to a student at Sparsholt College who spent time with our Wealden Heaths team. The work at the SDNPA is

varied and so are the skills and expertise of both environmental and office based staff. Together our ranger and the student developed a work programme that would give the student a broad experience of the National Park. This included carrying out landscape management work and surveying. The three weeks spent with the National Park Authority will greatly assist this student studying for a career in conservation as well as bringing great benefits to the organisation as hosting a student placements makes us evaluate what we do and why.



## TRIANGLE WEB SPIDER SURVEY



The triangle web spider (*Hyptiotes paradoxus*) is a Nationally Scarce species that is primarily found on coniferous trees (particularly yew and box) in the UK. It was first recorded in East Sussex in 2014 at Ashburnham Place, west of Battle. In August 2017 a speculative survey was conducted at Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve in West Sussex; the largest area of yew woodland remaining in the UK. After several hours of searching, the first ever *H. paradoxus* recorded in West Sussex was found in the foliage of a yew tree. Further searching that day yielded another three records, including that of a mature female. A subsequent site survey the following month found another 13 individuals, at various locations throughout the National Nature Reserve. Further surveys are planned for 2018 to build on this work and hopefully reveal more about the species' distribution in the South Downs National Park.

## USING GOATS TO MANAGE CHALK GRASSLAND



A local farmer and one of our eastern area rangers worked in partnership to address the issue of fast growing weed species threatening an important chalk grassland site near Beeding Hill. Initially 12 rare-breed bagot goats, were bought and released onto site to work their magic. Unlike sheep, which graze on grasses, the goats tend to browse their way through brambles and overgrown scrub which threatens the more desirable species by out-

competing them. The goats quickly made their presence felt, munching through swathes of rosebay willow herb. They were so successful, that we now have 20 goats up on the hill. We are hoping to bring together a band of volunteer 'lookers' to help check the goats on a daily basis and spread the message of the importance of grazing chalk grassland sites.

## VOLUNTEERS HELP THE PEARL-BORDERED FRITILLARY



Our volunteers have done some great work over the winter at Verdley Wood (near Henley) to help improve the habitat for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. This is one of the few places this woodland butterfly has managed to hang on in Sussex. Coppicing small chestnut and brashing the bracken created thatch that will provide shelter for the caterpillars and also clearings to allow the violet, its main food plant, to grow and spread. We have been working on a small area of this site for several years (which is why the butterfly has survived there) but the landowner, Cowdray Estate, has agreed to coppice more sweet chestnut and has been widening some rides. An area cleared in early 2017 has seen a lot of violet growing through with signs of caterpillar nibbles. Neil Hulme from Butterfly Conservation, who joined a couple of our work parties, is delighted with the progress and excited about the future for the site.

## WEST MEON NATURE STATION



Over the last two years, the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service has been working with landowners Hampshire County Council to convert a disused depot at the old West Meon Station site into a nature reserve – for the benefit of the nearby primary school. The volunteers first cleared waste and scrub then had to improve the compacted sub-soil, before creating paths and grassland glades.

They then constructed bench seats to resemble an ‘outdoor classroom’. The schoolchildren named it their ‘Nature Station’ and the site was finally launched when the children, parents and teachers joined volunteers at an Open day in November 2017. The children of West Meon School are continuing to develop ideas for further improvements, so the project looks to have a bright future.

For details of other Projects on the Ground such as those below, please see our website [southdowns.gov.uk](http://southdowns.gov.uk):

- Cloth Farm – Celtic field system
- Steyning Downland Scheme – wild play area
- Graffham Down’s Dormice
- Walking for health
- Hedgelaying at RSPB Pulborough Brooks
- Oxenbourne Down – scrub management
- Petersfield “Downs to Towns” – green fingers
- Easebourne School learn to prune their orchard
- New interpretation panels at Tide Mills



# CARING FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS FOR 35 YEARS – MARK HAYWARD, RANGER

**Mark Hayward has been a ranger in the east of the Park for 35 years. Starting as a trainee for the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (VRS) in 1983, he has worked with many key people integral to ensuring the designation of the South Downs AONB as a National Park.**

Mark started in the Heritage Coast Area as part of a small team with no office, no computer and in those days no mobile phones. The work focused on maintaining and managing Rights of Way (RoW), with small amounts of conservation work on Local Wildlife and SSSI Sites.

With the formation of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board in the early 90s Mark progressed to a Ranger based in a small office at Stanmer Park. This marked a significant change in the work, with more conservation and partnership work to promote and manage the AONB in East and West Sussex. The success of this work led to the establishment of the South Downs Joint Committee and the final push for the SDNP – however this took nearly 30 years!

Mark initiated many important projects, including establishing hedge laying training with the help of the South of England Hedge Laying Society. Over 16 years he has trained hundreds of people and laid 3.5km of hedge. Volunteers, farmers and partners have learnt this important rural skill, ensuring it is continued and hedgerows are managed to maximise biodiversity. The sites were chosen to be near a RoW to enable maximum interaction with the public, recognising the importance of education. Mark has been involved with building or



restoring 15 dew ponds – work which has led to funding for supporting more dew ponds across the National Park. Over the past 8 years Mark has been working to restore the boundary flint wall at Stanmer Park, also training many people in this rural skill.

Over 35 years, Mark has worked with hundreds of incredible volunteers. They come from all walks of life but all have a shared purpose – to make a difference and give something back to the National Park they all know and love. Their invaluable work ensures the National Park is looked after, and their dedication, joy they bring and laughter shared, make the work of a Ranger the best in the world.





# HEATHLANDS REUNITED

## Our five-year Heritage Lottery funded partnership project 'Heathlands Reunited' is entering its 3rd year in June 2018.

Throughout last winter (Sep 2017– Mar 2018), partners continued with their practical management works funded by the project at over 34 heathland sites across the project area. The project partners have completed work to restore, recreate and reconnect heathland.

In year two a total of 70 football pitches (50 ha) of heathland has been conserved, broken down into the following works:

- **14** football pitches worth of scrub cleared
- Just under **10** football pitches of non-native invasive species removed
- Just under **33** football pitches of bracken treated
- **14** football pitches worth of linking habitat created.

In addition to this work there are also a number of conservation grazing schemes which are being supported. The fencing of Iping Common is nearly complete and we should see cattle there in the coming months, as well as cattle for a grazing project at Lynchmere will also shortly be concluded.

The project has been working to re-engage and inspire communities to visit their heathlands, learn more about them and work together to look

after them so they can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Year two saw a focus on one of our main interpretation projects, commissioning an artist to work with evidence gathered by volunteers and local communities to develop seven site 'pieces'. The pieces hope to portray the individual stories of seven heaths, which will also link to one another to join the heathlands up in people's minds. The sculptor Graeme Mitcheson was appointed at the beginning of 2018 and we are excited to see this project develop over the coming year, the first of its kind for the National Park.

During the project's second summer we also saw the launch of the 'Take the Lead' campaign which successfully reached around half a million people. We have also seen the development of responsible dog ownership engagement activities through our 'countryside ability' courses and the recruitment of new dog ambassadors in the project area. Our volunteer network continues to grow and the recruitment of new volunteer streams including Heathland Host and Health Walk leaders has now begun.

The project team and partners are now working on delivery of the remaining three years of the project. To find out more visit:

[southdowns.gov.uk/heathlands-reunited](https://southdowns.gov.uk/heathlands-reunited)



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

amphibian and reptile  
conservation



Hampshire &  
Isle of Wight  
Wildlife Trust



Hampshire  
County Council

SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK



The Lynchmere  
Society



giving  
nature  
a home



Sussex  
Wildlife Trust



Ministry  
of Defence



National  
Trust

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

We are continuing to promote opportunities for awareness, learning and engagement, seeking to ensure quality access management and accessibility, and supporting the development of sustainable tourism. Progress against our key objectives as laid out in the Corporate Plan are summarised below:

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE	WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<b>Increase the number of volunteer days undertaken by the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (SDVRS)</b>	Between April 2016 and March 2017 volunteers carried out <b>5,221</b> volunteer days. This drop from the number of days reported in 2016/17 is in part due to the Secrets of the High Woods project ending which involved a significant number of volunteers. Tasks undertaken by volunteers included scrub clearance on chalk grassland and heathland, coppicing in woodlands, maintaining rights of ways, laying hedges, water vole monitoring, surveying water invertebrates, flint walling, project work and administration at the National Park Authority offices. Volunteers work in partnership with a wide range of organisations including the National Trust, Natural England, the Forestry Commission, South-East Water, County and District Councils and smaller local community groups.	<b>Have a demonstrable influence on major infrastructure decision making</b>	Our major infrastructure work has continued and we have seen the results of our influence on several significant schemes in the past year, these include: 1. the A27 scheme at Arundel – the SDNPA objected to all 3 routes proposed which will cause damage to the SDNP; 2. the A27 scheme at Worthing – comments from the SDNPA contributed to a junction ‘improvement’ being taken out of the SDNP and reduced in size; 3. M3 junction 9 road improvements - SDNPA have responded in the strongest terms to the siting of a temporary works depot within the SDNP, and an in principle objection to the works as proposed; 4. ESSO have consulted with the SDNPA since Dec 17 over their plans to replace the multi-fuel pipeline through the SDNP in Hampshire. We continue to work with them to influence their decision making and have highlighted a route outside of the SDNP.



WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<b>Develop and implement projects which add value to the Local Highway Authorities' delivery of their rights of way statutory responsibilities</b>	A range of work has been undertaken including surface improvement works on the South Downs Way bridleway at Littleton Farm in West Sussex. Also in West Sussex, Path Extinguishment Orders at Fittleworth led to work preparing a Statement of Case for the Authority and commenting on the applicant's Statement of Case as part of a Public Inquiry into the proposed Extinguishment Orders. The Inspector did not confirm the Order and the rights of way remain open to the public.
<b>Target socially deprived communities to enable schools to access outside learning opportunities via the South Downs Travel Grant.</b>	The South Downs National Park Travel Grant Scheme targets schools with over 10% of students on Free School Meals in our most deprived urban communities around the National Park and aims to reduce the main barrier to outdoor learning identified by teachers in our schools survey; the cost of transport.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<b>Target socially deprived communities to enable schools to access outside learning opportunities via the South Downs Travel Grant (continued...)</b>	The Travel Grant enables these schools to have subsidised coach travel to visit one of over 100 outdoor learning providers on the South Downs National Park Learning Map and supports our network approach to connecting schools and learning providers. In 2017-18, 2,072 students from 33 groups have been able to benefit from Learning Outside the Classroom in the SDNP. The feedback from recipients has been overwhelmingly positive and the £10,000 grant is always oversubscribed. For 2018-19 the grant fund has been increased to £16,000 due to external sponsorship secured through the South Downs National Park Trust.





# SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK TRUST AND 'MEND OUR WAY' CAMPAIGN

SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK TRUST

**In October 2017 the South Downs National Park Trust was launched as an independent charity working with partners to “enhance and protect the South Downs National Park for future generations”.**

Its first major initiative has been the 'Mend our Way' campaign which seeks to raise £120,000 in a year to mend broken sections of the South Downs Way, the hugely popular national trail running the length of the National Park. Approximately 20,000 people walk, cycle or ride the 100 mile length of the South Downs Way each year and many millions more explore sections of it.

'Mend our Way' is part of the 'Make a Million' initiative being run by the British Mountaineering Council, seeking to raise £1,000,000 for some of the UK's most treasured trails

[mendourmountains.thebmc.co.uk](http://mendourmountains.thebmc.co.uk).



The Mend our Way campaign has been reaching out to these people and others who care to help raise funds to fix the worst affected sections of the trail. These are:

## OLD WINCHESTER HILL (HAMPSHIRE)

One of the most iconic hills in the Hampshire Downs, a Scheduled Ancient Monument Fort as well as a National Nature Reserve. Every winter the route up to Old Winchester Hill becomes a slippery muddy strip. £50,000 will pay to strip away the mud and replace the surface with stones.

## HYDEN LANE (NEAR BUTSER HILL, HAMPSHIRE)

Hyden Lane is the highest point on the chalk ridge of the South Downs and busy year round but poor drainage on the path is also a problem here. Large puddles of standing water are often trapped on the track and cause the surface to break up quickly. £30,000 will pay for additional limestone scalplings to form a raised, cambered track.

## MILLPOND BOTTOM (PEN HILL, WEST SUSSEX)

This is a remote part of the South Downs Way, popular for its tranquil setting and stunning views. £15,000 is needed to properly mend the churned up chalk track.

## PLUMPTON PLAIN (NEAR DITCHLING BEACON, EAST SUSSEX)

This busy section lies between Ditchling Beacon, one of the highest points on the South Downs Way, and the historic county town of Lewes. Water sits on the almost level path so it will take £25,000 to repair and strengthen it as well as adding drainage.

# SAY 'YES' TO NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE IN THE SOUTH DOWNS



**The National Citizen Service (NCS) was established by the Government and is now in its 6th year. The programme aims to:**

- Engage 15-17 year olds across the UK
- Develop the skills that employers increasingly value including confidence, leadership and independence
- Link to social action projects
- Motivate young people to long term engagement in volunteering

NCS achieves this through a 4 week programme where young people work in groups of 12-15 people to undertake three strands:

- **Adventure** – a week's residential in an activity centre trying out new activities and teambuilding

- **Skills** – a week's residential developing life skills to boost CV or UCAS personal statement
- **Social action** – plan, fundraise and make a difference over 5 days of activity

Connecting young people with nature is a key aim for the South Downs National Park. Along with all other English National Parks, the South Downs has a target to double the number of young people experiencing a National Park as part of National Citizen Service (NCS) as outlined in the Defra 8-point plan for National Parks. In addition, the Volunteer Development Strategy identifies young people as a target audience for diversifying our volunteer base. NCS is a good strategic fit with these aspirations and an important delivery mechanism for learning, outreach and volunteering.

In June 2017 we piloted three sessions in the Western Area with the main provider of NCS in Hampshire, Mountbatten School. The aim was to test how best we can engage with this scheme to encourage more young people to volunteer within the National Park.

A total of 32 young people aged 15-17, and 5 leaders (themselves young people aged 18-19) participated in the three days at Stodham Copse, near Petersfield. Supervised by the Western Area Rangers and the SDNPA Education team, the groups were introduced to the special qualities of the National Park and the River Rother in particular. For most of the young people the volunteering day was their first experience of a conservation task.

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

We are continuing to provide information and support to help communities better understand their environment and the impact of their actions on it, as well as making sure they are engaged in the design and development of their local surroundings. We are supporting the growth of sustainable local businesses. Progress against our key objectives as laid out in the Corporate Plan are summarised below:

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<b>Work with landowners to create Whole Estate Plans</b>	Whole Estate Plans (WEP) are an innovative approach to providing a non-statutory plan, which demonstrates the overall position of an organisation. A WEP can be used to provide contextual background for development proposals, help guide and support funding bids, future neighbourhood plan production, agri-environment and forestry schemes and other Natural Capital projects. A total of 19 estates, farms, rural holdings have been engaged with either through workshops, site meetings or discussions and 4 WEPs have been endorsed at Highfield, Iford, Newton Valence and Wiston Estates. For more information visit: <a href="https://southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/supporting-communities-business/whole-estate-plans/endorsed-whole-estate-plans/">southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/supporting-communities-business/whole-estate-plans/endorsed-whole-estate-plans/</a>

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<b>Increase the number of businesses using the shared identity</b>	Uptake of the shared identity in the sustainable tourism sector has been positive with 89 businesses, food producers and tourism bodies starting to use the shared identity alongside their own branding. We expect this to expand further as the shared identity increases in visibility. Examples include site interpretation at two YHA sites, marketing collateral for accommodation providers such as Sullington Manor Farm and White Lodge, Lewes. The food and drink sector are represented by vineyards and breweries, who are using the shared identity for visitor related activities including Langham Brewery and Ridgeview Vineyard.
<b>Work with partners to ensure projects use the shared identity resources</b>	130 projects are currently using the shared identity resources. Projects include the Weald and Downland Living Museum Gateway Building in Singleton, Gilbert White House and the Oates Collection in Selbourne and Winchester, Lewes and Eastbourne Tourist Information Centres.



WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<p><b>Identify opportunities for, and develop, five hubs and gateways over the next five years</b></p>	<p>In the last year Gilbert White and the Oates Collections Museum opened their newly refurbished museum and café with information on the National Park, using the shared identity. The National Park also features in the revamp of the Winchester Tourist Information Centre and our shared identity can now also be found in Lewes and Seaford Tourist Information Centres. Work is continuing with Truleigh Hill YHA, Petersfield Museum, and Beachy Head Visitor Centre, Worthing Borough Council (Highdown Gardens), Hampshire County Council (Queen Elizabeth Country Park) and in many smaller locations across the National Park.</p>
<p><b>Set up and manage the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)</b></p>	<p>CIL was implemented in the National Park on 1 April 2017. CIL money will be used to help deliver key National Park priorities, such as green infrastructure, sustainable transport and education. A proportion of the CIL collected is paid to parishes where new development occurs. For more information visit: <a href="https://southdowns.gov.uk/planning/community-infrastructure-levy/cil-regulations-guidance/">southdowns.gov.uk/planning/community-infrastructure-levy/cil-regulations-guidance/</a></p>



# HELPING COMMUNITIES PREPARE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The South Downs is unique in the National Park family with as many people living within the South Downs as the Lake District, Peak District and New Forest National Parks combined. This situation is reflected in the South Downs Special Qualities, which recognises the **distinctive towns and villages, and communities with real pride in their area**. This special quality is clear to see with 52 of our communities preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and thus taking an active role in managing change in their local area.

Community groups are helped to identify appropriate locations for housing (including affordable housing), employment or community facilities. Housing is often the primary concern for local people, ensuring that development meets the needs of local people and is located in appropriate locations. The NDPs being produced in the National Park are making a significant contribution to the provision of affordable housing, for example, the Petersfield NDP has allocated two sites for self-build homes, which will be restricted to those who can demonstrate a local connection to the community, to help those who live locally get on the housing ladder and continue to live in the National Park.



We work very closely with all our NDP groups to ensure their plans consider the purposes and duty of the National Park Authority and reflect the special qualities as the following examples illustrate:

- Liss, East Meon, Patching and Bury NDPs have policies which identify important views and seek to protect important landscape features within their settlements, conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of these places
- Milland, Liss, Petersfield, Patching, Bury, Amberley and many other NDPs have policies dedicated to conserving important habitats and species, with specific biodiversity policies where there are important national designations
- Many of the smaller rural parishes have also identified Parish Heritage Assets which are buildings and structures that are not nationally listed but are cherished by the local community and contribute to their village's historic character and appearance. Milestones, wharfs, pavilions and ancient trails are some of the more unusual Parish Heritage Assets that have been protected in the NDPs.



# SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND

**In 2017/18 a total of £76,254.39 was granted to 16 community led projects through the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF). An excellent example of how this fund can support local projects is shown in the following case study on Clausentum Fen.**

Clausentum Fen, meaning 'enclosed,' is named after a Roman settlement that used to sit in a bend of the River Itchen. Known as a 'green finger', the Fen extends into the urban communities of Winchester and is a haven for local wildlife including snipe, linnets, reed bunting, bullfinches and spotted flycatchers. It is also a wonderful green space for people to exercise and enjoy being with nature.

In 2003 a local resident successfully applied to have the site recognised as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). However, without a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) in place the site began to decline, which attracted fly-tipping, litter, and other anti-social behaviour.

In 2016 local residents overlooking the site took action and formed the Clausentum Fen Conservation Group. They wrote a constitution and consulted with relevant experts (in hydrology, arboriculture, habitat management and wildlife management) and stakeholders (including; Hampshire County Council; Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust; South Downs National Park Authority; and the Environment Agency).

A CMP was developed with the aim of restoring lost biodiversity. First steps in the regeneration process were clearing large areas of bamboo, removing litter, nettles and then experimenting with baffles and waterflow.

Contractors were required to remove several large sycamores that were threatening to break the stream bank and to undertake landscaping to create a still pond. The cost of this work was met by a £2,000 grant

from the Sustainable Communities Fund and matched by grants from two Hampshire County Councillors.

## Habitat management

- The clearance work allowed the conservation group to create ideal fen conditions, replanting native plants such as flag iris and snowdrops. Shrub habitat is gradually growing back with hawthorn, blackthorn, native dog wood and goat willow across the site.
- The experimentation with baffles and water flow has already led to an increase in river fly – a good indicator of water health and an important food source for fish and birds.

## Public engagement

- The momentum created by the work has led to an increase in membership of the conservation group to over 130 people, including students from Winchester College.
- Managing public access is a key challenge. The northern part of the site, with beautiful beech trees and other interesting species, will be accessible to the public but access to the southern part is likely to be restricted to protect the wildlife.





# OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2016/17

## COLUMBIA CLOTHING – SHARED BRANDING WITH OTHER NATIONAL PARKS



In May 2017 National Parks UK announced a first of its kind, five-year partnership with Columbia Sportswear to make Columbia the official outfitter of all National Parks' staff. This is the single largest step towards creation of a recognisable UK wide National Park brand to date and offers considerable savings. All National Park Authorities now have a consistent style and colour of outer clothing with each Park choosing their own colour of polo shirt. The partnership has been of particular benefit to the SDNPA as we have been able to replace all of our corporate clothing under the new deal for zero cost. This has saved us over £25,000 when compared to the previous clothing purchase when the SDNPA became fully operational in 2011.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK CITIZENS PANEL



In September 2017, the first South Downs National Park Citizens Panel was established, with 2,010 people living in or near the National Park recruited by telephone. Panel members will be participating in two surveys each year – in the spring and autumn – and may on occasion take part in ad hoc smaller scale pieces of research. For more information and to view the survey

findings from the autumn survey 2017, visit [southdowns.gov.uk/discover/research/citizens-panel/](https://southdowns.gov.uk/discover/research/citizens-panel/)

## BRIGHTON CHAMP YEAR 2



Year two has seen ChaMP evolve a targeted approach for reducing nitrate loss to the aquifer. In consultation with farmers we have formulated a Rural Measures Offer, including consultations and advice, interventions to improve precise nutrient application, and reduce nitrate losses through soil. In the urban setting we are developing rainscapes (also known as Sustainable Drainage Systems – SuDS), which intercept polluted water and silt running off the surface of the road, preventing them ending up in soakaways, from where they can get into the aquifer. Rainscapes clean the water naturally by the action of bacteria in the roots of the plants and soil. We have identified a number of possible locations for rainscapes in Brighton and Lewes, currently undergoing feasibility studies. ChaMP is also pushing groundwater protection in the urban setting up the agenda in key organisations, as well as supporting other organisations' efforts to create SuDS to ensure groundwater protection is fully considered.

## LEWES CINEMA WINS RTPI DESIGN AWARD



Work done by the South Downs National Park Authority and Burrell Foley Fischer Architects to restore an old brewery site into a cinema and community arts venue was recognised with a top regional planning award. On 23 November 2017, the Depot Cinema in Lewes was crowned overall winner at the RTPI South East Awards for Planning Excellence, and also picked up an

award as winner in the category for Excellence in Planning for Heritage. The project retained the original building on site whilst sensitively extending it to provide modern facilities. As well as providing three cinema screens, the building accommodates theatre space, temporary exhibitions, educational facilities, a restaurant and a bar.

## NATIONAL PARKS FOR THE FUTURE – NATIONAL PARKS UK CONFERENCE 2017



In October 2017 South Downs National Park was honoured to host the bi-annual 3 day conference for the UK's 15 National Parks. The 91 delegates (Executives, Officers and Members) were treated to carefully crafted tours across the Park to better understand the special qualities of the SDNP. Operational staff, key partners and volunteers were met in situ as well as local producers who

later contributed their local produce to the conference dinner. Feedback suggested that 100% of delegates found the tours either worthwhile or very worthwhile.

The choice of speakers was premised on the theme of the conference 'National Parks for the Future' and included Frank Dean (President & CEO Yosemite Conservancy, USA) who spoke about fundraising and people management in US National Parks, Sarah Mukherjee (former BBC Environment Correspondent, now CEO of Crop Protection Association), Adam Philip Phillips (member of Mosaic Youth Engagement Project in the Lake District National Park) and our own Ranger Dan Oakley who gave a thoroughly enjoyable Dark Night Skies presentation. Adam and Sarah also contributed to a very active panel debate chaired on the final day by TV presenter Julia Bradbury. The panel also included Professor Ian Bateman OBE (Natural Capital) and Dr William Wolmer (Chair of the South Downs Land Managers Group).

We set out to create an exciting and colourful conference to leave our delegates with great memories but didn't duck some of the challenges that National Parks for the future would face and we felt to a large extent we had achieved this.

## SDNPA CYCLING AND WALKING STRATEGY (2017-24)



The strategy was approved in October 2017 and sets out the aims and direction for the future of cycling and walking activity and infrastructure in the National Park. The delivery action plan identifies the priorities for the next five years and informs the Access Team priorities for 2018/19 and the Partnership Management Plan review. The strategy is being utilised by internal teams

including Development and Planning and is helping to shape various Local Authority strategies and access schemes within and near to the National Park.

## WATER VOLES BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER IN THE RIVER MEON



The Meon Valley Partnership Project to return water voles into the River Meon completed the final stage during 2017 at East Meon with a total of 2,584 water voles now released from source to sea. An important part of this project is the engagement with the local community with 6 activity days organised with local schools and assisting landowners to enhance their section of

the river for all wildlife.

For further highlights, such as those below, please visit our website.

- Condition survey of Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Cyclists and Walkers Welcome Scheme
- ELMS – shared training with other NPs
- Health and Wellbeing Conference
- Roll out of shared identity signage along the South Downs Way

## LOOKING FORWARD...

### Here are just a few examples of our upcoming work in 2018/19

- Chalk Grassland flagship event in July
- Creation of new route for western end of the South Downs Way out of Winchester
- Expansion of Cyclists and Walkers Welcome Scheme to communities along the route of the Velo South which takes place on closed roads in West Sussex
- Introduction of Woodland Advisory Services
- Launch of the Local Plan
- Provision of Heritage Coast Interpretation – includes working with Eastbourne Borough Council to deliver SDNP Shared Identity car park ladder signage across 15 sites on Eastbourne Downland
- Work with Natural England on implementation of England Coast Path National Trail through the National Park
- Work with England's National Parks and Visit Britain to deliver a business support programme for tourism providers in the National Park enabling the development of new bookable experiences, suitable for international markets.





# HOW THE AUTHORITY IS FUNDED

The main source of funding, for all National Park Authorities, is a National Park Grant from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). In 2017-18 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) received a grant totalling around **£10.1 million**.

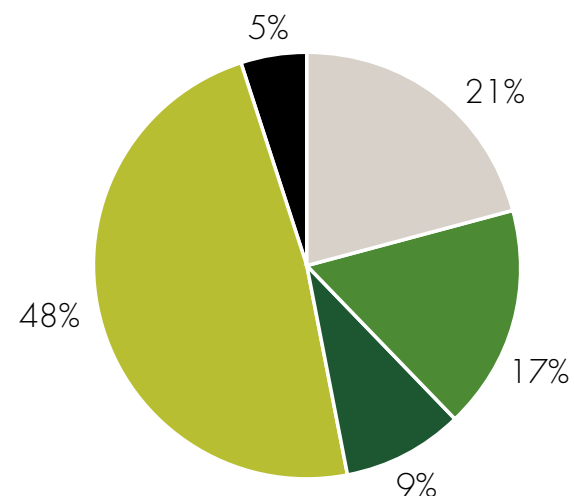
As the Planning Authority for the National Park, a significant part of our budget is dedicated to processing and determining planning applications for development. In 2017-18 the SDNPA received income of just over **£1.1 million** through planning activities.

The SDNPA was also successful in attracting significant funding for projects to deliver the Partnership Management Plan. During 2017-18 the SDNPA received **£1.2 million** of income through specific grants in addition to funds secured by other partners to deliver work in the National Park.

In total the income received by the SDNPA in 2017-18 was **£12.5 million**.

The allocation of how those funds are spent is illustrated in the following chart:

SDNPA Expenditure 2017-18



- Living landscapes (Purpose 1)
- People and Places (Purpose 2)
- Sustainable Futures (Duty)
- Planning - Development Management
- Corporate & Democratic Core

# HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT

As well as the statutory duty to act as planning authority for the National Park, and the need to provide proper governance by supporting the roles of Members, Audits etc., the SDNPA spends the funds it has available in pursuit of the purposes and duty.

# THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK VISION

By 2050 in the South Downs National Park:

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

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

- **Partnership Management Plan 2014–19**
- **State of the National Park Report 2012**
- **Corporate Plan 2016–21**



# SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

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For your guide to everything there is to  
see and do in the National Park visit  
[southdowns.gov.uk/discovery-map](https://southdowns.gov.uk/discovery-map)