



ANNUAL REVIEW
2018/19

A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

This Annual Review documents the successes of the eighth year of the South Downs National Park as we look forward to celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2020/21.

In 2018/19 the Authority completed its work on the National Park's first Local Plan while also delivering its largest and most ambitious programme to date. This document provides an overview of these projects which details their wide range of partners and approaches.

We welcome the higher national profile that the fight against climate change has acquired over recent months. National Park Authorities possess the right skills and tools to respond to the climate emergency. Grazing schemes such as that at Mill Hill in Shoreham, downland restoration projects such as that in Steyning and the habitat creation work of the farm clusters all gain focus and impact when placed in the

wider context of the SDNPA's landscape led approach. This is mirrored in the integrated approach of the whole estate plans that are now being produced by many of our largest landowners.

It is easy to focus on the eye catching flagship projects – and SDNPA has many that are documented here, such as Heathlands Reunited, the woodland partnership, Brighton ChaMP, the international dark skies reserve, Truleigh Hill and Mend our Way. But just as important is the mass of small local projects undertaken by our rangers, volunteers and contractors. In 2018/19 there were more than 150 of these spread across the 1,600 km² of the National Park. Each will make a huge difference to its immediate locality and together they form a complex tapestry of environmental enhancement and habitat reconnection. We could never capture their breadth and variety in a short round up of the year but we give some examples in the final pages.

If this Review has inspired you to learn more about the plans of SDNPA then please take a look at our Corporate Plan for 2019/20 which is being published in tandem. This sets out our strategy for the current year as we await the outcome of the Glover Review of National Parks and Protected Landscapes.



We are ready to take the opportunities that come our way but will not passively await them. Instead we are acting now to shape the national debate around the future of farming, rural development and environmental policy post Brexit, advocating lowland landscapes within Government. This Annual Review provides ample evidence that we deliver against our promises.



Trevor Beattie
Chief Executive



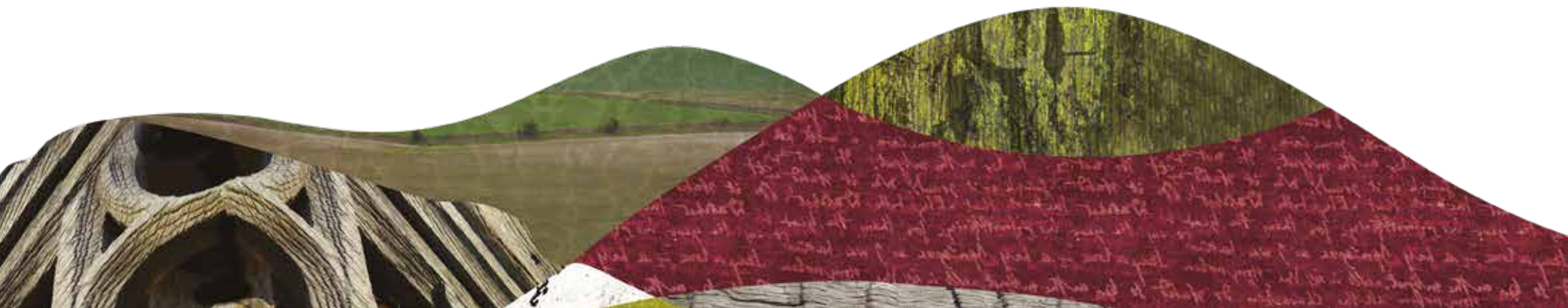
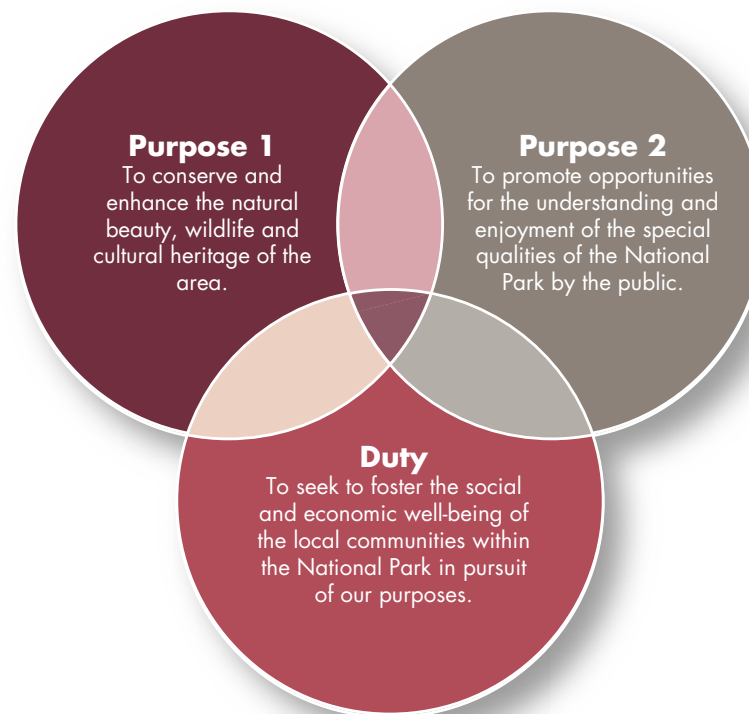
Margaret Paren
Chair

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

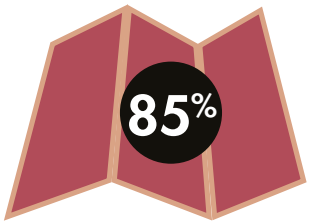
This Annual Review highlights some of our key achievements for 2018/19 which link to the objectives laid out in our Corporate Plan 2018/19 (see southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/key-documents/ and click on **SDNPA Corporate Plan 2018-19**)

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 2018/19



PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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

HEDGEROW



9

ENTRY SIGNS installed

E-NEWSLETTER

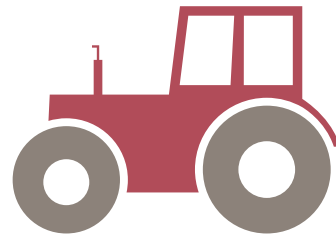
SDNP signups to date

4,781



120 FARMERS IN...
6 FARM CLUSTERS

covering 2/3rds of the National Park



SCHOOL CHILDREN 3,593

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



5

WHOLE ESTATE PLANS

approved to date and another 7 in preparation

HEATHLANDS REUNITED YEAR 3



288^{ha} of heathland restoration work

DARK SKIES

During our Dark Skies Festival...



20 PARTNERS

...held over...



30 EVENTS



...involving some 3,000 PEOPLE



242 PROJECTS

...using the National Park shared identity

76%

SDNPA Citizens Panel members aware of one or more shared identity images

ALONG THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY



GATES REPAIRED

GATES REPLACED

OUR 314 SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGERS spent...



DAYS SUPPORTING National Park work



DAYS OF WARDEN SURVEYING on the South Downs Way

139

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 is summarised below:

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE	WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Prepare for the submission of the South Downs Local Plan	The Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on 26th April 2018, with the examination scheduled for November and December 2018. In the new year, the main modifications proposed by the Inspector and the SDNPA following examination of the Local Plan went through a period of consultation. The team collated the responses and our views on them, ready to send to the Inspector who will ultimately determine what, if any, changes are to be made. The whole Plan will then go for adoption by the Authority in July 2019. We will provide more detail in the Annual Review 2019/20	Agree an integrated work programme for ecosystem services, natural capital and green infrastructure delivery	An internal cross-departmental Green Infrastructure (GI) working group has agreed a programme of work which involves a two-step approach: Step 1 is to update, refresh and publish the GI Principles & Evidence base in 2019; Step 2 is to develop a strategy for the Green Infrastructure Investment Areas over the next 12–18 months. Moving forward, the Green Infrastructure Framework will be referred to as the “South Downs People and Nature Network”. We are planning to publish and “soft launch” the Principles and Evidence base by late summer 2019.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO

Provide support that promotes a consistent approach across all farm clusters

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

The Southern Facilitators Group comprises 15 Farm Cluster Groups across Southern England, with 6 in the National Park. The farm cluster groups continue to look at ways to engage with the public, with the Winchester Downs Group running a successful Bioblitz and the Arun to Adur Group an Open Farm Day. The Operational Management Plan approach designed by the Winchester Downs Cluster has now been adopted by the other groups, providing a consistent way to present their aims, objectives and deliverables. Following the success of the Arun to Adur Farmers Group 'Meet the Farmer' videos, the Eastern South Downs Farmers Group is planning to repeat the project. See **page 9** for more detail on our successful work with farm clusters.

Secure medium-term funding to continue to develop our aspirations around bigger, better, more joined up heathlands

Funding for the Heathlands Reunited project was secured in 2016. See **page 10** for more details on the project's very successful third year.



OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

Here are some highlights of work carried out on the ground across the National Park during 2018/19:

BRIGHTON ChaMP YEAR 3

Nitrate pollution of the chalk aquifer is a long-term issue. Year three has seen strong progress in the Brighton ChaMP partnership promoting rural measures, with a good take-up among farmers of our incentives (cover crops, soil-mineral-nitrogen testing, precision nitrogen application). Feedback has informed a second phase of the rural programme. Three urban rainscape projects are progressing (sustainable drainage schemes, or SuDS), tackling groundwater pollution by intercepting pollution and silty road run-off, while improving flood risk, biodiversity and amenity value at the sites. Our wider urban programme takes in sports, industrial facilities and new developments promoting best practice management to keep the aquifer clean. Research and communication play a strong role, drawing on existing research, identifying themes to inform our work and support awareness of pollution prevention best practice. Cover crop research is now published on our website (visit southdowns.gov.uk/cover-crop-study), and events have included a well-attended workshop promoting soil health.

TRULEIGH HILL LANDSCAPE PROJECT

Truleigh Hill has been considered an eyesore for some time owing to the cluster of telecommunications and broadcasting antennae which are located on the top of the Downs. These towers are highly visible as landmarks for



many miles around, but the landscape of Truleigh Hill is also degraded at a local level due to a combination of fragmented land use, exotic tree plantings and inconsistent planning decisions resulting in domestic properties which appear incongruous in the context of the large-scale farmed landscape and telecommunications infrastructure. The overall aim of the Truleigh Hill Landscape Project, funded by the Rampion Mitigation Fund, is an improved landscape for the Truleigh Hill area. Objectives include an engaged community, ecological and environmental enhancements, improved access and understanding of the wider Truleigh Hill area. Work undertaken so far has primarily been research, commissioning evidence gathering and collating existing evidence and information.

The Truleigh Hill Habitat & Access project funded by the Rampion Mitigation Fund and National Grid, aims to showcase the habitats of the South Downs at the YHA. The dew pond has been restored, a dipping platform constructed, easy access trail constructed, chalk grassland created and the field refenced so that it can be grazed. Education resources

are being developed for self-led school visits. We've made contact with Schools without Walls (So Sussex) linking them to Truleigh Hill YHA as a delivery partner for the John Muir Award with visiting schools. In addition, interpretation panels and an easy access trail are being developed for the YHA.

WOODLAND ADVISORY SERVICES (WAS) BEING INTRODUCED

The WAS is part of the Woodland Trust and SDNPA Conservation Partnership 2017–2020, a partnership project which, through funding a dedicated Woodland Officer, aims to deliver a package of targeted woodland management advice and support to landowners and businesses in the SDNP.

The Conservation Partnership follows the highly successful Forestry Partnership 2012–2016, which increased take up of forestry grant schemes by 85%, developed a comprehensive GIS database of woodland ownership and management and strengthened links with the wider National Park forestry industry. A WAS visit involves a thorough review of the owner's woodlands, and provides a summary report which identifies opportunities for further management to enable owners to set clear objectives, and provides key contacts in and around the National Park that would help them to achieve these. In 2018/19, 41 visits were made covering 1,242 hectares.



FARM CLUSTERS

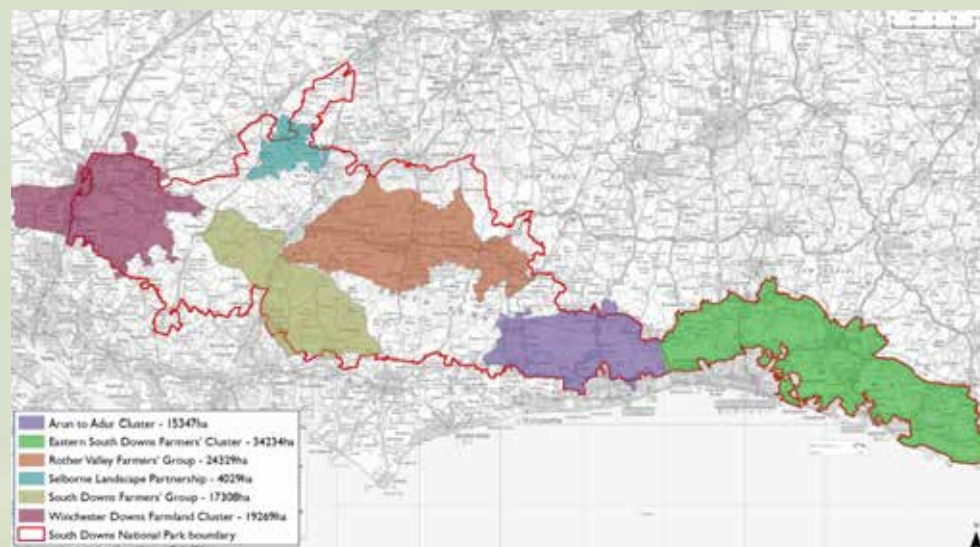
The farm cluster concept is a simple one: farmers, land managers and local partners work together across the landscape to improve and enhance the environment. Working together they can achieve more than on their own.

Farm clusters use a bottom-up approach, with farmers and landowners forming the group and deciding their own aims and objectives. A trusted local advisor is often appointed to run and coordinate the group on a day to day basis, with a steering group consisting of members and locally relevant partners providing direction.

The majority of the farm clusters in England are funded through the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund. This is a competitive pot of money that funds an individual farmer or group of land managers to work together at a landscape scale. To secure the funding, they need to have a plan that lists the targets and actions they plan to undertake. Some clusters are funded in different ways including privately, such as through water companies, or self-funded where members pay a fixed fee or fee per hectare of their holding.

There are six farm clusters within the South Downs National Park and the Authority works with all of these groups, providing support and assistance to deliver their aims. The farm clusters range in size from just under 5,000ha to over 30,000ha and have anywhere between 10 and 45 members.

The farm clusters in the South Downs are undertaking a range of different projects including:



- **Farmland bird recovery:** improving conditions for priority species such as lapwing, grey partridge and barn owl
- **Habitat restoration and connectivity:** linking areas of nationally important chalk grassland
- **Resource protection:** working with water companies to identify ways to improve water quality
- **Public engagement:** telling people about how farmers care for the landscape while producing quality food

These projects are being delivered in partnership with a range of organisations and experts including the South Downs National Park Authority, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, Butterfly Conservation, National Farmers Union and Water Companies. It really is a collaborative approach where knowledge and ideas are shared to maximise environmental delivery.

HEATHLANDS REUNITED YEAR THREE

Our five-year National Lottery Heritage funded partnership project is entering its 4th year in June 2019.

Throughout last winter the partnership of 11 like-minded organisations continued practical management works funded by the project across 36 heathland sites. In the first three years of the project, we have worked to restore 551 football pitches (383Ha) worth of precious heathland habitat. The project is therefore well on target to reach 1,000 football pitches worth of restoration by the final year in 2021. The project purchased 15 cattle and gifted these partners to support heathland grazing. The fencing at Iping and Stedham Common was completed and the cattle are now grazing the site. 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.



HeRe Iping Fire Learning © Kary Sherman

In total last year 3,868 attendees took part in 62 engagement activities:

- 401 attendees at 33 walks
- 2600 attendees at our two Secrets of the Heath events
- 150 students on 4 school visits
- 45 people on training events



Year 3 saw the launch of the Heathlands Heritage Story Book, aimed at telling unique site specific stories while also encouraging members of the public to visit other heathland sites in the project area to understand the sites as a connected habitat. Year 3 saw nine new welcome boards erected at heathland sites across the project area and the heathlands interactive project map went live on the website to help people find out more about their local sites: southdowns.gov.uk/find-your-local-heath.

Year 4 will see the promotion of the established resources, events, volunteering and walks programmes with a focus on widening participation. Beth Nicholls, the project's new Community Outreach Officer, has joined the team to help push this forward in the final 2 years. To find out more about how the project team and partners are working on delivery of the remaining two years of the project, visit: southdowns.gov.uk/heathlands-reunited.

amphibian and reptile
conservation



Hampshire &
Isle of Wight
Wildlife Trust



Forestry Commission



Hampshire
County Council



South Downs
National Park Authority



The Lynchmere
Society

giving
nature
a home



Sussex
Wildlife Trust



NATURAL
ENGLAND

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 is summarised below:

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE	WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<p>Provide a wider range of opportunities for our South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (SDVRS)</p>	<p>Between April 2018 and March 2019 volunteers carried out 3,996 volunteer days. This year we have worked to ensure that all new and existing volunteer roles have accompanying role profiles. These cover an impressive number of diverse volunteering opportunities including Public Events, Serpent trail and Geocache Surveyor, Sheep Looker and Dark Night Skies Electrical Display Volunteer. These are in addition to the Practical Conservation volunteer roles. Also, this year we have piloted a new role of Youth Ambassador which included promotion of Micro-Volunteering through an Instagram takeover. Volunteers work in partnership with a wide range of organisations including the National Trust, Natural England, the Forestry Commission, South-East Water, County and District Councils and smaller local community groups</p>	<p>Increase the awareness of the South Downs National Park, particularly in the South East of England</p>	<p>We have significantly raised the profile of the National Park this year through our attendance at key events, such as the Big Church Day Out, which has over 30,000 attendees. We ran a SDNP 'village' and sponsored a highly successful 'Family Bike Ride' at Winchester cycle fest, which was attended by 5,000 people. We also supported the Arun to Adur Farm Cluster Open Day, piloting the new 'meet the farmer' plaques with the public. We further raised our profile by having a stand at Whistler's Green at the Boomtown Festival in August, attended by over 60,000 young people.</p> <p>In addition, entry signs were installed at 6 locations in West Sussex, including Lavant, Pulborough and Shoreham, with 13 more being installed across Hampshire, West and East Sussex in 2019/20.</p>

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<p>Development of mutually beneficial promotional opportunities, including use of the shared identity between National Park based tourism businesses and the SDNPA</p>	<p>The roll out of the Discover England Tourism programme was underway in mid 2018 with two information sessions held for 60 tourism providers explaining how they could join the programme to develop their experiences for international markets and be part of England's National Park Experience Collection. Later in the year, Discover England moved into one-to-one training sessions for signed up providers and three general sessions open for all National Park tourism businesses. Work took place to extend the 'Cyclists and Walkers Welcome' scheme around West Sussex. Discussions are underway to extend the scheme to Horsham, Chichester and Eastbourne. Two Visitor Giving partners have submitted their first six months of donations to the South Downs National Park Trust. Five further partners are confirmed with arrangements underway and discussions continue with three more.</p>

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<p>Target socially deprived communities to enable schools to access outside learning opportunities via the South Downs Travel Grant</p>	<p>The South Downs National Park Travel Grant Scheme targets schools with over 10% of students on Free School Meals in the most deprived urban communities around the National Park. It aims to reduce the main barrier to outdoor learning identified by teachers in our schools survey; the Cost of Transport. 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.</p> <p>Our grant for 2018/19 was £17,363. This enabled 3,593 students from 56 schools to benefit from Learning Outside the Classroom in the National Park.</p>



OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK CITIZENS PANEL YEAR 2

The second year of the citizens panel saw it going from strength to strength. Survey response continues to be high, with our panel showing unprecedented response rates of over 40% when the industry standard is around 23%. So far, panel members have been asked about their interest in volunteering, participating in community work parties and supporting the South Downs National Park Trust. They have also been asked about their awareness of our events, and the shared identity images and where they have seen them. Having a panel has enabled us to collect vital baseline information, for example, around awareness of our Take the Lead campaign. This will enable the Communications Team to set targets around engagement and will test awareness on a regular basis. Panel members are surveyed twice a year, in the spring and the autumn, and many have been invited to take part in more focused work, such as website testing or providing feedback on the Local Plan Policies Maps. If you are a resident and are interested in joining the panel, please visit:

www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/research/citizens-panel/

WILD CHALK

Our pilot 'Wild Chalk' event, celebrating chalk grassland, took place on Sunday 22 July 2018 in East Preston Park, Brighton. It was a great success with the local community with well over 1,000 attendees taking part in a host of activities, including the popular new colouring wall, to learn more about this precious habitat. This pilot event, sponsored by Southern Water, was held in close proximity to residential areas of Brighton. 'Wild Chalk' was specifically designed to champion this rare habitat, raising the profile and awareness of our unique landscape and helping to ensure that it is protected by future generations.



© SDNPA Laura Warren

IMPROVING THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY

SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK TRUST

Stretching all the way from Winchester to the seaside resort of Eastbourne the popular South Downs Way is the only National Trail to sit entirely within a National Park.

Every year more than 500,000 walkers, cyclists, riders and runners enjoy sections of the 160km (100 mile) South Downs Way National Trail. Some for pleasure, others for the challenge and many to raise money for charity. All of this activity has an impact, and several hard-to-reach sections of the trail needed urgent attention.

In 2018/19, through the 'Mend our Way' appeal, the South Downs National Park Trust raised an astonishing £120,000 for critical improvements to four stretches of the South Downs Way. The first section of the Trail identified was at Plumpton Plain near Ditchling Beacon, East Sussex. This is the longest single piece of South Downs Way restoration ever completed! It transformed a muddy, water-logged track into a brand-new, weather-resistant path.

As a result of the appeal, three further sections of the Trail are also scheduled to be improved in the coming months. Two of these sections are in Hampshire, Old Winchester Hill one of the most iconic hills on the downs and Hyden Lane at Butser Hill, the highest point on the chalk ridge in the South Downs. The fourth section is at Millpond Bottom near Penn Hill, West Sussex, popular for its tranquil setting and stunning views.

The South Downs National Park Trust is the official charity of the South Downs National Park. For more information visit southdownstrust.org.uk Registered Charity Number 1174975.

BEFORE RESTORATION: Plumpton Plain, South Downs Way



AFTER RESTORATION: Plumpton Plain

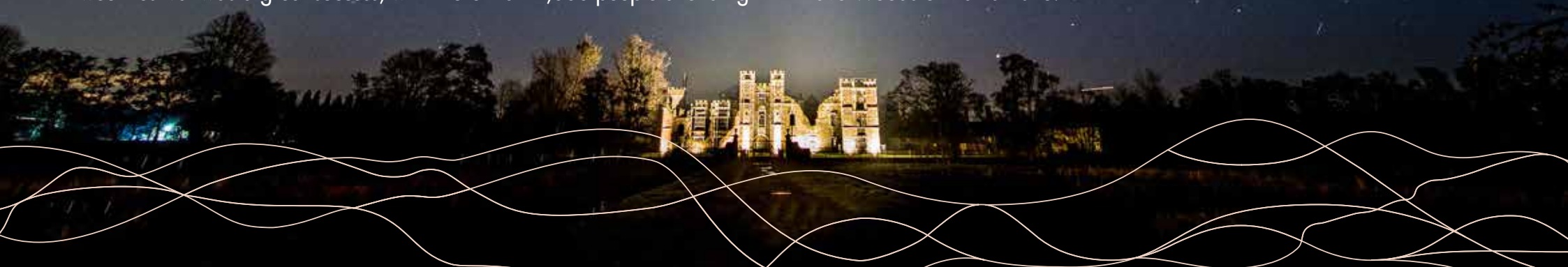


DARK SKIES FESTIVAL YEAR THREE – BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER



The South Downs Dark Skies Festival was bigger than ever this year with a total of 32 events taking place across the National Park, involving 25 different organisations who engaged directly with over 3,000 people. The events ranged from simple stargazing evenings, night hikes, planetarium shows, bat box building, and astronaut experiences, to shadow puppet workshops. The National Park Authority ran six events ourselves. The two week festival was a great success, with more than 2,000 people attending

our own events and many more attending those of our partners. A very high percentage were families with young children from the surrounding urban areas. For many of them the Festival has been their first direct experience of the National Park. The first week of the festival coincided with the school half-term and, fortuitously, a particularly large, low, full moon, which allowed us to capitalise on this year's festival theme of the anniversary of the moon landing. Our 'Stargazing South Downs Roadshow' visited Midhurst, Petersfield and Lewes town centres and proved to be the perfect half-term outing for a combined total of 1,600 visitors. In the second week of the festival we concentrated on providing some serious stargazing experiences in the darker areas of our Dark Skies Reserve. Many of our partners also reported enthusiastic support for the events they had put on: the Novium museum in Chichester reported 'Our event today was fantastic and we had around 500 people visit during our 3 hour event' and Petworth House's moon walk: 'The event was such a success! We had such lovely feedback and it was definitely the start of something bigger'. In addition to events we also hosted guest blogs on the website on all things astronomical, including moth trapping with Michael Blencowe of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, the importance of maintaining our dark night skies by Graham Bryant of Hampshire Astronomical Group, and how to choose your first telescope by Dave Woods of Hants Astro.



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 is summarised below:

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE	WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<p>Deliver Discover England's National Park programme to deliver increased SDNP exposure and new South Downs bookable tourism experiences tailored towards international markets</p>	<p>Six English National Park Experience Collections were developed across the South Downs National Park covering landscape, nature and produce. Business Information Sessions were held for tourism providers in Lewes and Midhurst. Seven accommodation providers and nine experience providers who were accepted onto the intensive training programme had one-to-one training sessions with the business support consultant over the next three months to prepare for the National Park Experience Collection marketed by the central Discover England team to the international travel trade. Two 'Growing Your International Visitor Numbers' workshops open to all businesses were delivered and online training modules developed. An application was drawn up to extend the programme through the DEF Amplification Fund. This will require committed match funding from each National Park Authority (£5,500 from each NPA). A national launch was held in the Peak District National Park in January 2019, and the SDNPA organised a local media launch with partners.</p>	<p>Develop hubs and gateways to the National Park to provide visitor and accommodation information</p>	<p>The new visitor gateway at the Gilbert White Museum was launched in May 2018 and discussions are ongoing with a number of partners including Stanmer Park and Charleston. We are working with Highdown Gardens, Worthing on their stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application, which includes a South Downs National Park (SDNP) Gateway. This will be implemented later in 2019 dependent on stage 2 success. We are working with Petersfield Museum on an SDNP Gateway following their successful HLF bid. Install is due Summer/Autumn 2019. We met with Brighton and Hove CC regarding an SDNP Gateway at Stanmer Park and are advising on the visitor experience aspects of their forward plan. Work is ongoing with St. Hubert's Church Idsworth on a minor SDNP Gateway.</p>

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
<p>Ensure infrastructure which supports the development of the National Park is delivered in a timely fashion by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Managing an effective Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) collection process – Using the Infrastructure Business Plan (IBP) to prioritise and identify the location of infrastructure projects – Managing Section 106 obligations effectively 	<p>CIL has been in operation since April 2017. The South Downs is the only National Park that has CIL. The team deal with approximately 100 separate points of contact with the public each week. Parishes receive a proportion of CIL from development in their area and the first payment of £31k was made to Parishes in April 2018.</p> <p>In 2018/19, we collected £1,094,367.65 in CIL receipts. We have over 400 projects to review/ assess for the 2018/19 IBP. The 2018/19 IBP (spending of the CIL receipts) will be considered by Planning Committee in Autumn 2019.</p> <p>In 2018/19 we funded 52 Section 106 projects totalling £551,722.18.</p>



OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

ENGLISH NATIONAL PARK EXPERIENCE COLLECTION

The English National Park Experience Collection is a joint initiative between nine National Parks which was supported by the Visit Britain/Visit England Discover Britain Fund. It promotes a series of packaged experiences for the international travel trade which are designed to be flexible, enabling the creation of new itineraries and making it possible for travel operators to design multi-park tours. A range of private providers were present at the launch of the Collection, including four from the South Downs. Sally Balcombe, the CEO of Visit Britain who gave the keynote address, described the initiative as “one of the most interesting things we’re involved in” and said she would like to develop the partnership further. The Collection is an excellent example of joint working between National Park Authorities and the creation of commercial partnerships with a strong entrepreneurial spirit.



PETWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The South Downs National Park Authority is the statutory planning authority for the National Park area. We are in the top 20 largest planning authorities in the country in terms of the number of planning applications we receive each year and also one of the largest in terms of the geographical area covered.

Neighbourhood Plans were introduced by the Government in 2012 in an effort to democratise the planning process by giving local communities the power to shape development in their area. In 2014, Petworth Town Council approached the Authority and requested that they be designated for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Once designated, the Authority has a duty to support them in preparing their plan as per planning regulations.

The making of the Petworth Neighbourhood Plan is the culmination of many years of work and strong leadership by Petworth Town Council, guided by clear community wishes and with significant input from the South Downs National Park Authority.

The Plan needed to tackle numerous issues including allocating land for new housing and employment uses; safeguarding shops and the town centre; protecting community and leisure facilities; protection of biodiversity; promoting low carbon technology; supporting development of benefit to younger residents.

It was agreed that a collaborative approach would be most successful, ensuring the wishes of the local community were listened to and observed. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was set up in 2012 and was made up of residents and town councillors, assisted by five working groups, Nexus Planning (a team of planning and regeneration consultants) and SDNPA Officers.



The public were involved throughout the process through various methods including questionnaires distributed to every household, online questionnaires, three drop-in sessions plus two consultation sessions with young people. These events were attended by around 150 residents. The responses were used to inform the preparation of the Plan's vision and core objectives.

The resulting plan tackled local issues head on. It met the SDNPA's housing requirements and delivered on requirements of the local community, including the provision of new access to the primary school. On 7 June 2018, the Petworth Neighbourhood Plan successfully passed at Referendum.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND

An excellent example of how the Sustainable Communities Fund can support local projects is shown in the following case study on Fittleworth Community Shop.

When the village shop and post office closed in 2011 the residents of Fittleworth, West Sussex were concerned about the lack of any shop and community hub in the village. The Parish Council established a working party in January 2016 to look at the need and viability of a community owned and run shop and café. The project was established as a key priority in the Parish Council's five year Strategic Plan and is featured in the Neighbourhood Plan.

After much research and extensive consultation, it was decided to operate the shop as a Community Benefit Society (CBS) – a not-for-profit community owned and operated social enterprise. At this point the project became independent of the Parish Council although the Council have remained fully supportive throughout. Suitable land was identified in the centre of the village near the village hall and school which the Parish Council agreed to lease to Fittleworth Community Shop Ltd. The Sustainable Communities Fund of the National Park Authority offered a £10,000 grant to the project to start the fundraising phase which was phenomenally successful and raised a total of £450,000 through community events, grants and donations.

Fittleworth Stores opened their doors to customers on Monday 1 October 2018 and in their first 3 weeks sold 1,146 cups of coffee as well as a fair amount of cake and sausage rolls. The Stores has made sustainability and local suppliers the core of their business by launching with meals and cakes from a local caterer, coffee blended by a local roaster and meat supplied by a local butcher. Since opening, the range of local produce has expanded to include products from over 30 local suppliers, including bread, fish, eggs,



fruit and vegetables, flowers, local art and craft. Services were extended even further when a Post Office opened in the shop during Jan 2019.

Five staff members are supported by a team of 5 paid teenagers and 50 volunteers to keep the shop open 7 days a week. Sales in the shop and café have exceeded initial forecasts and are rapidly growing with incredibly positive feedback from local and visiting customers.

Being adjacent to the school, the wider area has become a real focal point for the community with families and children enjoying the outdoor play equipment, along with the more recent additions of things like bike racks and a recreation area for older children.

Fittleworth Stores has become an exemplar for what can be achieved when communities come together to tackle challenging yet widespread issues.

PROJECTS ON THE GROUND

Relationships are fostered and developed daily between the National Park and the local councils with Officers attending AGMs, special meetings and workshops with the 176 Town and Parish Councils across the National Park.

Together, numerous projects are initiated every year 'on the ground'. Here are just a few highlights from 2018/19:

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION AWARD



The Western Downs SDVRS were presented with the Butterfly Conservation Award at their AGM during November. The VRS received the award due to the habitat restoration work they have completed with Butterfly Conservation over the last six years. The tasks organised have generally been scrub management at Magdalen Hill Down and the surrounding sites but they have also

completed meadow management at Bentley Station Meadow, near Alice Holt. The tasks completed on chalk downland have allowed the sites to be grazed which promotes the establishment of chalk grassland plants, with an increase in butterflies recorded on all the sites. For example, small blue butterflies have returned to Morn Hill, near Winchester. One task included removing buddleia which does not provide as good a nectar source for the South Downs blue butterflies. By removing the buddleia it allows the native chalk grassland wild flowers to flourish which the blue butterflies prefer.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO GRAFFHAM DOWN



A ranger-led walk with 17 disabled ramblers in the Central area tested out a recently improved access route east from Cocking Hill car park along the South Downs Way to the Graffham Downland Trust's Nature Reserves. The National Park Authority have been working with the Graffham Downland Trust over the past year to replace two stiles with gates, and remove the bays from four

other kissing gates across the site. This has made the reserves more accessible to users of electric mobility vehicles, adults with children in buggies, and anyone else for whom stiles present an impediment to accessing the countryside. The route along the South Downs Way offers spectacular views and showcases the recent fencing work at Heyshott Cross Dykes, which has secured the future management of the scheduled monument.

HEDGELAYING AT COCKING HILL CAR PARK



In rural car parks such as Cocking Hill in the South Downs, car crime is a big problem for users and the police. While good visibility into a car park significantly reduces the risk of break-ins, this often means hedges are cut down. However, the National Park Authority managed to reach a compromise with West Sussex County Council highways department and West Sussex Police, whereby we laid a hedge as low as it will allow, improved visibility from the A286 whilst maintaining (and improving) a habitat corridor and

keeping a natural barrier from the road. The local farmer has agreed to keep it trimmed each winter and eventually the stakes and binders securing it will rot away, making the hedge look more natural. We are looking forward to seeing it flourish over the years, so whenever you're passing over the Downs have a glance and watch it mature!

LAPWING SURVEYS IN THE WINCHESTER DOWNS



Members of the Western SDVRS have helped to assist the Western Area ranger team in conducting surveys of summer breeding lapwing in the Winchester Downs area. Lapwing were identified as a target species by members of the Winchester Downs Farm Cluster group, leading two members to install new summer breeding plots on their land to add to existing plots managed by other members already in countryside stewardship. Co-ordinated by the RSPB and providing valuable data for the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative a total of 44 surveys were carried out by the team between March and June 2018. Results from the surveys are currently being analysed and compared against similar surveys undertaken in the local area. This should ensure that the correct conclusions are drawn and that appropriate land management advice is given to landowners to help support lapwing breeding success across the South Downs into the future.

MANAGEMENT OF ST CATHERINE'S HILL



St Catherine's Hill is an iconic Iron Age hill fort positioned at the western edge of the National Park very close to the centre of Winchester, linked to the city by the River Itchen flood meadows. All of this makes it a key gateway site to the South Downs. It is owned by Winchester College and managed by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT). As has happened on many downland sites for some time, scrub encroachment has been slowly engulfing parts of the site and given its importance to the National Park we have pitched in to give them a hand. Our volunteers carried out three days of scrub clearance and we supported contractors through our grass roots fund clearing around 1ha of brambles and shrubs that were drowning out species such as devil's bit scabious and salad burnett. This is the start of an ongoing partnership with HIWWT to improve the site for biodiversity and access.



RESTORATION OF BURNT HOUSE DEW POND



Between mid-September and mid-October 2018 the Eastern ranger team led five Stanmer volunteer tasks at Burnt House dew pond. They repaired the sweet chestnut fencing, installed a pedestrian gate, removed some of the scrub around the edge and dragged the parrot's feather (an invasive non-native species) out. The volunteers cleared some of the gorse and other vegetation around the

dew pond and fence line to open the area up which helped create better views for the public. Due to it being next to a busy section of the South Downs Way, they had many people come up to them asking questions and admiring their work. The group are planning to revisit the site in September 2019 to remove any regrowth of the parrot's feather.

SHEEP LEND A HELPING HOOF FOR BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION AT MILL HILL, SHOREHAM



A flock of Jacobs sheep are being employed to improve precious chalk grassland, vital for the survival of rare butterflies, in the South Downs National Park near Shoreham. Mill Hill, owned and managed by Adur District Council with the support of the National Park Authority, is one of the best spots to see butterflies in the National Park thanks to the high quality of its chalk grassland,

which only exists because of centuries of grazing. Reintroducing grazing animals, like these Jacobs sheep, is essential to maintain and improve plant diversity and support the butterflies and other insects that thrive on them.

STEYNING DOWNLAND SCHEME GATEWAY BUILDING AND INTERPRETATION



The Steyning Downland Scheme Gateway is a converted shipping container, clad in wood, with a roofline shaped to reflect the South Downs. Located at the entrance to the Steyning Downland Scheme, it not only acts as a gateway to the Scheme and South Downs National Park, but also as a tool store for the volunteers that help manage this part of the National Park. On the front is an

18ft interpretation board, including a map, bitesize timeline, geological information and shared identity. The display takes visitors on a fascinating journey through the landscape from prehistoric times to the present day. There are also lift-up flaps giving fun facts about nature, at perfect small person height! On the back and side are bug hotels made by children from Beavers, Brownies, Forest Schools and Steyning Grammar School.

LOOKING FORWARD...

Here are just a few examples of our upcoming work in 2019/20

- Launch of the South Downs National Park Local Plan
- Launch of the new 5 year Partnership Management Plan
- Plans for Seven Sisters Country Park
- Bee Lines Campaign
- 10th Anniversary Celebration – designation of South Downs National Park

HOW THE AUTHORITY IS FUNDED

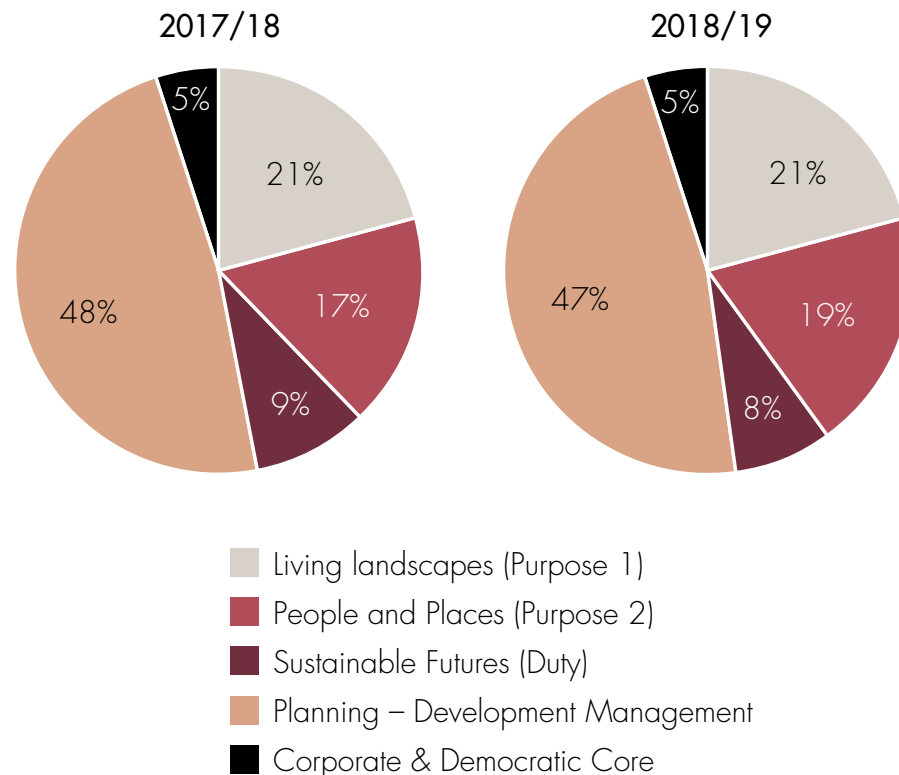
The main source of funding, for all National Park Authorities, is a National Park Grant from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). In 2018/19 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) received a grant totalling around **£10.3 million**.

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 2018/19 the SDNPA received income of just over **£3.4 million** through planning activities (including Community Infrastructure Levy).

The SDNPA was also successful in attracting significant funding for projects to deliver the Partnership Management Plan. During 2018/19 the SDNPA received **£0.9 million** of income through specific grants and contributions in addition to funds secured by other partners to deliver work in the National Park.

In total the income received by the SDNPA in 2018/19 was **£14.6 million**.

SDNPA Expenditure



HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT

As well as the statutory duty to act as planning authority for the National Park, and the need to provide proper governance by supporting the roles of Members, Audits etc., the SDNPA spends the funds it has available in pursuit of the purposes and duty. The allocation of how those funds are spent is illustrated in the following chart:



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**



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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