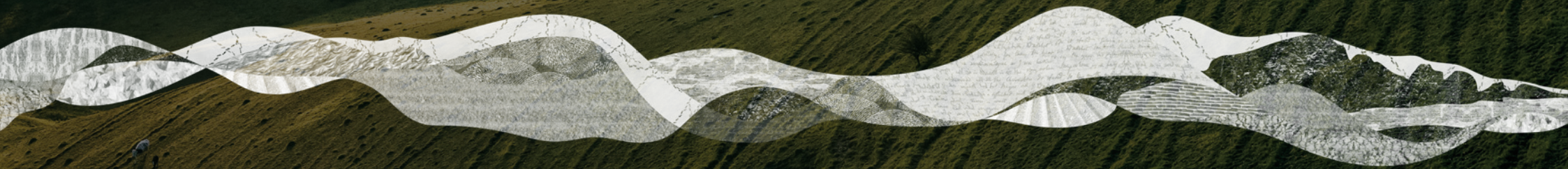


SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK

# South Downs National Park Corporate Plan 2020–2025

YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN 2020–21





**South Downs National Park Authority**

South Downs Centre

North Street

Midhurst

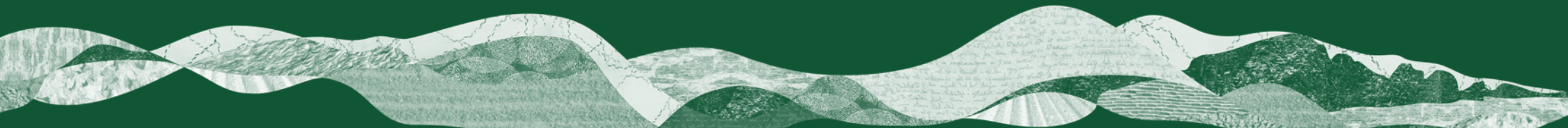
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[southdowns.gov.uk/discovery-map](http://southdowns.gov.uk/discovery-map)

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# Introduction

**The South Downs National Park covers over 1,600km<sup>2</sup> of England's most valued lowland landscapes shaped, over millennia, by the people who have lived and worked here.**

Its inspirational and varied landscapes, internationally important wildlife, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant market towns and villages hold a special place in the hearts of many millions. If we want it to remain a special place in 2050, we need to make sure that its landscapes can provide more benefits to more people, who can enjoy, understand and take action to support it.

The new Partnership Management Plan (PMP) 2020-2025, and the Local Plan adopted in July 2019, set a clear guiding framework for the actions we as an Authority will take for the next five years, and this Corporate Plan sets these out in more detail. Whether you live in or near the South Downs National Park, are a business, one of our partners, a visitor, or simply someone who cares about its future, we hope you find this plan evidence of our commitment.

The Authority has identified five overarching priorities for the next five years.



# The Climate Emergency

Climate change is having a fundamental effect on biodiversity, agriculture and water resources. The National Park is already experiencing more unpredictable weather events causing drought, soil erosion and flooding. This is changing the landscapes as habitats come under pressure and agricultural systems and infrastructure struggle to adapt.

Working with our partners, the South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority) will develop a Climate Change Action Plan for a net-zero National Park and Authority. As part of this we will:

- Use our planning policy and development management service , working together with all local planning authorities across the National Park
- Encourage communities to make changes to how we travel and live, for example by using renewable energy and decarbonising transport
- Work with farmers, estates and other landowners to change the way land is managed to reduce emissions and increase carbon sequestration.

We will act as an exemplar by demonstrating best practice in our corporate response to climate change. We want to be recognised as a leading player in managing the impacts of climate change on the South Downs National Park and contributing to a low carbon economy.





# Biodiversity

**Nature is increasingly under pressure, with growing national evidence about the decline in insect populations, soils, water and air quality, and the onset of new pests and diseases (such as Ash Dieback) becoming evident.**

The South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority) will develop a nature recovery strategy for the National Park itself, linking this to a wider regional campaign, with AONBs, Local Nature Partnerships and Local Authorities.

These will:

- Help reverse the decline of nature, by supporting species recovery and habitat management
- Encourage land owners and managers to give nature a chance to recover, by supporting nature recovery areas and networks
- Build consensus with land owners and managers about how to use agriculture, forestry and rewilding approaches together to rebuild our natural capital alongside food production and carbon sequestration.

The Authority will act as a catalyst to bring key stakeholders together to pilot new and innovative approaches.





# Health and well-being

Evidence of the physical and mental health benefits of connection with nature continues to grow. The PMP includes a new outcome and priority on health and wellbeing which aims to involve communities in and around the boundary who suffer from poor health, use the National Park to prevent ill-health, restore good health, in partnership with the NHS.

We will:

- Continue to promote the National Park for learning and recreation, supporting schools and volunteering
- Work with public health authorities and the NHS to increase its use to prevent ill-health and restore good health amongst those most in need
- Increase sustainable access to the National Park by delivering new dedicated walking & cycling routes and encouraging transport providers to improve public transport into and around it.

We want the National Park to excel in delivering and inspiring excellence in natural health.



# Economy, housing and infrastructure

**The National Park is home to more than 8,000 businesses and a thriving economy is essential if our landscapes are to be sustainably managed.**

When the UK leaves the EU, a major transition will take place. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will be replaced by a New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS) and tourism and the visitor economy will change. Situated in the heavily populated South East, the National Park is already experiencing major housing development around its borders. These new communities will inevitably have a significant impact; for example, on water abstraction and treatment, transport systems and because people will want to and should have access to enjoy the South Downs. We will:

- Push for our farmers to be part of the national pilot for the New Environmental Land Management System
- Develop innovative approaches to providing affordable rural housing
- Encourage improvements to broadband connectivity and speeds for our rural communities and businesses
- Use our tourism work to encourage people to stay longer, do more and spend locally
- Work with neighbouring local authorities to develop people and nature networks across boundaries
- Be a robust advocate to avoid or reduce the impact on the National Park of national infrastructure schemes and to achieve net gain for the environment.





# Seven Sisters Country Park

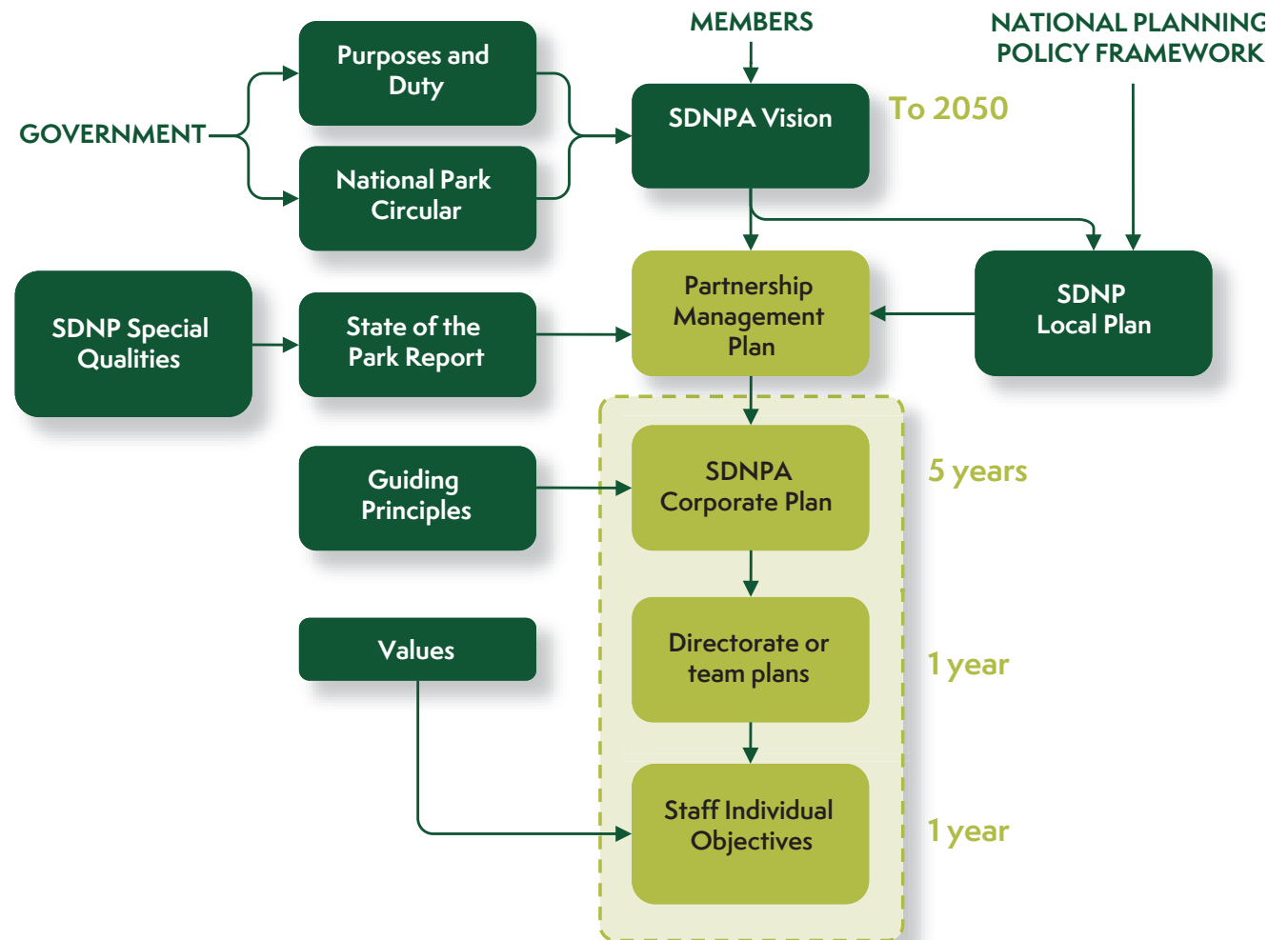
Situated in the South Downs National Park, Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP) comprises 280ha of chalk cliffs, meandering river valley and open chalk grassland.

The transfer of the freehold of the Seven Sisters Country Park from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to the South Downs National Park Authority creates a huge opportunity for the Authority to make a direct contribution to National Park purposes and to the key issues listed above: climate change, nature recovery, health & wellbeing and economy, housing and infrastructure.

Crucially it will also allow us to diversify our income and make the work of the Authority more sustainable. The various elements of the SSCP project have been shown under each of the sections of the Corporate Plan.

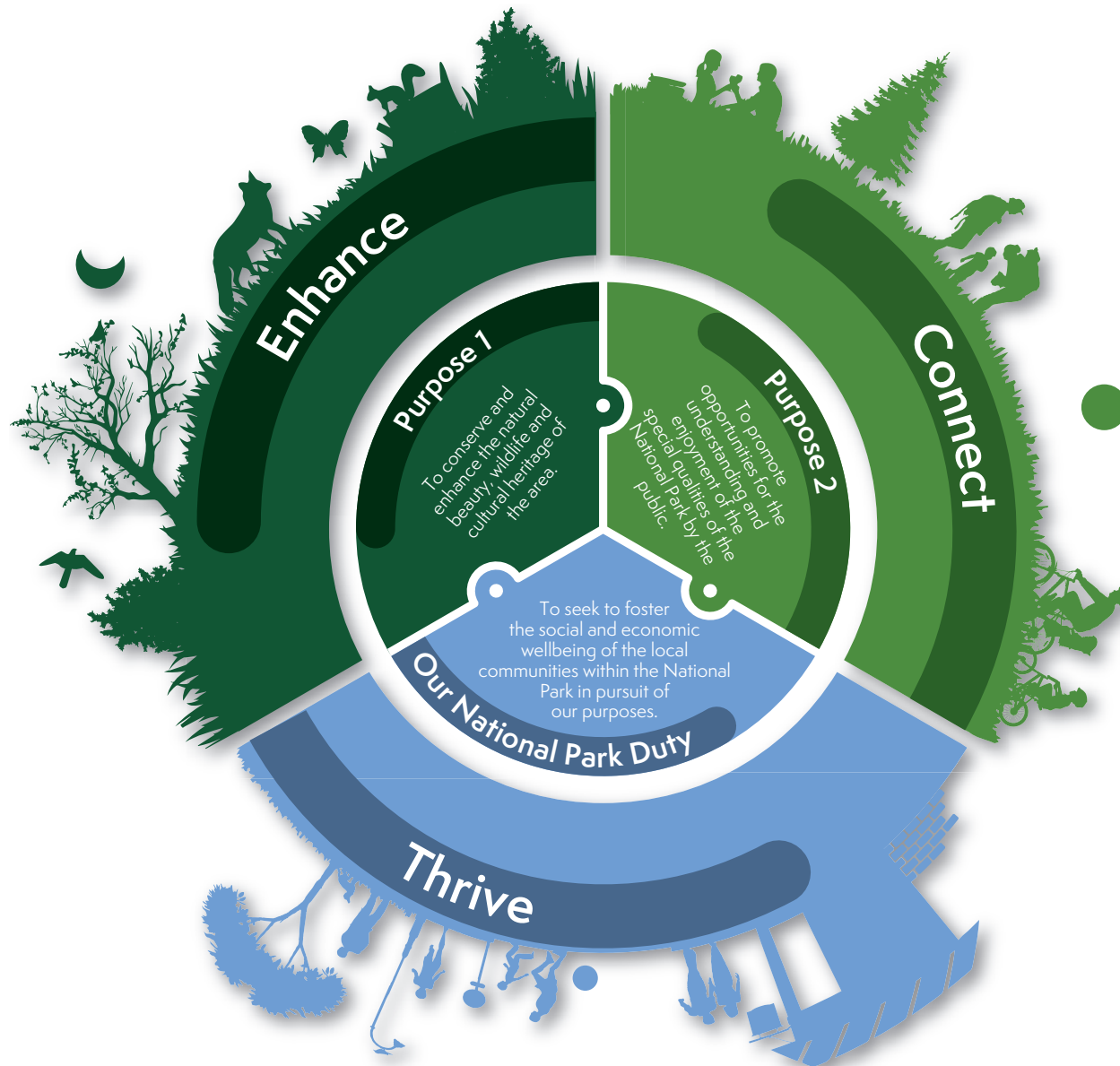


Progress towards demonstrating that we have delivered the success measures will be monitored by the South Downs National Park Authority annually and published in the Annual Review.





# Our Purposes and Duty



## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

# 1. Enhance

We will develop strategies and support or lead strategic overarching partnerships and projects which deliver the first Purpose of National Parks: **to conserve wildlife, the natural beauty of the landscape and cultural heritage (*Enhance*)**. Outcomes 1-4 in the Partnership Management Plan 2020-25 address these as follows:



## OUTCOME 1: LANDSCAPE & NATURAL BEAUTY

The landscape character of the South Downs, its special qualities, natural beauty and local distinctiveness have been conserved and enhanced by avoiding or mitigating the negative impacts of development and cumulative change.

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

- 1.1 Protect and enhance the natural beauty and character of the SDNP and seek environmental net-gain from any infrastructure projects
- 1.2 Improve green and blue infrastructure to deliver nature recovery networks and connect people to nature within and around the SDNP
- 1.3 Maximise environmental, cultural and economic benefits of agri-environment and forestry schemes across the National Park

SDNPA CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITIES	IN YEAR 1 OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE WILL:
Deliver the strategic approach to spatial elements of the People and Nature Network (Green Infrastructure)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Continue to develop local projects in key areas including Winchester and Truleigh Hill</li> <li>2) Pilot the GI National standards working with (NE)</li> </ol>
Lead the Authority's response to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Nationally Significant Infrastructure Proposals</li> <li>ii) Major and strategic planning applications</li> <li>iii) Other ad hoc major projects as required</li> </ol>	Respond in a timely and appropriate fashion to NSIP proposals and other major planning applications which may impact the National Park
Provide high quality specialist advice in Design, Conservation and Landscape, predominantly within the Planning directorate but also across the organisation as required	Provide specialist advice as and when required
Implement Local Plan Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Technical Advice Notes (TANs)	Create further guidance on Local Plan policies for Trees (SPD) and Biodiversity Net Gain (SPD)
Environmental land management (ELM) system	Work with other organisations to develop their tests and trials and continue to build relationships through farm clusters



## OUTCOME 2: INCREASING RESILIENCE

There is increased resilience within the landscape for its natural resources, habitats and species to adapt to the impacts of climate change and other pressures

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

- 2.1 Improve soil and water by reducing soil erosion, improving carbon capture and filtration and reconnecting wetland habitats
- 2.2 Improve the resilience and quality and quantity of trees and woodlands in the National Park and ensure that the right tree is planted in the right place

SDNPA CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITIES	IN YEAR 1 OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE WILL:
Develop SDNPA projects as part of the National Trust led HLF funded Changing Chalk initiative	Development Phase: 1) Grazing project officer in post 2) Undertake dew ponds baseline survey
Reduce nitrates into groundwater as part of Brighton ChAMP Phase 2	Continuation and rolling out of ChAMP Phase 1 with farmers and with communities on rain gardens
Develop nature recovery/nature based solutions as part of the climate change action plan	1) Develop and agree the climate change action plan with NPA and partners 2) Implementation to start late 2021/22
Support the South Downs Forestry Champions Partnership and its action plan	1) Deliver Woodland Trust partnership project (extended by 3 years) 2) Investigate & confirm other woodland initiatives

## OUTCOME 3: HABITATS & SPECIES

**A thriving and connected network of habitats and increased population and distribution of priority species now exist in the National Park**

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

- 3.1 Create, restore and improve areas of priority habitat to be more, bigger, better, and joined up at a landscape scale
- 3.2 Increase the genetic diversity and resilience of target species and implement a landscape scale strategy for tackling invasives, pest species and diseases

SDNPA CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITIES	IN YEAR 1 OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE WILL:
Complete Heathlands Reunited and secure ongoing commitments to heathland recovery and public engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Complete current project</li> <li>2) Define objectives &amp; funding of Phase 2 looking at entire Wealden Heaths network</li> </ul>
Develop and implement a Nature Recovery Strategy and a wider campaign working with regional partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Define vision &amp; create a Nature Recovery Strategy</li> <li>2) Define the Nature Recovery Networks</li> <li>3) Adopt &amp; apply Natural Capital Investment Strategy (NCIS)</li> <li>4) Create guidance for net gain– including guidance for planners</li> <li>5) Continue to develop satellite monitoring capability</li> </ul>
Set up and administer the Biodiversity/Natural Capital Challenge Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Investigate feasibility, define criteria &amp; launch concept</li> <li>2) Seek external funding to pump-prime</li> </ul>
Produce a Landscape Management Plan (LMP) for Seven Sisters Country Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Undertake biodiversity baseline survey</li> <li>2) Start drafting the Landscape Management Plan</li> </ul>

## OUTCOME 4: ARTS & HERITAGE

**Cultural heritage of the National Park is enhanced and widely understood and enjoyed**

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

- 4.1 Increase conservation, awareness, access to and understanding of South Downs cultural heritage
- 4.2 Promote creativity and understanding of the landscape and traditions of the South Downs through contemporary arts and crafts

SDNPA CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITIES	IN YEAR 1 OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE WILL:
Create and undertake a Scheduled Monument Monitoring project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Project development: Liaise with partners (Historic England, National Trust)</li> <li>2) Link with other projects (i.e. Changing Chalk)</li> <li>3) Scope funding and timescales</li> <li>4) Liaise with SDNPA colleagues re resource requirements and capacity</li> </ul>
Commission and oversee Archaeology On The Edge (Stage 2) project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Project development: Liaise with partners (National Trust; County Archaeologist; Universities)</li> <li>2) Secure partner sign up/commitment</li> <li>3) Scope funding and timescales</li> <li>4) Liaise with SDNPA colleagues re resource requirements and capacity</li> </ul>
Roll out the Footsteps App	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Identify organisations that may benefit from use of the App</li> <li>2) Tender for package of content– secure content development (scripting, filming etc.)</li> </ul>
Meet the Archaeologist NFC plaques created and installed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Work with historic environment county and district specialists to identify key sites and relevant archaeological expertise</li> <li>2) Liaise with Historic England re. locations and walking routes linked to Scheduled Monuments / areas of archaeological interest</li> <li>3) Liaise with rangers re landowner permission for NFC tag signage installation</li> </ul>



## 2. Connect

We will develop strategies and support or lead strategic overarching partnerships and projects which deliver the second Purpose of National Parks: **to promote understanding and enjoyment and improve health and well-being through volunteering & learning, high quality access management and providing information and events (Connect)**. Outcomes 5-8 in the Partnership Management Plan 2020-25 address these as follows:



## OUTCOME 5: OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCES

**Outstanding experiences for communities and visitors are supported by high quality access and sustainable transport networks**

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

- 5.1 Encourage everyone to experience the National Park and widen participation for under-represented groups through targeted activities and promotion
- 5.2 Improve accessibility through a network of high quality routes connecting communities with the landscape, heritage, attractions and transport hubs and gateways
- 5.3 Encourage sustainable access into and around the National Park, encouraging the retention and expansion of rural transport services

SDNPA CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITIES	IN YEAR 1 OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE WILL:
Increase our digital reach and engagement	Relaunch the website
Deliver 10th Anniversary programme of celebration	Deliver programme of celebration as set out in the Comms Plan
Manufacture and install 30 new entry signs inside the National Park	Successfully manufacture and install the entry signs by end 2021/22
Deliver Centurion Way Phase 2 from Singleton to Cocking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Undertake ecological/tunnel surveys for Centurion Way Phase II</li> <li>2) Work with Sussex Bat Group to commission ecological surveys in West Dean Tunnel</li> </ul>
Provide funding for permissive paths as a stop gap between expiring existing agri-environment schemes and the start of the new ELMs scheme	Ensure pilot agreements are in place with relevant landowners
Complete Egrets Way Phase V	Complete scheme design for Phase V, secure permissions and commence scheme construction
Identify Protected Landscape issues within strategic transport policies and planning in Transport for South East region	Identify issues in partnership with the South East Protected Landscapes group and develop actions to deliver recommendations
Create a new cycle way along the Rother Valley	Complete scheme feasibility and outline design work for Phase 1 (Petersfield to Nyewood)

## OUTCOME 6: LIFELONG LEARNING

**Widespread understanding of the special qualities of the National Park and the benefits it provides**

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

- 6.1 Provide high-quality outdoor learning opportunities as part of a locally relevant curriculum

#### SDNPA CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITIES

Develop the 'Our South Downs' Learning Network

#### IN YEAR 1 OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE WILL:

- 1) Pilot the ambassador schools programme with Bury Primary School and Droxford Junior School
- 2) Research the potential for a schools eco grant

## OUTCOME 7: HEALTH & WELLBEING

**The South Downs National Park is a well-used and recognised asset for sustaining mental and physical health and wellbeing**

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

- 7.1 Develop initiatives which enable local communities and individuals to improve health and wellbeing

#### SDNPA CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITIES

Develop our Health and Wellbeing work programme by developing our partnerships

Deliver the John Muir Award (JMA) Families Inclusion Award

#### IN YEAR 1 OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE WILL:

Support the delivery of the Southern National Parks and Public Health England social prescribing conference

Deliver year 1

## OUTCOME 8: CREATING CUSTODIANS

**More responsibility and action is taken by visitors, communities and businesses to conserve and enhance the special qualities and use resources more wisely**

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

8.1 Increase and diversify volunteering opportunities that support the National Park

#### SDNPA CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITIES

Develop our youth engagement programme

#### IN YEAR 1 OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE WILL:

- 1) Review the youth ambassador pilot and extend the role to other National Park areas
- 2) Extend the South Downs youth action programme to Easter and summer 2020 involving wider partners in a park-wide offer
- 3) Identify next steps for incorporating the Youth Voice across the SDNP



## 3. Thrive

We will develop strategies and support or lead strategic overarching partnerships and projects which deliver the Duty of National Parks: **to build sustainable communities which are engaged and shaping their environment and supporting sustainable businesses and tourism (Thrive)**. Outcomes 9-10 in the Partnership Management Plan 2020-25 address these as follows:



## OUTCOME 9: GREAT PLACES TO LIVE

**Communities in the National Park are more sustainable with an appropriate provision of housing to address local needs and improved access to essential services and facilities**

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

- 9.1 Increase affordable housing stock in the National Park, with focus on exemplary design and using local sustainable materials.
- 9.2 Support community-led initiatives which enhance the towns, villages and landscapes of the National Park
- 9.3 Support improvement in digital infrastructure, speed and coverage throughout the South Downs National Park

SDNPA CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITIES	IN YEAR 1 OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE WILL:
Develop an annual challenge fund to support the development of community facility enhancements that contribute to multiple PMP outcomes	1) Launch the concept and define the criteria 2) Seek external funding to create the fund
Participate in the development of the Petersfield place making strategy	Set up governance and identify enhancements
Review and update the Local Plan, including evidence gathering and engagement	Incorporate learning from the establishment of the first Local Plan
Implement Local Plan Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Technical Advice Notes (TANs)	Create further guidance on Local Plan policies for Parking (SPD), Construction (SDP) and Viticulture (TAN)
Effectively and efficiently operate all processes and systems for incoming and outgoing monies related to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 legal agreements	Continue to develop the Infrastructure Business Plan (IBP) as a mechanism to direct CIL money to National Park priorities

## OUTCOME 10: GREAT PLACES TO WORK

**A diverse, sustainable, dynamic economy which is positively linked to the special qualities of the National Park**

### PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES

- 10.1 Strengthen and support sustainably managed land-based industries and local enterprise
- 10.2 Increase awareness and desirability of the South Downs as a special place to visit
- 10.3 Establish the South Downs as an exemplar in sustainable tourism

SDNPA CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITIES	IN YEAR 1 OF OUR CORPORATE PLAN WE WILL:
Develop the Sustainable Economy and Tourism Engagement Strategic Approach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Develop and launch a businesses network—including sustainable tourism</li> <li>2) Create the South Downs Enterprise Partnership</li> <li>3) Deliver recommendations highlighted in the 2018 Economic Profile</li> </ol>
Enhance the South Downs Public Realm	Develop designs and contribute to schemes to enhance the public realm on and around highways
Deliver the extended National Park Experience Collection (ENPEC), including the roll out of Ranger Experiences	Deliver the Discover England Fund 2 (DEF2) project with UK National Parks
Assist in the development of the Sussex Heritage Coast Visitor Management Plan	Commission the development of a Visitor Management Plan with Heritage Coast Partners
Develop and launch the SDNP Dark Skies Welcome scheme	Develop criteria and branding
Complete Phase 1 & Phase 2 scope of works at Seven Sisters Country Park	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Complete Phase 1: refurbishment of buildings (starting Sep 2020) and commence construction</li> <li>2) Feed Phase 2 design into the overall masterplan</li> </ol>
Work towards building Seven Sisters Country Park into a world class visitor attraction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Develop Seven Sisters Country Park holiday accommodation offering</li> <li>2) Achieve Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Service (VAQAS) baseline accreditation</li> </ol>

## ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES

We will develop strategies, support or lead strategic overarching partnerships and projects which deliver our organisational objective: **to be a confident and secure organisation exercising effective influence; providing excellent customer service, and value for money and generating income to support our work.**

KEY PRIORITIES	IN YEAR 1 WE WILL:
<b>Seven Sisters Country Park</b>	
Set up a trading company for Seven Sisters Country Park	Form a trading company and commence operations [subject to Authority approval]
<b>Planning</b>	
Maintain a robust and well performing host authority development management system	Monitor service and deliver continued improvements
Complete Soft Sand Single Issue Review	Submit for examination and adopt
Provide Local Plan training for officers, members and agents	Train officers, members and agents on the Local Plan
Deliver a robust and well performing development management and Minerals & Waste service	Exceed the performance indicators for issue of decisions whilst adding value
Deliver a robust and well performing development management service in terms of Appeals performance	Respond swiftly to appeals and measure the rate of dismissals
Deliver a robust and well performing enforcement service	1) Undertake investigations within agreed timetables 2) Ensure swift resolution and conclusion of investigations
Deliver ongoing process and procedure improvements as set out in the Development Management Improvement Plan	Introduce a new Pre-application Service Charging Schedule
<b>Performance, Projects and Learning</b>	
Set up thematic research networks with academics and sector specialists based on research requirements highlighted through strategic reviews and in the PMP	Identify themes and potential partners



KEY PRIORITIES	IN YEAR 1 WE WILL:
Undertake a systematic assessment of the way the organisation acquires, stores and maintains its spatial and generic data	Assess current data we are holding and produce a plan for solution implementation
Progress the Citizens Panel beyond the pilot phase	1) Award new three year contract 2) Revise the Panel membership
Improve performance and project reporting information on the SDNPA website	Provide accessible information for stakeholders on our website
Establish, manage and monitor an evaluation framework tasked to carry out external evaluations of SDNPA corporate and project work	Establish the framework and procure evaluations– e.g. PMP process review
<b>Other corporate priorities</b>	
Continue to review opportunities to secure suitable long term accommodation for our area offices that meets the aspirations of the Authority	Relocate the Weald and Downland (Central) area team to new suitable accommodation
Commission a new Staff Survey and create an action plan	Plan the survey ready for commission and implementation the following year
Aim to achieve climate neutrality for the SDNPA	1) Carry out a carbon audit 2) Agree and implement a climate change action plan
SDNPA to continue to support the Trust	To continue ongoing support, incl. financial support [subject to Authority budgetary approval]

## FIVE YEAR MEASURES

MEASURES OF SUCCESS
Nature recovery and biodiversity (to be defined)
Climate change <i>(to be defined)</i>
Cultural heritage <i>(to be defined)</i>
% aware of SDNP in YouGov poll <i>(Survey of 2,000 YouGov pollsters in 2021 and 2023)</i>
Increase from the baseline (in the 2018 Volunteer Development Strategy) in the number of people from underrepresented groups participating in volunteering opportunities led by the South Downs National Park Authority
Increase our average unique monthly web visitors from @36,000 to 54,000 by 2025
Increase our social media following from @37,000 to 50,000 across all platforms by 2025
'Your National Park' campaign launched and reaching 20,000 people by 2025
Create two new gateways to the National Park between 2020 and 2025
Develop at least 3 Health and Well- Being Hubs across the National Park by 2025
Whole Estate Plans <i>(to be defined)</i>
Economy and new housing and infrastructure <i>(to be defined)</i>
% major applications determined within 13 weeks
% non-major applications determined within 8 weeks
% of new projects brought forward that have delivery plans
% of contractors satisfied with SDNPA as a client
% of contractors fulfilling their obligations as set out in their tender to quality, time and budget





# SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

