

# Case Study

### Pathways Gallery at Petersfield Museum

#### Background

South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) recognises the importance of Petersfield, a thriving market town in Hampshire, as a key gateway for the Western area of the National Park.

With the diminishing provision of tourist information within the town, the redevelopment of Petersfield Museum provided an opportunity to reinvigorate the inspiring narratives for the area and the South Downs National Park (SDNP), as well as positioning the venue as key information hub for this end of the National Park.

Over a six month period (September 2015 – March 2016), 17 consultation events were held engaging with over 325 members of the public. The overwhelming response to the redevelopment plans (95%) were positive, reinforcing the need for it.

One key outcome of this project was the new Pathways Gallery, an audio-visual exhibition focused on the SDNP. This acts as a fully immersive experience at the exit point of the gallery, leaving visitors inspired to go out into the landscape and discover the National Park for themselves.

Additional elements of interpretation were also included in the outcomes of this project, including in the pre-pay area of the Museum, all intended to signpost pathways out into the landscape.



#### The project

Early discussions between the South Downs National Park Authority and Petersfield Museum helped to find common threads through the collections, while also ensuring a significant SDNP presence in the pre and post-pay areas.

The SDNPA contributed £10,000 to the Petersfield Museum redevelopment project. This was seen as a contribution towards establishing a wider partnership with the Museum and formed part of the match funding for the £1.7m bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The total project cost was £4m with additional contributions from charitable trusts and foundations, East Hampshire District Council, private donations and fundraising activities.

Towards the end of the project, the Museum requested an additional £2,000 from the SDNPA to cover the design and production of a map panel for the pre-pay area. The need for these extra funds were as a result of the inevitable delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

SDNPA colleagues provided support and feedback on briefs, content and designs, met with interpretation suppliers and provided film and photographic assets.

The Museum opened to the public on June 6<sup>th</sup> 2021.

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“The gallery definitely provides a suitable and uplifting end to the Museum journey encouraging visitors to go out and explore the area surrounding Petersfield.”

Dan McWilliams, Petersfield Museum Director

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## The outcome

As a result of this project and the partnership working, Petersfield Museum has become a welcome visitor attraction for the town of Petersfield and the wider National Park, as well as increasing the museum’s profile and impact within the cultural sector in East Hampshire and the wider region.

A number of outcomes have been achieved that enrich visitor understanding of the National Park, empowering them to get out into the landscape after visiting the Museum.

- Creation of an immersive, audiovisual Pathways Gallery featuring a large map of the National Park. This includes screens playing a specially commissioned film featuring Museum Patron Daniel Day Lewis reading the poetry of Edward Thomas over a montage of film footage of the South Downs National Park. This experience creates a sense of history and place for Petersfield within the National Park.
- A panel in the pre-pay area of the Museum with a map of the SDNP and location marker, showing the town in context of the wider landscape.
- Use of the SDNP shared identity throughout the interpretation and on walking leaflets.

Anecdotal feedback the Museum has collected shows that visitors enjoy all parts of the Museum, including the Pathways Gallery and film.

**The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP) 2020–25** sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 10 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

**This project supported the delivery of the following PMP outcomes:**

**Outcome 4:** Cultural heritage of the National Park is enhanced and widely understood and enjoyed.

**Outcome 6:** There is widespread understanding of the special qualities of the National Park and the benefits it provides.

[southdowns.gov.uk/partnership-management-plan/](https://southdowns.gov.uk/partnership-management-plan/)

## The future

This project has helped to establish a positive ongoing relationship between the SDNPA and Petersfield Museum, and will provide future opportunities for collaboration.

The audiovisual nature of the Pathways Gallery means that the interpretation can be updated in the future with new film content. The Museum is also well positioned to capitalise on its contribution to the South Downs, in driving visitor traffic to and from the town.

The Covid-19 pandemic definitely impacted the project, causing delays that, in turn, affected cash-flow. This was exceptionally challenging, not least for the Museum in traversing the challenges of a capital project during a pandemic. However, the Museum team and trustees navigated challenges to produce a positive asset for the town and community in Petersfield, as well as a valuable addition to the visitor economy.

**For more information, please contact:**

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