

Case Study

The Novium Museum: From Field, To Fork, To Lockdown

Background

In 2020, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) set up a Recovery Fund of £375,000 to help support partner organisations and local communities in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

One of the beneficiaries of the grant was The Novium Museum in Chichester.

Alongside funding from South East Museum Development, The Novium set out to explore the relationship between food and farming in the South Downs.

The exhibition and associated programme of events included new partnerships with farmers, the Goodwood Estate and UK Harvest. The programme looked back to the history of Chichester, and its relationship to the South Downs through Chichester's Cattlemarket, and ahead to the challenges and opportunities facing farming today.

Stephanie Thorndyke, Manager of The Novium Museum, commented:

“The project aimed to increase knowledge and understanding of food and land management in the South Downs as well as the ability of farming to deliver positive environmental change now and in the future. It also allowed us to restart programming after the first national lockdown, helping us to rebuild existing audiences and connect with new local audiences.”



The project

The project was awarded £9,900 from the SDNPA Covid-19 Recovery Fund and delivered a range of activities and initiatives, including:

- Production of a documentary film, working with local farmers to record reflections on the pandemic and the future of farming and food <https://www.thenovium.org/fieldtofork>
- A family day on 27 June, coinciding with Open Farm Day, which reached over 100 visitors.
- An exhibition, 'From Field, To Fork, To Lockdown', which explored the city's agricultural history and connections to the South Downs, while also looking ahead to contemporary farming issues. It welcomed 4,800 visitors between national lockdowns in 2020, and will remain open into March 2022.
- Virtual talks and workshops were delivered, including reminiscence sessions with a care home in May and July 2021.
- Oral histories collected from local farmers.
- 'Cook-a-longs' were delivered in partnership with UK Harvest for participants aged 16-24.
- Areas of the programme were also delivered by the Museum as part of Chichester's Summer Street Party in August 2021.

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“We are so pleased to be collaborating with UK Harvest on this fantastic initiative. We hope that these sessions will inspire young people in our community to get creative in the kitchen by exploring simple techniques to create tasty and nutritious meals within a budget, as well as supporting our local farmers by shopping locally. We would like to thank the South Downs National Park Authority for supporting this project.”

Councillor Roy Briscoe, Chichester District Council

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The outcome

Funding at a critical time enabled the Museum to collaborate widely across the local farming and food sustainability community, resulting in an exhibition and range of events aimed at attracting visitors back to the Museum after the first national lockdown and beyond.

The Museum has grown new partnerships with a range of local organisations, additionally highlighting the work of the Museum to a range of new groups, and demonstrating its ability to contribute to debate and understanding around contemporary issues.

The oral histories will become part of the Museum’s collection and be available for audiences of the future, and will be used to inform future exhibitions and research on similar topics. Reminiscence resources have been developed for The Novium Museum to use in future activities.

The documentary film is available on a number of digital platforms and will continue to be used to inform and educate the public on these important issues. The exhibition and documentary film will be displayed at other venues throughout Chichester District in the future.

The future

Due to the impact of the national lockdowns, the project was revised through necessity (but its essence retained). The pandemic presented challenges to the programme, particularly around securing the involvement of young people due to school closures and the lack of capacity within colleges and universities.

However, the partnership with UK Harvest helped to ensure the delivery a youth programme, with ‘cook-a-longs’ raising awareness of sustainability, locally sourced foods and food waste.

The exhibition will now remain open into early 2022 to allow more people to see its key messages.

The project has built positive partnerships for the Museum, and a trusted and valued relationship between the Museum and SDNPA.

For further information, please contact:

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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 successfully achieved the following PMP outcomes:

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

Outcome 5.1: To enable everyone to experience the National Park and widen participation for under-represented groups through targeted activities and promotion.

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/



The poster features a vibrant yellow background with the text 'NOURISHED LIVE COOK-A-LONG' at the top. Below this is a photograph of two people smiling in a kitchen, surrounded by fresh produce. A green circular badge with the word 'FREE' is overlaid on the photo. At the bottom, there is a table with information about the event, including the date (18th or 22nd June), time (5pm - 7pm), location (Residents of Chichester), and platform (Online via Zoom). Logos for 'The Novium Museum' and 'South Downs National Park Authority' are also present.

WHEN	Join the session on the 18th or 22nd June 5pm - 7pm
WHO	Residents of Chichester
WHERE	Online via Zoom

September 2021