

Report to **South Downs National Park Authority**  
Date **24 March 2022**  
By **Performance and Research Lead**  
Title of Report **Corporate Plan 2020-25 Year 3 Action Plan for 2022/23**  
**Decision**

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**Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to approve the Corporate Plan 2020-25 year 3 action plan 2022/23 as set out in Appendix I of this report, subject to:**

- a) any amendments required to address the comments made by the NPA
- b) the final design of the Corporate Plan 2020-25 year 3 action plan for 2022/23, and
- c) any minor text amendments considered appropriate,

**being approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority.**

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## **I. Introduction**

1.1 This report sets out the Corporate Plan 2020-25 Year 3 action plan for 2022/23, which Members are asked to receive and approve. The broad content of this was discussed at the December 2021 Member workshop and the direction of travel endorsed. A draft of the Action Plan was considered at Policy & Resources Committee on 17 February 2022 (see Report PR21/22-29) and Members recommended approval to the National Park Authority (NPA) with some final changes to be incorporated as discussed at the meeting and as set out at section 3 of this report.

1.2 The Corporate Plan Year 2 action plan was approved by the NPA on 25 March 2021 (Report NPA20/21-26).

## **2. Corporate Plan 2020-25 year 3 action plan for 2022/23**

2.1 This Corporate Plan Year 3 Action Plan 2022/23 has been developed in the likelihood of a flat cash funding settlement from Defra. Its starting point has therefore been the imperative of sharper focus, concentration of effort, the need to stop doing some things and deliver more impact with fewer a resources. Accordingly, it is driven by high-level targets in three areas:

- Nature Recovery
- Climate Action
- A National Park for All.

2.2 These high-level targets will be used to measure overall progress with the entire Corporate Plan and it is expected that every team will contribute to some or all of them as appropriate. The targets provide the primary test of impact for the SDNPA and they are strongly aligned with the Defra consultation on the Landscape Review.

- 2.3 Beneath this framework of targets, our work has been divided into nine overarching areas of work, each of which involves contributions of time and budget from across the SDNPA Directorates. Each theme will contribute to the high-level targets, often across two, or even all three. They are:
- Nature Recovery
  - Climate Action
  - A National Park for All
  - Rural Economy
  - Seven Sisters Country Park
  - Delivering the Statutory Planning Service
  - Major Developments
  - Generating Income
  - New Ways of Working.
- 2.4 The proposals under each area of work have been developed by a lead officer, liaising with colleagues to ensure a collaborative approach. This will ensure that parts of the SDNPA such as Communications, Support Services and Performance & Projects can distribute their time effectively and are not over stretched. Each thematic area needs to show how it is delivering against the three high-level targets.
- 2.5 More detailed delivery plans are maintained by individual teams and Theme Programme Boards and will flow down into the Performance Development Review (PDR) objectives for individual staff.
- 2.6 Policy & Resources Committee monitors the Corporate Plan on a quarterly basis. Measures of success are reported annually and will largely run for the lifetime of the five-year Corporate Plan to measure change over time.
- 2.7 The Corporate Plan 2020-25 year 3 action plan for 2022/23 is at Appendix I.
- 3. Amendments to the Draft Year 3 Action Plan following P&R committee in February 2022**
- 3.1 The following amendments were made as a result of discussions at P&R:
- More detailed explanation as to the role and purpose of the Farmer Panel in relation to the FiPL programme
  - Clarification around some aspects of the statutory planning service
  - More specific information about how we will deliver on our income generation targets
  - Inclusion of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion priorities and targets.
- 3.2 The following amendments have not been considered by the P&R Committee :
- Introduction of contents page
  - Correction of typos and inconsistencies in wording
  - Firming up of measures – especially in relation to climate action’
  - Inclusion of missing figures and other information highlighted in yellow in the draft Corporate Plan taken to P&R in February
  - Creation of one page summary for each of the nine areas of work and the priorities for 2022/23, and inclusion of an eye catching picture to encapsulate each thematic area
  - ‘Designing up’ some of the draft infographics included in the draft Corporate Plan.

3.3 One suggested amendment that was proposed at P&R committee but which has not been made was incorporating the ‘five year measures’ into the relevant thematic area(s). It is instead proposed to keep this as a table at the end of the Corporate Plan, as all measures were agreed before the introduction of the ‘nine’ thematic areas of work. As it stands, most of the measures relate to either ‘A National Park for All’ or ‘Delivering the Statutory Planning Service’. Including them within the relevant thematic area made the Corporate Plan look unbalanced.

**4. Options & cost implications**

4.1 The Corporate Plan is developed alongside the budget and will be reviewed each year. There is minimal cost associated with the development of the Corporate Plan itself apart from some small cost for design and a limited print run. The budget will be subject to a separate report and approval from the Authority.

**5. Next steps**

5.1 Once NPA approve the Corporate Plan 2020-25 Year 3 action plan 2022/23 – subject to any required amendments - it will be transferred to the public format, and published on the website.

**6. Other implications**

<b>Implication</b>	<b>Yes*/No</b>
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	The resource implications of the areas of work in the Corporate Plan are set out in the budget
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Implications of this report in itself do not raise an issue of value for money. However, the projects that the organisation has funded are assessed for value for money when they are approved. In addition, projects are evaluated individually for value for money when they finish. This is reported regularly to the Policy and Resources Committee
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	The Corporate Plan demonstrates SDNPA delivery against the PMP outcomes and the delivery of our statutory planning function. As such it delivers something against most of the outcomes in the PMP
Links to other projects or partner organisations	N/A
How does this decision contribute to the Authority’s climate change objectives	One of our three high level targets focuses on Climate Action. The work we will deliver will address the Authority’s climate change targets, and also demonstrates how we will support others to work towards Net Zero for the National Park.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None

Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes, One of three High-Level Targets is A National Park for All, which contributes to removing barriers for all sectors of the community to engage with and access the National Park. All projects in the Corporate Plan will go through an assessment as part of the project approval process to ensure they contribute to the delivery of the enhanced public sector equality duty
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None.
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None.
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	No, not directly although during development of the Corporate Plan, sustainability issues are included as part of the process.

## 7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

7.1 Robust corporate planning and monitoring of performance are part of the mitigations for our corporate risk as detailed in the table below:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Changes to the level of funding provided by relevant Government departments for future years	Likely	Significant	<p>A robust monitoring and project approval system and regular reporting to P&amp;R Committee on projects and the budget available along with a Corporate Plan which sets clear priorities to support delivery of Partnership Management Plan outcomes.</p> <p>The sharpened focus in this corporate plan, directly addresses the issue of a potential reduction in the level of funding available to the NPA during the next few years. Mitigation is in place for 2022/23 but there will be further impact in 2023/24.</p>

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Appendices	I. Corporate Plan 2020-25 Year 3 action plan 2022/23
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services, Business Service Manager; Countryside and Policy Managers
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	<a href="#">Corporate-Plan-2020-25_year 2 action plan 2021/22</a> Partnership Management Plan report to NPA December 2019





**SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

# Corporate Plan 2020–2025

**YEAR 3 ACTION PLAN 2022-23**

**South Downs National Park Authority**  
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# 1. 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 are resilient, provide benefits to all of society, and that people can enjoy, understand and take action to support it.

The world is changing very rapidly, and these external factors are having a significant impact on the landscapes and communities in and around our National Park. Climate change is already being felt in the South Downs as the seasons and weather patterns change. The coronavirus pandemic has affected our partners, with many having to furlough staff, suspend volunteering or close sites, attractions and businesses for long periods. Following Brexit, the entire system of support for farming and the rural economy is being transformed.

Although the public sector has been shrinking, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA or the Authority) has remained financially viable, and the resourcefulness and dedication of its Members, staff and volunteers has meant that it has continued to provide frontline support and services, albeit in rather different ways. For example, our planning service continued throughout lockdown, our Coronavirus Recovery Fund provided £350,000 support to over 60 local enterprises, and our communications and virtual

events programmes used social media to reach wider audiences than ever. The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) is published in December each year and helps to monitor how effective the National Park Authority has been in delivering on its statutory planning function and purposes and duty. We also produce an Annual Review each year, which highlights our key achievements and how our budget was spent.

In January, Defra published its consultation on the **Landscapes Review** written by Julian Glover in 2019. This lays out the role that Government sees for the network of National Parks and AONBs in England to contribute to nature recovery, tackling climate change and ensuring that the whole of society can benefit from these special places. Whilst a number of measures are proposed which would require new legislation, the SDNPA has been moving in the direction set out in the consultation for a number of years, and the high-level targets and work areas set out in this plan are strongly aligned with Government's expectations of what National Parks should be doing. The consultation proposes a new vision for Protected Landscapes:

**'A coherent national network of beautiful, nature-rich spaces that all parts of society can easily access and enjoy. Protected landscapes will support thriving local communities and economies, improve our public health and wellbeing, drive forward nature recovery, and build our resilience to climate change'**

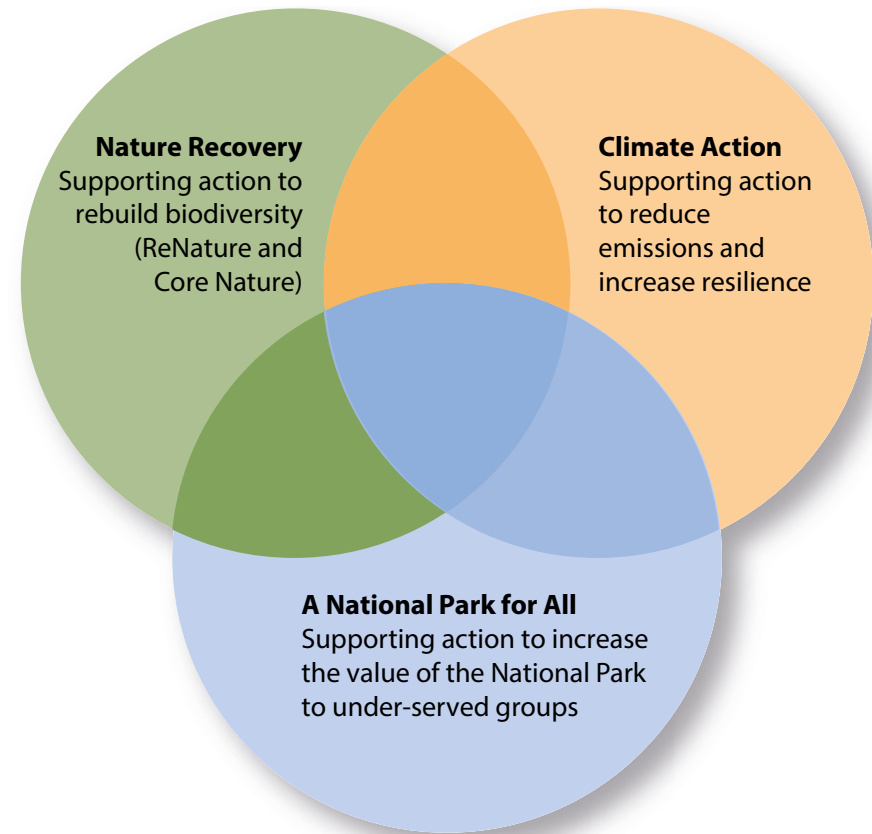
**This Corporate Plan translates this vision into practical action by the Authority**

## 2. HIGH LEVEL TARGETS

The long-term ambitions of the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) are very broad, but for the next three years the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) will come under increasing financial pressure as rising inflation outstrips a flat cash funding settlement.

It is therefore essential that we focus on those areas where we know we can make the most impact against the priorities in the PMP, the Public Affairs Strategy and Government's Glover response. This does not mean abandoning the whole range of the PMP. We will maintain the breadth of its ambition with the associated partnerships so that we can respond swiftly when circumstances change and/or funding is secured. This Corporate Plan shows how we will make a greater impact with fewer, but better targeted, resources while maximising our potential to raise private and charitable finance.

It is for this reason that we are putting in place a single set of high-level targets for this Corporate Plan. This is how we will measure the overall effectiveness of the SDNPA between 2022 and 2025 in terms of its impact on the ground. We will expect every team to maximise its contribution towards these targets.



## 2.1 NATURE RECOVERY

### TARGETS

- **To secure an additional 13,000ha, or 33% of land managed for nature by 2030 from a baseline of 25%**
- **Maintain, enhance and/or restore existing key sites, habitats and species**

Nationally and globally, nature is under intense pressure, with fresh evidence every week about declines in insect populations, farmland birds, soils, water and air quality, and the onset of new pests and diseases (such as Ash Dieback). All these trends are evident in the South Downs, however, there is also hope. Superb examples already exist across the National Park of action to manage and expand biodiversity, often by farmers, estates, businesses, and communities in addition to the dedicated work of environmental NGOs and public bodies. Awareness of the value of nature soared during the pandemic, and restoring biodiversity will also bring Social, health and wellbeing and economic benefits, as well as being key to tackling climate change.

At present, just 25% of the National Park is managed for nature, and the National Park Authority has therefore adopted an ambitious target to increase this to 33% by renaturing 13,000 hectares of land by 2030. With the South Downs National Park Trust, in July 2021, we launched a ReNature Campaign with unprecedented media coverage. #ReNature will raise the profile of this issue, mobilise funding and be a catalyst for action by land managers and communities. We are bringing land managers, partners and donors together to create innovative approaches, and working with Defra to scale these up by blending public, private sector and philanthropic funding. More than £300k has been raised, and in response

to our first 'Call for Nature Sites' more than 75 projects have come forward. Through our planning system, net gains in biodiversity and other renaturing programmes have been achieved. Through our Defra funded Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, we have already allocated over £800,000, a substantial portion of it for nature recovery. Funding from the programme is allocated through a Local Assessment Panel, which comprises a representative from both the National Park Authority and Natural England and seven farmers, drawn from across the National Park to cover the wide range of farm types (arable/livestock/mixed), size (estate/small family farm) and ownership type (occupier owned/tenant). The programme will continue in 2022/23 and 2023/24.

This work is part of a wider national, regional and local approach to nature recovery. It involves our neighbouring Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), the Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Local Authorities. This puts us in a strong position to put the National Park at the heart of the new Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) for Sussex and Hampshire; part of a set which will cover the whole of England.



## 2.2 CLIMATE ACTION

### TARGETS

- **South Downs National Park Authority to reduce its carbon footprint by 150 tons per annum in line with the 2030 net zero target**
- **5% reduction per annum in the overall carbon footprint of the South Downs National Park from the baseline reported in 2019**

Climate change is having a fundamental effect on biodiversity, agriculture, water resources and communities in the National Park. We are already experiencing more unpredictable weather events causing drought, soil erosion and flooding. This is changing the landscape as habitats come under pressure and agricultural systems and infrastructure struggle to adapt. The need for a green recovery post-covid, and COP 26 in Glasgow brought this into even sharper national focus and the National Park Authority – working alongside many other organisations – is determined to play its role in tackling climate change. We have adopted ambitious net-zero targets for the Authority but also for the National Park as a whole, and this is now underpinned by the Climate Change (CC) Action Plan which forms part of this Corporate Plan.

The CC Action Plan concentrate efforts in the areas where we are best placed to make a difference, for example:

- using our planning policies and development management service, working together with host authorities across the National Park;
- supporting communities to make changes to how we travel and live, for example by using renewable energy and decarbonising transport;
- helping communities become more resilient to be able to adapt to, and manage, the impacts of climate change;
- working with farmers, estates and other landowners to change the way land is managed to reduce emissions and increase carbon sequestration; and
- working with businesses to support them in their aspirations to be more sustainable and positively contribute to the National Park Net Zero with nature targets.

Action to reduce emissions and adapt to existing climate change will help to make South Downs communities and businesses damaged by Covid more resilient, bring people together with a shared purpose and stimulate jobs and economic activity. We will also 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.

## 2.3 A NATIONAL PARK FOR ALL

### TARGETS

- **Increase diversity of visitors to, and those engaging with, the South Downs National Park**
- **'Your National Park' campaign reaches 20,000 people by 2025**
- **Impact measure for direct engagement**

We want the South Downs to be a welcoming place, for everyone to connect with nature, the landscape and our rich cultural heritage. We want it to be a place that nourishes and nurtures physical and mental health and well-being. We want to inspire individuals and communities to experience it and take action to care for it. We want to work with individuals and communities to break down the barriers that stop them from feeling that the National Park is for them, or which make it difficult for some to visit.

We recognise that for some people, the barriers to accessing the National Park can feel insurmountable. This goes well beyond usual assumptions around accessibility (such as connectivity around walking and cycling routes, or available public transport) and instead reflects deep seated social, cultural and economic divisions that have left some feeling that National Parks are not spaces in which they can find welcome or belonging. This plan therefore includes work to build connection and trust with under-served communities, many of which are within a few miles of the National Park boundary but never visit. We wish to nurture new cultures of connection to the nature, heritage and landscape of the South Downs.

Our ongoing engagement learning, volunteering, outreach, community, cultural heritage and health work are all critical to making this a reality. But this commitment applies to the whole of the National Park Authority in every aspect of its business. In all our projects and programmes we will strive to get the best outcomes for people, and develop opportunities for co-design with those communities currently under-served in our governance and staff structures. We will actively seek opportunities for communities to contribute through our work on Nature Recovery, Climate Action and A National Park for All.



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We have adopted a mission statement for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), supported by an action plan which lays out in detail how the Authority itself is addressing this issue.

Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Mission Statement

- We will put equity at the centre of all our work; challenging and removing discrimination and barriers to participation wherever they may occur to create a National Park where everyone can find opportunity and belonging.
- As an employer, we will reflect the nation we serve, and our values of collaboration, innovation and respect will be at the heart of our inclusive culture.
- As a planning authority, we will be accessible to all and ensure developments and policies are fully informed by the communities we support.



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# 3. AREAS OF WORK THAT CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS OUR HIGH-LEVEL TARGETS

**The High-Level Targets introduced above will provide the ultimate measures of success for the whole Corporate Plan.**

Below this are many strands of work which are grouped in nine areas as set out in the following pages. We have statutory functions, for example, in delivering our planning service and managing open access land.

Our support for cultural heritage activities provides tangible benefits both economic and in terms of the well-being of people who engage creatively.

Our planning service needs to strike the balance between protection of landscape character and enabling much-needed affordable housing and economic activity, and our innovative communications and engagement programme continues to broaden our reach and engage new audiences with the National Park. The acquisition of Seven Sisters Country Park creates a huge opportunity to make a direct contribution to the high-level targets and, crucially, to diversify our income and make the work of the Authority more financially sustainable.

## **NINE AREAS OF WORK.**

- Nature Recovery
- Climate Action
- A National Park for All
- Rural Economy
- Seven Sisters Country Park
- Delivering the Statutory Planning Service
- Major Developments
- Generating Income
- New Ways of Working



## 3.1 NATURE RECOVERY

Framed by the South Downs National Park Wildlife Delivery Plan and Campaign for Nature Recovery #ReNature, our goal is to have one third of the South Downs National Park for nature and the other two thirds to be nature friendly, in a connected and joined up network of habitats.

**Nature Recovery = ReNature + Core Nature  
+ Connecting people with nature**

- **Core Nature** – the sites/initiatives which already have a primary objective for nature or managing biodiversity. For example, designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and ancient semi-natural woodland. This is the existing 25% of land for nature.
- **ReNature** – the sites/initiatives where there is a significant change of land management whereby nature’s recovery or managing for biodiversity becomes the/a primary objective. The uplift from 25% of land for nature to 33%.
- **Connecting people with nature** – ensuring that society benefits from nature – ecosystem products and services



## 3.2 CLIMATE ACTION

### Climate Change is one of the principal drivers of environmental change for the National Park in the future.

Its impacts are likely to be significant and profound across a whole range of areas and assets. The National Park Authority has a key role in meeting the challenges arising from the climate and nature emergency in terms of advocacy, influence and delivery.

The Climate Change agenda is very broad, and the Authority has limited resources. The Authority needs to focus on the areas where we can have the greatest impact and influence. It needs to be influential at a national level, but also needs to deliver effectively at a strategic, Park-wide scale and help support local, community-based action. We need to ensure we have a full understanding, underpinned by adequate evidence, of the risk posed to the National Park and its key assets by climate change.

As a National Park Authority, our statutory purposes are about protecting and enhancing nature. We can promote actions to the climate emergency that are nature-based. Any response to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change can also help with nature recovery. The Authority should lead by example. How it operates, its working practices and how it manages Seven Sisters Country Park can also make a significant contribution to climate action. The Authority should do all it can to minimise its carbon footprint and achieve high levels of sustainability. Through our Corporate Plan, internal governance and resource planning we will continue to ensure that we embed climate change action across the Authority.



## 3.3 A NATIONAL PARK FOR ALL

Our work on connecting people to the National Park is varied and complex. In order to better connect currently under-served groups to the National Park we will target specific audiences, who face the greatest barriers to access:

- Young people (aged 16-24);
- People from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse communities;
- People facing forms of health and access inequalities including disabled people;
- People living in urban areas, especially people facing socio-economic barriers to inclusion.

We will use a number of different mechanisms to target our work effectively:

- We will seek to create tangible assets in the areas identified in the People and Nature Network as having a deficit and where local communities are willing to engage in supporting access to the National Park;
- We will co-design projects with partner organisations, communities and networks that directly connect people to the National Park, or which support building connection with the National Park;
- We will support broad engagement and awareness of the National Park through our communications and online and hybrid events;
- We will provide guidance and information to support communities and individuals to take action themselves.



## 3.4 RURAL ECONOMY

The aspiration is to have a rural economy within the National Park that inspires businesses to positively contribute to the National Park's purposes, PMP outcomes, and to address nature recovery and climate change mitigation through their practices.

Sustainable businesses support resilient and thriving communities across the National Park underpinned by a rural economy where social and environmental outcomes are also delivered. Our aim is to empower enterprise to ensure they positively contribute towards the South Downs National Park, and deliver our priorities against Climate Action, Nature Recovery and a National Park for All. This will be done by working on a number of mechanisms targeting the land-based, visitor economy and food & drink sectors. These include developing Our South Downs enterprise network including a sustainable certification programme, Whole Estate Plans (WEPs), supporting and facilitating the South Downs Forestry Champions, as well as coordinating Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) in the South Downs National Park, and participating in the new Environmental Land Management Schemes, where appropriate.



## 3.5 SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK (SSCP)

The South Downs National Park Authority became owners of Seven Sisters Country Park at the end of July 2021.

Although popular with visitors, the site was not fulfilling its full potential for visitor experience and nature. The Country Park is also starting to face challenges of climate change, which will only increase in the coming years. We're currently investing approx. £2m into the site to improve the visitor infrastructure. Over the coming years we will need to integrate the new facilities into the business as usual and ensure it delivers improved visitor experience for all. We will also continue to deliver the Landscape Management Plan, finding ways to improve the site for nature. To underpin all of our other work, we will look to become financially self-sufficient to ensure that we can keep on delivering for people and nature into the future. To enable us to deliver on our ambitions at Seven Sisters we will manage the site through the newly formed SDNPA owned company South Downs Commercial Operations Ltd. The company will allow us to work commercially and its board of directors will give the focus needed to deliver an exemplary site.



## 3.6 DELIVERING THE STATUTORY PLANNING SERVICE

**The South Downs National Park Authority is the local planning authority and the minerals and waste planning authority for the National Park.**

We are one of the largest planning authorities in the country and deliver this function both in house and through hosted arrangements supported by specialists, in order to deliver on our Purposes and Duty. We are responsible for preparing the development Local Plan for the National Park, which needs to be reviewed and updated as necessary every five years. We also work cooperatively with our neighbours on cross-boundary strategic issues such as water neutrality. The Local Plan follows on from the PMP and contains policies on Climate Action, Nature Recovery and a National Park for All, as well as covering other statutory matters. We have prepared further guidance to help with the implementation of these priorities, for example, technical advice notes on ecosystem services, renewable energy and biodiversity net gain. Planning applications are determined in accordance with the Local Plan and material considerations, and seek to achieve benefits in terms of Climate Action, Nature Recovery and a National Park for All. We defend appeals vigorously and provide a planning enforcement service. Our planning performance, including where we have added value, is monitored, and we report key elements annually in the Authority Monitoring Report.



## 3.7 MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

**Major developments present challenges – and opportunities – for the National Park Authority to deliver its Purposes and Duty.**

Given our location in the densely populated South East of England there will be inevitable pressure for development both in and within the setting of the National Park and this must be managed. Our job is to ensure that the development that takes place is sensitive and appropriate for a cherished National Park and, where it occurs, to maximise the gain that these developments deliver including in respect of the key Corporate Plan priorities of Nature Recovery, Climate Action and a National Park for All. Allied to this is our successful Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is crucial in funding on the ground projects that benefit the National Park, its people and its habitats.



## 3.8 GENERATING INCOME

The South Downs National Park Authority has developed a number of new income streams.

This includes the establishment of an independent charitable trust (South Downs National Park Trust), the Trading Company (South Downs Commercial Operations Ltd), a Specialist Advisory Service and pilot programme to harness private finance to deliver Nature Recovery. We now have ambitious plans to expand this work, raising important funding for vital projects, restoring nature and increasing the level of unrestricted funding, helping us to become more self-sufficient.

### SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK TRUST





## 3.9 NEW WAYS OF WORKING

**In order to deliver our priorities for the National Park it is essential that the Authority is as efficient and effective as possible, making the right decisions, based on the right information and with the confidence that these decisions will deliver across our priorities.**

The purpose of this area of work is to ensure that we have robust processes in place to support this wider delivery and maximise the impact of the Authority's actions for the National Park. This work stream includes the introduction and embedding of a new blended working approach – building on the lessons learnt from the Covid 19 pandemic.

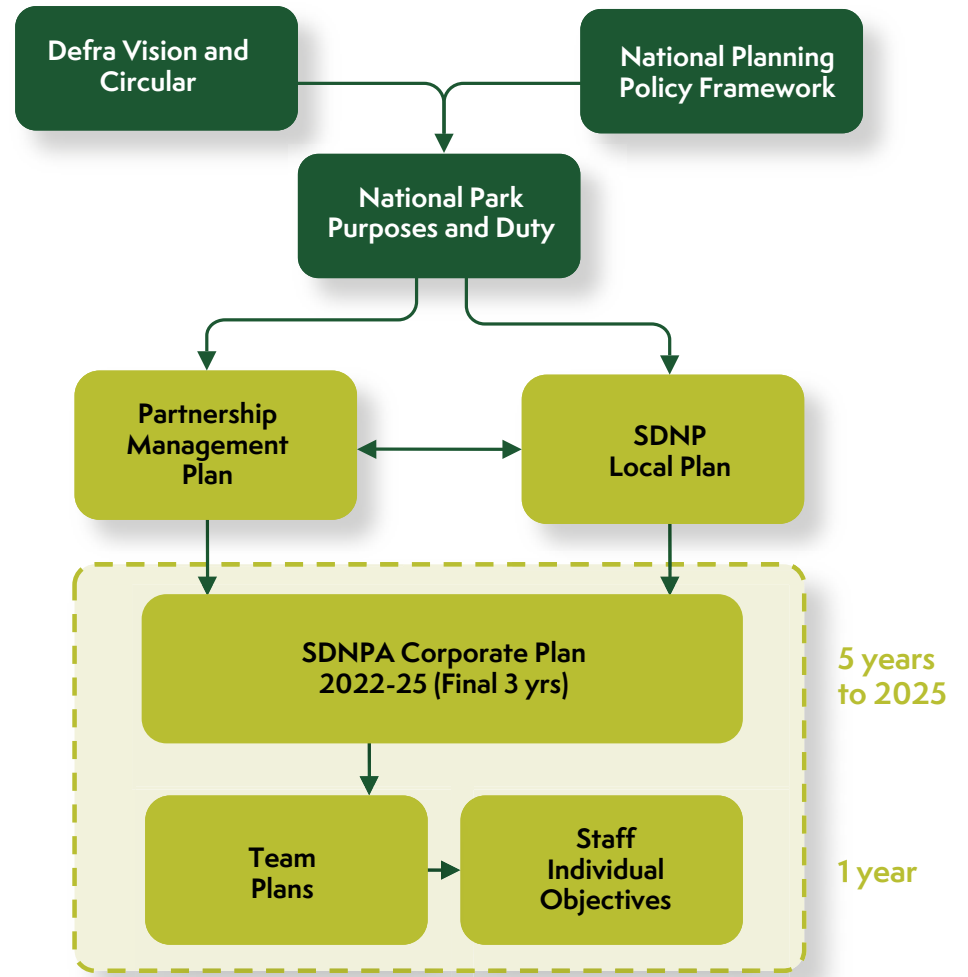
We will deliver our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Mission by concentrating initial efforts internally. The National Park Authority expects that changes to the way it does business, the way it recruits, and the messages it gives out will lead to a more representative organisation appealing to a wider range of people than at present, both within its workforce and reflected in the diversity of communities it serves.



# 4. THE CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH WE WORK

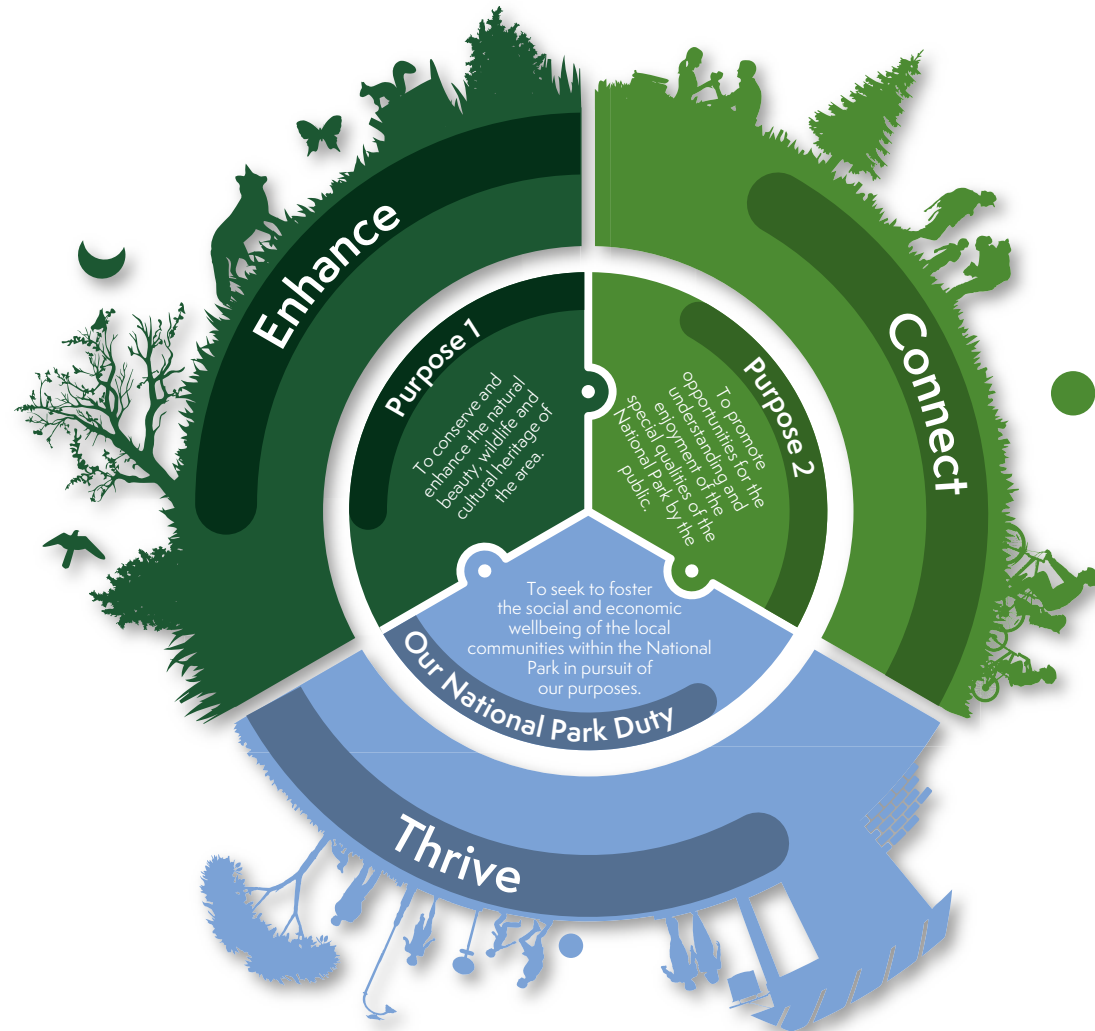
The South Downs National Park Authority's Corporate Plan sets out how we will deliver those elements of the South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP) for which we are responsible.

All relate back to the 10 Outcomes in the PMP. The Corporate Plan is one of our key management tools to ensure delivery of our Purposes and Duty. Progress towards demonstrating that we have delivered on our Corporate Plan priorities will be monitored by the South Downs National Park Authority Policy & Resources committee every quarter and published in the Annual Review for 2022/23.



# 5. NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES AND THE DUTY ON THE SDNPA

- **Our first Purpose is:** To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
- **Our second Purpose is:** To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.
- **The Duty on the SDNPA is:** To seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Par in pursuit of our purposes.

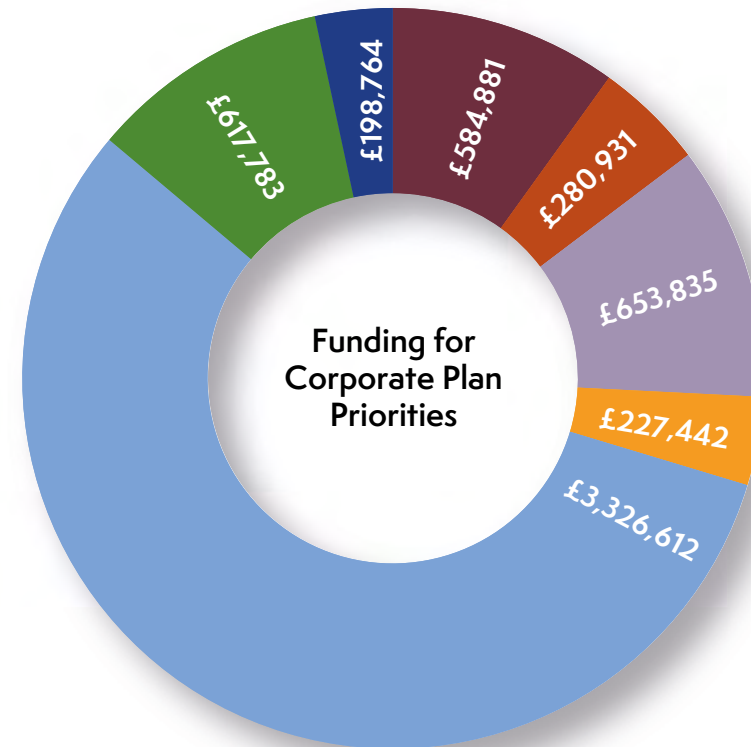


# 6. OUR RESOURCES

The Authority’s budget for the financial year 2022/23 is £13.3 million. This is funded from the National Park Grant from Defra of £10.5 million and £1.3 million from Planning Fees, with the remainder being made up from specific grants.

On the expenditure side the overwhelming majority of our budget is deployed on core staffing (over 50%), delivery of the planning service through s101 agreements with host authorities, and underpinning contracts for corporate services such as IT, finance and GIS. The amount of discretionary spend available to fund projects, programmes and partnerships in support of the High-Level targets is therefore very limited, and it is the use of our officer time across the staff structure which is the biggest factor in aligning resources with priorities. We will therefore be trialling in 2022/23 a simple system which allows staff to capture the broad percentages of time they put into each of the nine work areas.

The chart shows how the core funding from the National Park Grant contributes to the corporate priorities.



- Nature Recovery
- Climate Action
- National Park for All
- Rural Economy
- Delivering Statutory Planning Service
- Major Development
- Generating Income

Note: Seven Sisters Country Park to recover expenditure. No budget allocation for New Ways of Working.

# 7. OUR CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES

Our Corporate Plan priorities for 2022/23 are as follows:

## 7.1 NATURE RECOVERY



© SDNPA/Adam Hurlly

SDNPA Corporate Plan priorities	In Year 3 of our Corporate Plan we will:
<b>ReNature the South Downs National Park</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Define a core nature network for the National Park by end Q3 to inform Nature Recovery Networks (NRNs) and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).</li> <li>2) Contribute to the development of approximately 2-4 Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).</li> <li>3) Proactively deliver #ReNature through projects and initiatives using a variety of mechanisms.</li> </ol>
<b>Improve Core Nature in the South Downs National Park by ensuring all SSSIs in the National Park are in favourable condition</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Define 'good condition' for each of the four key habitat types (chalk grassland, woodland, lowland heathland and wetland) and establish a baseline from the end of Q4.</li> <li>2) Improve the area/condition of the four key habitat types.</li> </ol>
<b>Better connect people with nature</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Connect 50,000 people per year with nature through the ReNature Campaign.</li> <li>2) Target delivery of accessible natural greenspace through the ReNature programme in areas where there is a deficiency of provision.</li> </ol>

## 7.2. CLIMATE ACTION

© SDNPA/Aimee Felus



### SDNPA Corporate Plan priorities

### In Year 3 of our Corporate Plan we will:

#### Work towards our Net-Zero target for the South Downs National Park

Work towards delivering emissions reductions through:

- 1) Nature-based solutions; working with farmers, foresters and other land managers and through greening the grey in development.
- 2) Community based Net-Zero Planning and projects.
- 3) The launch of the Climate Change digital Resource Hub.
- 4) Engagement with the launch of the 'Count Us In' campaign.
- 5) Work with the Learning Network & South Downs Youth Action.

#### Work towards our Net Zero target for the South Downs National Park Authority

Work towards delivering emissions reductions through:

- 1) Delivery of a Sustainability Policy for the National Park Authority.
- 2) The development of a localised offsetting option for the SDNP.

## 7.3. A NATIONAL PARK FOR ALL



© SDNPA

### SDNPA Corporate Plan priorities

### In Year 3 of our Corporate Plan we will:

**Be a representative and welcoming National Park for All, focusing on engaging currently under-served groups**

- 1) Deliver South Downs Youth Ambassadors and Youth Voice.
- 2) Co-develop projects with organisations and individuals championing under-served groups accessing the landscape.
- 3) Support the use of social prescribing and other mechanisms to connect people to the National Park for Health and well-being.
- 4) Connect with under-served groups through the Voices programme and our broad engagement programme.

**Connect under-served groups to nature and the landscape through direct experience of the National Park**

- 1) Develop two health and wellbeing hubs.
- 2) Deliver the travel grant scheme and explore new schemes to connect people to the National Park.
- 3) Co-develop projects with organisations and individuals to empower/enable people from under-served groups to actively participate in/experience the National Park.
- 4) Deliver a programme of Access infrastructure projects and National Trail management to improve connectivity and increase opportunities for active access.

**Encourage individuals, groups and communities to take action to help deliver Partnership Management Plan outcomes**

- 1) Develop Youth Action & the Youth Action Fund and Micro volunteering.
- 2) Develop a digital community resource hub which promotes best practice and locally distinctive solutions, and provides communities with the necessary tools and advice to deliver community action.
- 3) Support and facilitate community action to enhance local assets to support under-represented groups to visit and use the National Park for wellbeing and enjoyment.
- 4) Support communities to create or restore nature and take action to mitigate or adapt to climate change, provide accessible greenspace for people's health and wellbeing/sustainable communities.

## 7.4. RURAL ECONOMY



© SDNPA/A.K.Purkiss

### SDNPA Corporate Plan priorities

### In Year 3 of our Corporate Plan we will:

**Develop the 'Our South Downs' enterprise network**

- 1) Create a sustainable business network to help businesses work collaboratively, engaging with National Park Authority initiatives around Nature Recovery, Climate Action and A National Park for All where appropriate.
- 2) Deliver a new National Park bespoke business sustainability programme addressing climate change challenges and seeking carbon reduction of enterprise and visitors in the National Park – e.g. by linking to Nature Recovery outputs such as tree planting.

**Facilitate and support the endorsement, actions and key priorities through the process of WEPs**

Facilitate WEP applications through a successful journey to encourage sustainability in key areas of the National Park to deliver Partnership Management Plan (PMP) outcomes.

**Support and facilitate the South Downs Forestry Champions**

In collaboration, deliver key outcomes under the South Downs Forestry Champions priorities (2019-2024) relating to people, place and prosperity.

**Deliver the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme in the National Park**

Deliver on time and within budget high quality outcomes on climate, nature, people, place, and relevant PMP outcomes.

**Position the National Park Authority to have a clear role in delivering Environmental Land Management (ELM) Schemes**

Participate in the Environmental Land Management (ELM) National Pilots with regard to Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery elements.



## 7.5. SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK (SSCP)



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### SDNPA Corporate Plan priorities

### In Year 3 of our Corporate Plan we will:

**Work towards SSCP becoming commercially successful and financially self-sufficient, having a positive impact on the local economy**

- 1) South Downs Commercial Operations Ltd to take over management of the site to allow commercial delivery.
- 2) Complete and open Phase 1 works (Exceat May 2022, Foxholes Nov 2022), including food and beverage offer, holiday accommodation, and retail.
- 3) Invest in pump barn as a hub for National Park-based businesses.
- 4) Complete and open Phase 2 works (Foxhole Cottage 3 and the Camping Barn with new facilities block).
- 5) Carry out urgent repairs and light refurbishment to New Barn Cottage.

**Lay the foundations for SSCP to become a high quality site for nature through exemplary management of the habitats**

- 1) Use 'nofence' in partnership with Plumpton College to deliver targeted grazing.
- 2) Fundraise for habitat improvements including reseeding, pond repairs, and scrub removal.

**Develop SSCP as an exemplary site for public access to the countryside. Ensure that we attract a diverse audience that reflects our local communities and that people have an enjoyable, inspiring experience**

- 1) Remove internal fencing (facilitated by 'nofence') to improve access.
- 2) Install new Changing Places toilet and level access at Exceat.
- 3) Develop new, diverse and accessible volunteering opportunities.
- 4) Create new and improved walking routes across the whole Country Park.
- 5) Fundraise for trampers (off-road mobility scooters).
- 6) Provide a year-round programme of activities for diverse audiences.
- 7) Trial social prescribing in partnership with health providers.

## 7.6. DELIVERING THE STATUTORY PLANNING SERVICE



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### SDNPA Corporate Plan priorities

### In Year 3 of our Corporate Plan we will:

**Effectively and efficiently process planning applications and appeals**

- 1) Endeavour to ensure application decisions are issued in accordance with Government targets: Major 60%; Minor 70%; Others 70% and value added (and recorded), where possible when considering applications.
- 2) No more than 10% of all decisions to be overturned at appeal in a 2-year period.

**Effectively deliver the enforcement role**

To continue to deliver the enforcement function within the National Park together with the host authorities and metrics to be reported through the Annual Planning Performance Report to P & R Committee.

**Develop Shoreham Cement Works Area Action Plan (AAP)**

Planning Committee and the National Park Authority to approve Issues & Options AAP for consultation in Q1, consultation to take place in Q2, representations to be reviewed and Preferred Options AAP to be formulated in Q3-4.

**Undertake the Local Plan Review (LPR)**

- 1) Scope out work plan and budget for the Local Plan Review (LPR). Way forward to be decided by Members in Q1. Depending on the decision of Members work will begin in earnest on evidence gathering for the LPR for the rest of the year.
- 2) As part of the review ensure that the collective policy matrix for Nature Recovery, Climate Action and National Park for All is designed to maximise integrated delivery of corporate priorities through the planning system.

**Progress Minerals & Waste Local Plans**

Submit East Sussex LPR for examination Q1, examination Q2 and hopefully adoption Q4. Issues & Options Hampshire Local Plan Review Q2.

## 7.6. DELIVERING THE STATUTORY PLANNING SERVICE (CONT.)



© SDNPA

### SDNPA Corporate Plan priorities

### In Year 3 of our Corporate Plan we will:

#### Support Neighbourhood Development Plans

At the same time as we are working on the Local Plan Review, we will support and work closely with Parish Councils wishing to prepare neighbourhood plans or neighbourhood plan reviews, to ensure that this work is progressed. It is anticipated that the Local Plan Review will be adopted at the same time that the neighbourhood plans are adopted.

#### Work on the Duty to Cooperate in line with our Section 62 of the Environment Act, section 11A duty

The need to work on cross boundary strategic issues is ongoing. However, during 2022/23 we are expecting local plans to come forward proposing substantial development in the setting of the National Park with new local plans in Chichester, East Hampshire, Horsham and Lewes Districts.

#### Renegotiate S101 contracts with host authorities

The current S101 contracts with our five host authorities expire on 1 October 2022. The aim is to have contracts in place with Chichester, East Hampshire, Horsham and Winchester Councils for a maximum period of 4 years and with Lewes Council for up to 2 years. This would enable these Councils to continue to provide planning services on our behalf.

#### Performance monitoring and reporting

The need to monitor and report on performance is ongoing and so will continue for both the in-house and host authority development management functions in 2022/23. Monitoring will include the Annual Planning Performance Report to Policy and Resources Committee and the Authority's Annual Monitoring Report.

## 7.7. MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

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### SDNPA Corporate Plan priorities

### In Year 3 of our Corporate Plan we will:

**Deal with major planning applications and appeals; considering major development in plan making**

- 1) Deal with major planning applications and appeals in an efficient and timely manner whilst driving maximum benefit for the National Park.
- 2) Ensure that major development is robustly addressed in all our development plans.

**Administer the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 – key income streams for delivery**

CIL will retain its link to funding infrastructure needed to support growth as required by legislation. As part of this we will also look to support and fund more projects that deliver the Corporate Plan priorities of Nature Recovery, Climate Action and A National Park for All.

**Deal with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIPs) within the National Park**

Ongoing work to protect the National Park, to maximise development benefits and to secure appropriate mitigation and compensation from NSIP schemes. Responding to statutory consultations as required. The A27 at Arundel and Rampion 2 examinations in public are expected.

**Provide specialist advice in respect of Conservation, Design and Landscape across the organisation – especially in regard to Nature Recovery, Climate Action and A National Park for All**

Align and focus specialist advice on:

- i) Delivering the three Corporate Plan priorities.
- ii) Assisting our work as Local Planning Authority.

A South Downs Design Review Panel will continue to operate that helps deliver better design in the National Park.

## 7.8. GENERATING INCOME

SOUTH DOWNS  
 NATIONAL PARK TRUST

SOUTH DOWNS  
 NATIONAL PARK

beelines  
 SOUTH DOWNS  
 NATIONAL PARK  
 PROTECT OUR POLLINATORS

TREES  
 FOR THE  
 DOWNS  
 SOUTH DOWNS  
 NATIONAL PARK

### SDNPA Corporate Plan priorities

### In Year 3 of our Corporate Plan we will:

**Aim to raise £2.5 million self-generated income per annum, supporting Partnership Management Plan (PMP) delivery, through bids to Statutory Sources and support for the South Downs National Park Trust in continuing to build a sustainable philanthropic income stream**

Raise £2.5m of self-generated income through philanthropic gifts, corporate partners and competitive government grants. This additional funding will be paired with strategic projects that drive forward delivery against the High Level Targets.

**Support the role of private finance for Nature Recovery, securing funding to restore 1,000 hectares for Nature**

Restore 1,000 hectares p.a. through projects which support landowners to secure private funding, changing current land management practices in favour of nature.

**Incubate a number of income generating initiatives, building on Seven Sisters and the South Downs National Park Trust, scaling these up to generate £200k per annum**

Generate £200k through full cost recovery, securing restricted funding against budgeted costs or via profit from new commercial ventures.

## 7.9. NEW WAYS OF WORKING



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### SDNPA Corporate Plan priorities

### In Year 3 of our Corporate Plan we will:

**Adopt a blended style of working that balances sustainability and flexibility whilst supporting business delivery**

- 1) Undertake a blended working Staff Survey in Q3 2022/23.
- 2) PDR process to be adapted to reflect new ways of working by Q4.
- 3) Train staff in the matrix management style of working by Q4.

**Streamline levels of service to Members and Partners to ensure they are proportionate and reflect the resources available for their delivery**

Complete a review of internal governance and propose recommendations for changes to structures and processes, as appropriate.

**Through the use of new technology and new approaches to internal decision making and internal communications, the National Park Authority will have developed a culture of 'the right information in the right place' – leading to improved decision making and organisational efficiency**

- 1) MS Teams road map in place.
- 2) Review of Internal Communications outputs, processes and practices.

**Ensure that the organisation is more diverse and representative both in its staff and Members and considers Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in service delivery and policy development**

- 1) Adapt the way we recruit, to increase the diversity of applications received from the current baseline.
- 2) Ensure that 100% of new programmes, projects, policies, services and strategies have EDI as a central delivery component. This will be evidenced by the completion and consideration of the EDI screening and impact assessment form at the start of the process.
- 3) Develop a training plan to prioritise EDI training and skills development for staff and Members and begin delivery of specific training.

# 8. FIVE-YEAR MEASURES

The measures below run from 2020-25 and are reported annually to our Policy and Resources committee.

## Measures of success

- % aware of South Downs National Park in YouGov poll
- Increase from the baseline (in the 2018 Volunteer Development Strategy) in the number of people from under-represented 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
- Create two new gateways to the National Park between 2020 and 2025
- Develop at least three Health and Well-Being Hubs across the National Park by 2025
- % major applications determined within 13 weeks
- % non-major applications determined within 8 weeks
- % of new projects brought forward that have delivery plans
- % of contractors fulfilling their obligations as set out in their tender to quality, time and budget



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