

Report to **Policy & Resources Committee**
Date **22 September 2022**
By **Countryside & Policy Manager (Eastern)**
Title of Report **Partnership Management Plan Delivery – Nature Recovery**
Decision

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to

- 1. Note progress on the delivery of the Nature Recovery programme**
 - 2. Endorse the direction of travel for future work with regard to Nature Recovery as set out in section 6**
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is subsequent to a Members' workshop on 7 September 2022, which provided an update on the South Downs National Park Authority's (SDNPA) Nature Recovery programme of work as set out at **Appendix I**.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The SDNPA has its own Nature Recovery programme of work and delivery plan for wildlife in the South Downs: **"Re Nature" the South Downs National Park - A Delivery Plan for Wildlife**" informed by the National Parks England (NPE) Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks.

- 2.2 In turn this has shaped the Corporate Plan targets:

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

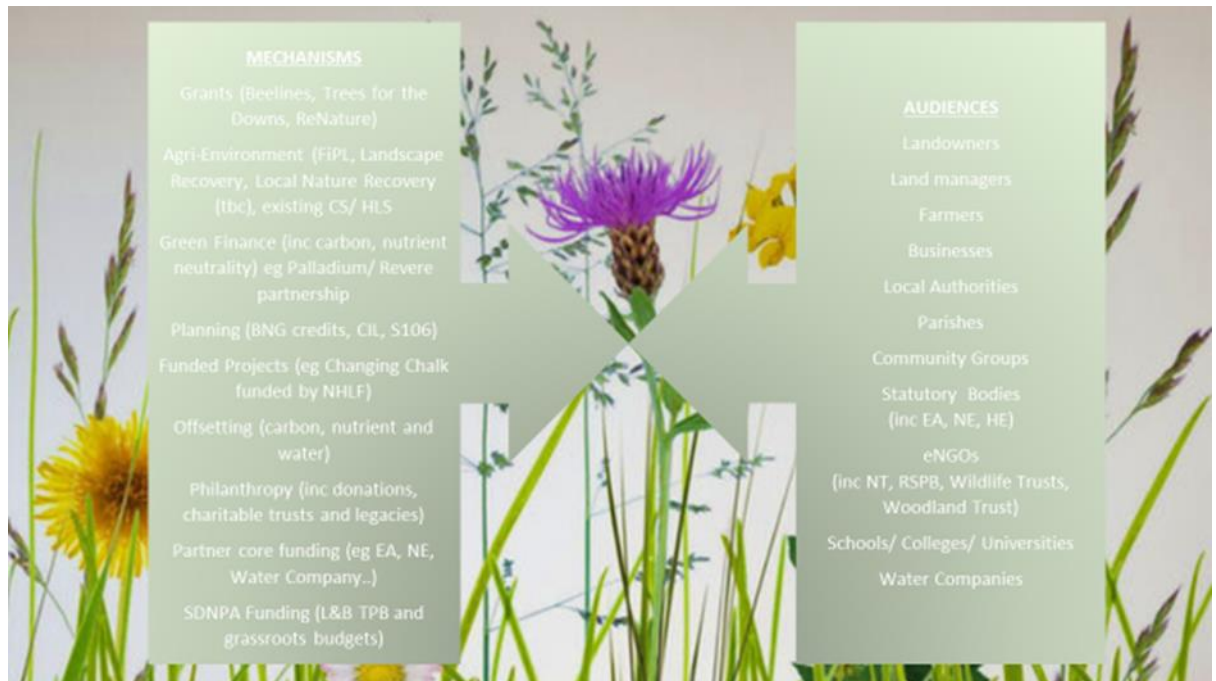
In essence, we are seeking a National Park which one third is nature and two thirds nature friendly.

- 2.3 It is also now a year on from launching the ReNature Campaign. The aim of our ambitious campaign is not only to create awareness about the biodiversity crisis, but to create a movement to ReNature the National Park and to enable the South Downs National Park Trust to raise funds towards the estimated £100m needed over 10 years to help create an additional 13,000 hectares of habitat. Our goal simply put is, "Nature everywhere, for everyone".

- 2.4 The legislative framework for nature recovery is now set out through the Environment Act 2021. The Act is part of a new legal framework for environmental protection.

- 2.5 The Act sets clear statutory targets for the recovery of the natural world in four priority areas: air quality, biodiversity, water and waste, and includes an important new targets to reverse the decline in species abundance by the end of 2030. It sets in law new tools that we can use to help meet those targets.
- 2.6 The Office for Environmental Protection began operating with its full statutory functions on 24-January 2022. Their mission is to protect and improve the environment by holding government and other public authorities to account.
- 2.7 In terms of restoring nature the new provisions and tools include Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and a strengthened Biodiversity Duty.
- 2.8 **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than beforehand. It means protecting existing habitats and ensuring that lost or degraded habitats are compensated before by enhancing or creating habitats that are of greater value to wildlife and people. The Act will introduce mandatory biodiversity net gain, due to become a requirement in later 2023 for development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Act also makes provision for it to be applied to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.
- 2.9 **Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)** are a new system of spatial strategies for nature (or “nature” plans) covering the whole of England. They are designed as tools to drive more coordinated, practical, and focused action to help nature. They will support the delivery of BNG and provide a focus for a strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Preparation of each LNRS will be led by a “responsible authority” appointed by the Defra Secretary of State. It is anticipated that there will be approximately 50 LNRSs covering the whole of England with the SDNP being covered by three: Hampshire, West Sussex and a joint East Sussex and Brighton and Hove strategy.
- 2.10 The current **Biodiversity Duty** under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (Section 40) for public authorities to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity when delivering their functions is strengthened by the Environment Act 2021 (Section 102) so that public authorities must consider what action the authority can take to further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Much of the details are still to be defined. Defra has run a series of consultations to inform the drafting of Regulations and Guidance on the provisions of the Act. SDNPA and/or NPE has contributed to consultation responses including BNG, LNRS, and the Nature Recovery Green Paper.
- 3. Delivering the Nature Recovery programme**
- 3.1 Delivery of the SDNPA Nature Recovery programme is through multiple mechanisms including:
- **Grants** (such as Beelines, Trees for the Downs, ReNature Grant...)
 - **Agri-environment** (FiPL, Landscape Recovery and existing schemes)
 - **Planning** (S106, Community Infrastructure Levy, BNG)
 - **Green finance** (partnership with Palladium, offsetting), and
 - **Partnership projects** (for example Changing Chalk funded by NLHF)
- 3.2 It also relies on partnership and collaboration with landowners, managers and farmers as well as joint working with key partners including local authorities, eNGOs, statutory bodies, businesses and communities.

Figure I: Mechanisms and Audiences diagram



- 3.3 So far, the **ReNature Campaign** has raised over £400,000. Since its launch, the campaign has reached 378,000 People online and 7.5m through coverage in the media with over 220 pieces of coverage. The campaign film – “the Night We ReNatured” has been viewed over 258,000 times. In July we held our first ReNature Festival, which we aim to make an annual event. We reached over 180,000 people in person with our digital content during the festival and sent out nearly 600 ReNature packs to help families to connect with nature. The majority of the packs were targeted at our underserved audiences and were distributed through food banks, refugee organisations, carer organisations and disability support organisations.
- 3.4 The Authority has also run its own pilot **Call for Nature Sites (C4NS)**. This was an independent and voluntary call to land owners, managers, partners and communities to support our ambitions to ReNature the South Downs. The C4NS is just one way of generating interest in and land for nature recovery activity within the SDNP. The C4NS is specifically aimed at contributing towards the Corporate Plan ReNature Target. Initiated in November 2021 with a closing date of 17 January 2022 it has resulted in 77 Expressions of Interest from across the entire SDNP, from farmers to estates as well as a whole parish. Following a triage process 31 initiatives are going forward covering 3562ha, of which 15 are being funded or being considered by the South Downs Trust through Beelines or Trees for the Downs. We are also looking to match other initiatives with other delivery mechanisms.
- 3.5 Measuring success and sharing the story of nature recovery is essential. The **Biodiversity Monitoring Framework (BMF)** sets out the approach to recording and monitoring biodiversity across the South Downs National Park. The supporting annual BMF Action Plan (Year 2 2022/23) emphasises the need to record nature recovery action and establish appropriate systems.
- 4. Issues for consideration**
- 4.1 Authority officers will continue to work towards facilitating the delivery of nature recovery through multiple mechanisms. For example, FiPL Year 2, the 31 C4NS, Green Finance initiatives, Brighton City Downland Whole Estate Plans and the Changing Chalk project.
- 4.2 The SDNPA will continue to engage with and influence the development of the Nature Recovery Network and the Local Nature Recovery Strategies that will be produced locally, working with the Responsible Authorities and through the Local Nature Partnerships.

- 4.3 The SDNPA will embrace BNG as it becomes mandatory under the Environment Act. This includes developing an approach through the Local Plan Review and working with other local authorities. Currently, Policy SD9 of the Local Plan requires development proposals to identify and incorporate opportunities for net gains in biodiversity since its adoption in 2019. To support this, our Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note (TAN) provides interim guidance on how BNG is to be achieved in the South Downs National Park now in accordance with existing South Downs Local Plan Policy. It also provides guidance on how BNG is expected to make a meaningful contribution to nature recovery.
- 4.4 In terms of outcomes a literal interpretation of the Corporate Plan target, assuming linear progress, would suggest we need to renature 1625ha per year for ten years. Plus some measurable improvement in core site condition. Process milestones are also set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 4.5 However progress will not be in any way linear and our resources are smaller than when we set the targets. So progress will depend on how BNG is implemented, what role National Park Authorities are given in ELM and how the new Government embraces the legislative framework which underpins the offsetting markets. None of these latter factors are under our control.
- 4.6 The Biological Monitoring Framework (BMF) will be used to continue to monitor progress so we can be adaptive to circumstances.
- 4.7 The South Downs Nature Recovery programme will continue to be overseen by the cross-directorate Nature Recovery Working Group. Appendix 2.

5. Future cost implications

- 5.1 Funding for the South Downs Nature Recovery programme will continue to be derived from multiple sources, including through the ReNature campaign. However, in the short-term officer capacity will be impacted following recent internal changes at the SDNPA and as we recruit a new Biodiversity Officer into post.

6. Next steps

- 6.1 Officers will continue to deliver the SDNPA Nature Recovery programme through Influencing Strategy, Developing Resources, Action for Core Nature and Action for ReNature. This will specifically include:
- Continuing to take forward C4NS initiatives
 - Continuing to explore green finance options and other funding mechanisms
 - Continuing to develop our tools and evidence base to inform quality nature recovery
 - Linking nature recovery and net zero for nature
 - Supporting and influencing the responsible authorities with LNRS readiness
 - BNG readiness
 - Responding to the live BNG metric consultation
 - Developing fit-for-purpose monitoring and reporting through the BMF
 - Continuing to promote awareness and fundraise through the ReNature campaign

7. Other implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee / full authority?	No.

Implication	Yes*/No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Not applicable. This report is for note only and does not contain any proposals for members to consider.
Which PMP Outcomes / Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	PMP Outcome 1: PMP Outcome 2: PMP Outcome 3:
Links to other projects or partner organisations	
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	Implementation of nature recovery projects and initiatives will often contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives – net zero with nature.
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?	There are no equalities implications arising from this report. Equalities issues are taken into account in relation to any decisions taken with regard to the application and administration of any grant funding submission and in the operation of the wider nature recovery programme.
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?	The use of personal data in the delivery of activity related to C4NS, grants such as Beelines and Trees for the Downs is undertaken in compliance with the Authority's obligations under data protection legislation. Advice of the Authority's Data Protection Officer has been sought when establishing how personal data is required to be used for delivery within these work streams.
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	None

8. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 8.1 As this is an update report there are no risks arising directly from it. Risks associated with the specific work streams are identified and managed by the teams involved and captured on work specific risk registers, or Directorate / Corporate risk registers as appropriate

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Appendices	Appendix 1: SDNPA Nature Recovery Programme 2022-23: Targets & Work Strands Appendix 2: Biodiversity Monitoring Framework for the South Downs National Park (March 2021)
SDNPA Consultees	Director of Countryside Policy and Management
External Consultees	None.
Background Documents	South Downs National Park Corporate Plan 2022/23 SDNPA: Delivery Plan for Wildlife in the South Downs “Re Nature” the South Downs National Park - A Delivery Plan for Wildlife The South Downs National Park Nature Recovery Delivery Prospectus 2021-2031 (including targets and illustrative opportunities map) The Environment Act 2021 The Environment Act 2021 Frequently Asked Questions (Note that pages 31-43 cover the Restoring Nature elements of the Act.) NPE: Delivery Plan for Wildlife in National Parks Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note (TAN) - South Downs National Park Authority

SDNPA NATURE RECOVERY PROGRAMME 2022-23: Targets & Work Strands

Targets:

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

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 (core nature + renature) and the other two thirds to be nature friendly.

High Level Targets

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

Target/ Priority 1: ReNature the South Downs National Park.

- To define a core nature network for SDNP by end Q3 2022 to inform NRN and LNRS
- To contribute to the development of approximately 2-4 Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)
- Proactively deliver ReNature through projects and initiatives using a variety of mechanisms.

ReNature: sites/initiatives where there is a significant change of land management whereby nature’s recovery or managing for biodiversity becomes the/a primary objective, contributing to the campaign goal of an additional 13,000 ha of land managed for nature / 33% by 2030.

Target/ Priority 2: Improve Core Nature in the South Downs National Park by ensuring all SSSIs in the SDNP are in favourable condition.

- To define “good condition” for each of the four key habitat types (chalk grassland, woodland, lowland heathland and wetland) and to establish a baseline from end Q4.
- Improve the area/condition of the four key habitat types.

Core Nature: sites/initiatives which already have a primary objective for nature or managing biodiversity. For example, designated sites such as SSSIs, NNRs, LWS and ancient semi natural woodland. The existing 25% of land for nature.

Nature Recovery 2022-23

Target/ Priority 3: Better connect people with nature

- To connect 50,000 people per year with nature through the ReNature Campaign.
- Target delivery of accessible natural greenspace through renature programme in areas where there is a deficiency of provision.

Note, to avoid double counting between climate change and nature recovery reporting.... (CF to confirm wording)

Work strands:

Influencing Strategy	Lead:	Timeline:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the development of LNRS by Tier 1 Responsible Authorities. (between 2 and 5 strategies depending on pan-Sussex join-up) 	NRWG	2022+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the development of the NRN (work lead by LNPs) 	NRWG	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to further Defra Environment Act consultations on informing the development of the Regulations & Guidance. 	NRWG	BNG: deadline 5-April-22 (KS) Nature Recovery Green Paper: deadline 11-May-22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and incorporate the Environment Act 2021 Regulations and Guidance into our nature recovery programme. 	NRWG	Targets: deadline 11-May-22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further define the SD Wildlife Delivery Plan habitat targets and map core network. Align targets with net zero with nature and National Park for all targets 	NRWG	2022/23 (VC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed the SD Wildlife Delivery Plan into the next SD LP Review (starts 2022) and SD PMP Review (starts 2023?) 	SLs/NRWG/Planning	2022+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To define a core nature network for SDNP by end Q3 2022 to inform NRN and LNRS 	NRWG	Draft to Member workshop Sep-22 (VC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for Nature Sites (C4NS) – manage annual/ regular EoI window and resulting ReNature projects/delivery 	NRWG/ Comms	EoI window: Nov-21 to 17-Jan-22. Assessment: Jan to April-22. Delivery: May-22+ (KS/JB/VC/ATJ)
	Planning/ NRWG	Mandatory BNG starts 2023 (KS)

Nature Recovery 2022-23

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from interim Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) advice to mandatory BNG under the Environment Act • South Downs Nature Recovery Campaign #ReNature further promotion late spring-2022 • Continue to develop readiness for other/new mechanisms to deliver/ support nature recovery. (eg PANN, CCAs, pilot with Palladium) • Work in partnership: with Protected Landscape family (NPE NR Delivery Plan and Tripartite Agreement); Defra Family; Teir 1 Responsible Authorities; and the Local Nature Partnerships (Sussex, Hampshire & IoW, and South East) 	<p>Comms/ Income Gen/ NRWG</p> <p>NRWG/ Income Gen/Planning</p> <p>NRWG</p>	<p>2022 (RJ)</p> <p>ReNature Grant launch April-22 (MS)</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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<p>Resource Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop the nature recovery information hub • Evolve our process for managing enquiries and nature recovery work • Take forward the Biological Monitoring Framework – Action Plan for year 2 (2022-23), inc defining “condition of habitats” • Develop Nature Recovery Log to inform reporting • Develop funding opportunities and mechanisms for nature recovery delivery (pledges?) • Share learning and develop “advice pack” from pilot initiatives such as the Palladium partnership • Develop and share stories and case studies • Develop ReNature projects/initiatives map 	<p>Lead:</p> <p>Comms & NRWG</p> <p>NRWG, SS</p> <p>Bio Monitoring Group</p> <p>NRWG</p> <p>Income Gen Team</p> <p>NRWG</p> <p>Comms</p> <p>NRWG</p>	<p>Timeline:</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>BMF Action Plan Yr2 agreed at L&B TPB May-22. Reports at L&B TPB Feb-23 (JB/PS)</p> <p>Interim log operational May-22 (PS)</p> <p>Ongoing (JW)</p> <p><i>tbc</i></p> <p>Ongoing (part of NR Comms Plan 2022/23) (RJ)</p> <p>Ongoing. Draft to May NRWG meeting</p>
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Nature Recovery 2022-23

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop resource for pro-active engagement with landowners for development of large (over 100 hectare) sites for nature recovery. Expert guidance provided on development of nature recovery management plans?? 	NRWG	tbc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use the PANN to help spatially target action for connecting people and nature 	NRWG	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed Public Opens Spaces toolkit into NR Information Hub 	NRWG/Comms	May-22+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland Opportunity Mapping tool 	NRWG/Comms	Spring 2022 (launch as pilot, review in 12 months)

<p>Action for ReNature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support key landscape scale projects: Changing Chalk, Big Chalk; Waterhall, Weald to Waves/ Sussex Regeneration Partnership etc.. • Pilot initiatives using new mechanisms (eg Palladium Partnership and Broadreed Farm) • Support Area Team priority nature recovery projects (may come from C4NS) • BNG through planning • Awareness raising and individual/community action through engagement work (eg SDYA, Education, Comms...) • On the ground projects, initiatives and advice • Using existing/new mechanisms to deliver eg FiPL, ELMs, offsetting, Water Company schemes 	<p>Lead: NRWG/SLs Area Teams</p> <p>NRWG/ Inc Gen</p> <p>Area Teams</p> <p>Planning</p> <p>CPC, Comms, Planning</p> <p>SLs/ Area Teams</p> <p>SLs/Farming/ Thrive Teams / Planning</p>	<p>Timeline:</p>
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<p>Action for Core Nature</p>	<p>Lead: NRWG/SLs/Area Teams</p>	<p>Timeline:</p>
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Nature Recovery 2022-23

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support key projects: Changing Chalk, Lullington Heath Restoration etc..• On the ground projects, initiatives and advice, working with key partners and land managers• Biological Monitoring Framework: how we measure existing habitat condition?• Using existing/new mechanisms to deliver eg FiPL, ELMs, offsetting, Water Company schemes	SLs/Area Teams Bio Monitoring Group SLs/ Farming/ Thrive Teams/Planning	
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Working Document

Working Document



Biodiversity Monitoring Framework for the South Downs National Park

March 2021

Authors

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I. Introduction

This paper sets out an initial framework for biodiversity monitoring in the South Downs National Park, it draws on a broad assessment of our current position concerning five monitoring areas and establishes a set of recommendations and actions that will allow us to present a coherent picture of the state of biodiversity in the South Downs National Park. The specific detail of each monitoring area is yet to be finalised and is out of the scope of this document. This developing piece of work will have future iterations and will adapt to emerging drivers and lessons learnt.

Why a biodiversity monitoring framework needed

As part of our core statutory purpose, National Parks are required to conserve and enhance wildlife. However, as it stands our current monitoring does not allow us to adequately describe the ongoing health of our wildlife and our contribution to its conservation. This led to the SDNPA being unable to respond to claims in 2019 that nature is worse inside UK National Parks than it is outside, because we simply did not have the data.

In addition, there has been an increasing focus at a national and local level on the current state of biodiversity and what actions we can take to restore it. This has added and given rise to numerous drivers and requirements for the outputs of the Biodiversity Monitoring Framework, including;

- South Downs Partnership Management Plan Outcome Indicators,
- South East Nature Recovery Network
- Future Local Nature Recover Strategy
- Environment 25 Year Plan
- South Downs Nature Recovery Campaign (Renature) – 33% of land “for nature”
- National Parks England Wildlife Delivery Plan – Commitment of roughly 2400ha of habitat creation in SDNP in ten years
- The Environment Act and Planning – Implementation and monitoring of Biodiversity Net Gain and Nitrogen Neutrality Offsets

We have established a number of key principles that underpin the framework;

- This is an overarching framework, a detailed approach to each survey and methodologies will evolve over time
- The resulting approach needs to be agreed with key partners who will contribute towards monitoring effort where relevant
- The approach will have limitations and has to be selective as we cannot monitor everything
- Where possible we will use national approaches to monitoring to enable comparisons of data in and outside the National Park

What questions are we trying to answer?

- What is the extent and condition of habitats within the NP?
- How much have we improved or expanded key habitats?
- How are our habitats contributing to climate change and resilience?
- What species populations have been enhanced and by how much?
- How does the state of biodiversity compare within the SDNP to outside the boundary?



2. Habitat Extent

What is the extent of habitats within South Downs National Park?

How are our habitats contributing to climate change and resilience?

2.1 Current measures of habitat extent

There are several current spatial datasets available to us that express the extent of habitats. These all vary in scale and purpose. Listed are five data sets that we have available and make use of:

- Natural England – Priority Habitat Inventory
- Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre and Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre Broad/Priority Habitat Inventory
- Centre for Ecology and Hydrology – Land Cover Map 2015
- Forestry Commission – National Forest Inventory
- SDNPA Earth Observation land cover data

All of the above data sets have their own benefits and uses; as such it is likely we will continue to maintain a copy of all of these datasets. However, we will need to use one core data set to represent our progression in achieving the goals set out in our key drivers. The Local Record Centre data set has the potential to be the most agile data set with the possibility of feeding in our own primary data from work undertaken and local knowledge or awareness of change from rangers.

2.2 Approach to habitat extent

- Work with local record centres to further develop locally derived Broad Habitat Mapping
- Develop a data collection and sharing protocol to get on the ground knowledge and work fed into the Record Centre Broad Habitat mapping
- Continue to sense check the local habitat map against nationally available data sets

3. Habitat Condition

What is the condition of habitats within the SDNP?

Are priority habitats inside the SDNP in a better condition than those outside?

How are our habitats contributing to climate change and resilience?

Has the condition of priority habitats improved over time?

3.1 Current measures of Condition

Natural England's SSSI monitoring is currently the most consistent definition of condition that the SDNPA reports on. However, SSSIs only make up roughly 10,000 ha of the park (6%). In addition, the original 'features of interest', or reasons for designation, drive the condition assessment; this can limit the scope of the assessment.

As such, it is likely an alternative definition of condition will be more suitable for broader adoption in the SDNP. Any assessment will likely need to take into consideration key indicator species, species diversity and/or low prevalence of undesirable species, but also potentially broader ecosystem service function.



3.2 Approach to habitat condition

- Establish a South Downs definition for 'good condition'
- Develop a survey schedule of priority habitats
- Work with partners to gather condition data of publicly and eNGO held assets

4. Species

How are priority species performing in the SDNP?

Are priority species doing better in the SDNP than outside?

How many INNS have declined/been controlled/increased within the SDNP?

Have any species populations moved north into the SDNP from the continent? e.g. Wall lizard
Is farmland more bio-diverse within the SDNP?

4.1 Current Species Monitoring

There is a huge wealth of species records across our two record centres. These data sets provide us with information on where species exist across the park and will flag up high-level understanding of species collapse or expansion. However, unless they are the production of a consistent methodology with measured effort it is difficult to pull out a robust population assessment or trend.

Numerous national recording schemes provide a consistent methodology across the country such as the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, National Plant Monitoring Scheme and the Breeding Bird Survey. Adopting the same methodology as these schemes and increasing the number of squares that are surveyed within the park will allow the SDNPA to produce a park specific trend that can be benchmarked nationally.

4.2 Approach to Species Monitoring

- Undertake a South Downs species prioritisation exercise to define scope for species monitoring (including invasive non-native species)
- Adopt up to five national species recording schemes that best represent the priority species for national benchmarking
- Develop a monitoring plan for each priority species group
- Nominate a champion for each species group who will own and manage the monitoring plan

5. Projects and habitat management

How many ha of priority habitat have been restored?

How many sites and/or habitats (ha) condition has improved after management or intervention?

At what point is a habitat considered restored?



5.1 Current reporting of projects and habitat management

Across the SDNP there is an ongoing effort from environmental NGOs, Local Authorities, community groups, landowners and our own operations team to restore nature. Although sometimes reported at a project level, and within our own organisations, much of this day-to-day action goes unrecorded in a central repository. As such, we are unable to report complete figures for restoration work in the SDNP. There are several potential sources for this data:

- Grass Roots projects
- Day to day outputs of area teams
- Landscape and Biodiversity Board funded Projects
- Partner projects and day to day work
- Planning Biodiversity net gain delivery
- Nitrate Neutrality offset delivery
- Environment Land Management schemes

There is also project specific species monitoring ongoing, such as the work associated with the water vole reintroduction project on the river Meon.

5.2 Approach to recording projects and habitat management

- Ensure all projects related to habitat management and restoration complete a biodiversity monitoring plan
- Register all projects and action in a central database - with a spatial attribute to facilitate mapping
- Use a consistent system to monitor day to day activity
- Species-specific projects should have time limited monitoring plans; where possible the methods used in project monitoring should complement generic park wide methods.

6. Planning

There are several major requirements for biodiversity monitoring within our planning system;

6.1 Local Wildlife Sites

Local Wildlife Sites in the South Downs are currently monitored under contract by the respective record centres. However, the current resource being deployed will not maintain an up to date evidence base of the more than 900 LWS in the park. It is unlikely that the SDNPA would ever have the resource to undertake more than 90 full LWS surveys on an annual; instead we will look to undertake high level site visits that will trigger full surveys should any issues or a change of habitat be noted.

6.2 Biodiversity Net Gain and other Off-setting

The South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033 sets out a requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in Strategic Policy SD9. BNG also features in the current Environment Bill and is likely to be enacted into law in 2021. As per the mitigation hierarchy, mitigation and net gain will always be sought on



site; however, there may be occasions where this will have to occur off site. The SDNPA will need to maintain a register of these sites as well as ongoing monitoring.

Additional offsetting has arisen due to the requirement for nitrate neutrality from any development within the Solent region. Any process we develop for monitoring planning will need to remain adaptable to ensure new and arising opportunities are captured.

6.3 Approach to Planning Biodiversity Monitoring

- Record BNG and other planning related works in the project database
- Continue current LWS provision via local record centres
- Adopt a multi-tiered approach to LWS monitoring so that all sites are at least visited in a 10-year cycle.

7. Action Planning

The approaches summarised in the above sections covering habitats, species, projects and planning will be developed into an annual action plan will be produced and reviewed at the end of each year.

