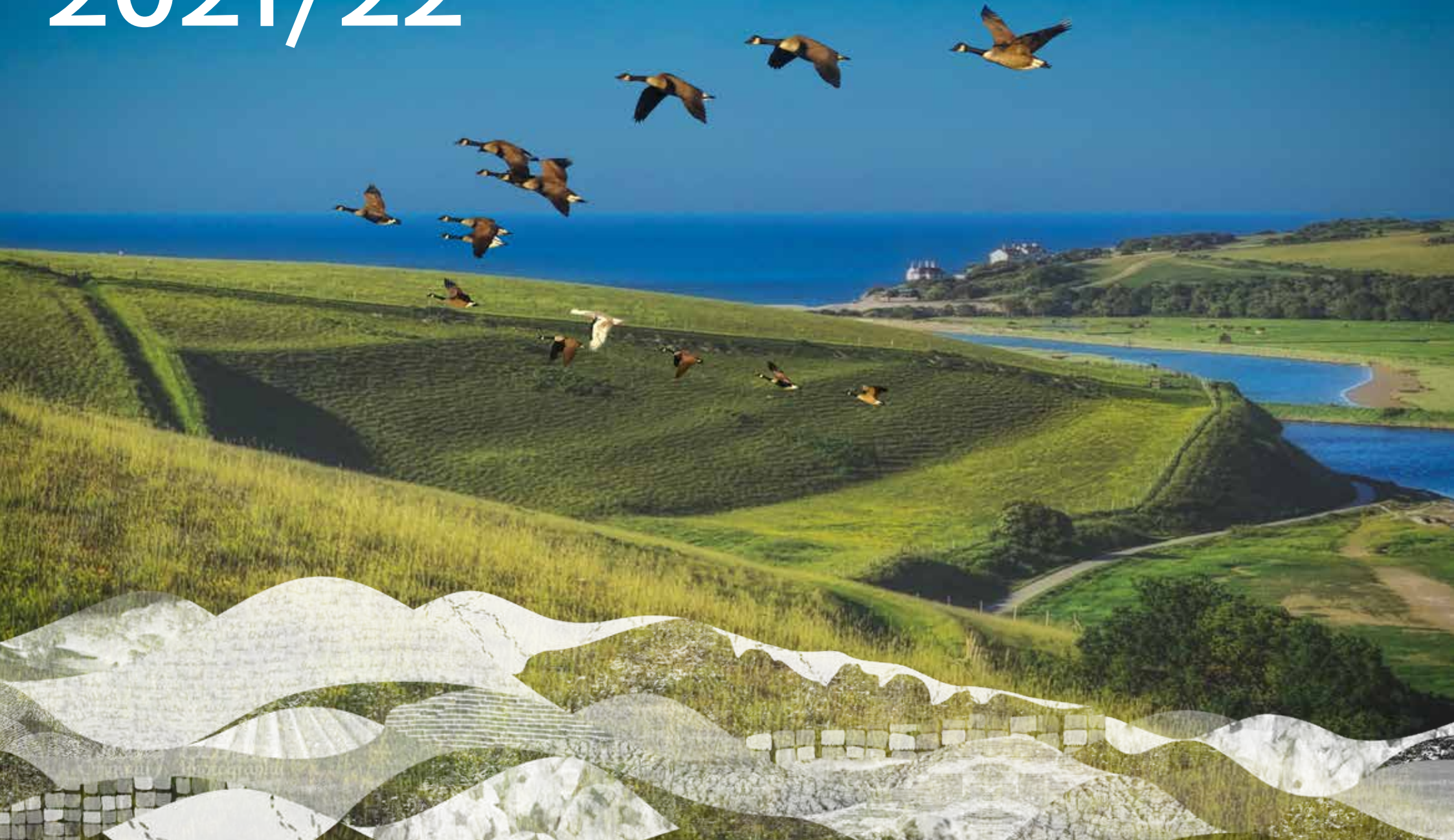


ANNUAL REVIEW 2021/22



A YEAR OF CHANGE IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Emerging from the pandemic with a renewed, re-energised focus on nature recovery and creating new and innovative opportunities for people to connect with the National Park, it's been a busy year of significant progress in respect of our Purposes and Duty.

Firstly, improvements for our communities and visitors, on both the eastern and western side of the National Park. The pandemic underlined just how important the South Downs is for people's physical and mental wellbeing, as well as the need to have excellent infrastructure for visitors. Our investment of just under £2m at Seven Sisters – a key gateway to the National Park – is providing a world-class visitor centre that's deserving of this renowned location, giving people everything they need for a great day-out and inspiring people of all ages to care for this fragile site.

In the west of the National Park, Butser Hill is truly iconic as the highest point of the chalk ridge and we're pleased to have been able to provide significant funding for a project that will strengthen the visitor offering here, as well as benefit the landscape and its wonderful wildlife. More on this next year.

Our new **Corporate Plan**, demonstrates that we are a National Park Authority with a strong vision to deliver the outcomes in the Partnership Management Plan.

This year we made major progress with our goal to tackle the biodiversity and climate crises with positive action. Alongside the South Downs Trust, we launched **#ReNature**, the biggest campaign initiated by the National Park, which seeks to raise £100m over the next 10 years to create an extra 13,000 hectares of habitat where plants and animals can thrive. The response has been



phenomenal, with dozens of potential sites put forward for ReNaturing and significant fundraising generated in the first year.

Evidence of successful nature recovery has been shown as one major project, Heathlands Reunited, reached its conclusion. The project has successfully conserved and enhanced 23,825 hectares of lowland heath over five years. An assessment conducted by external consultants, determined that the project had been 'significant' in restoring the ecological condition and nature conservation value of heathland within the National Park. A testament to how much can be achieved when partners work together.

Through the Farming in Protected Landscapes Initiative (FiPL), the Authority has been a regional leader in climate action. A total of 72 projects have been supported to the tune of over £600,000 of funding, each championing a different strand of sustainability.

Over 12,000 new trees, planted through the Trees for the Downs initiative, and fittingly dedicated to The Queen in her Platinum Jubilee year – represent another triumph for the environment.

Engaging with young people is a key priority for the National Park and this year has been a hive of activity, with visits, residential stays, school trips, teacher

training and educational sessions inspiring a new generation to appreciate the wonders of the South Downs.

With more than two million people living in or within 10km of the South Downs, this is, and always has been, a National Park for everyone. Our unwavering commitment to reach new and diverse audiences continued in earnest this year, with dynamic engagement work and unique projects providing new voices and perspectives on the South Downs landscape.

We know the challenges and opportunities ahead will require determination, innovation and collaboration – and this review shows we are committed to deliver for both people and nature.

Trevor Beattie

Chief Executive

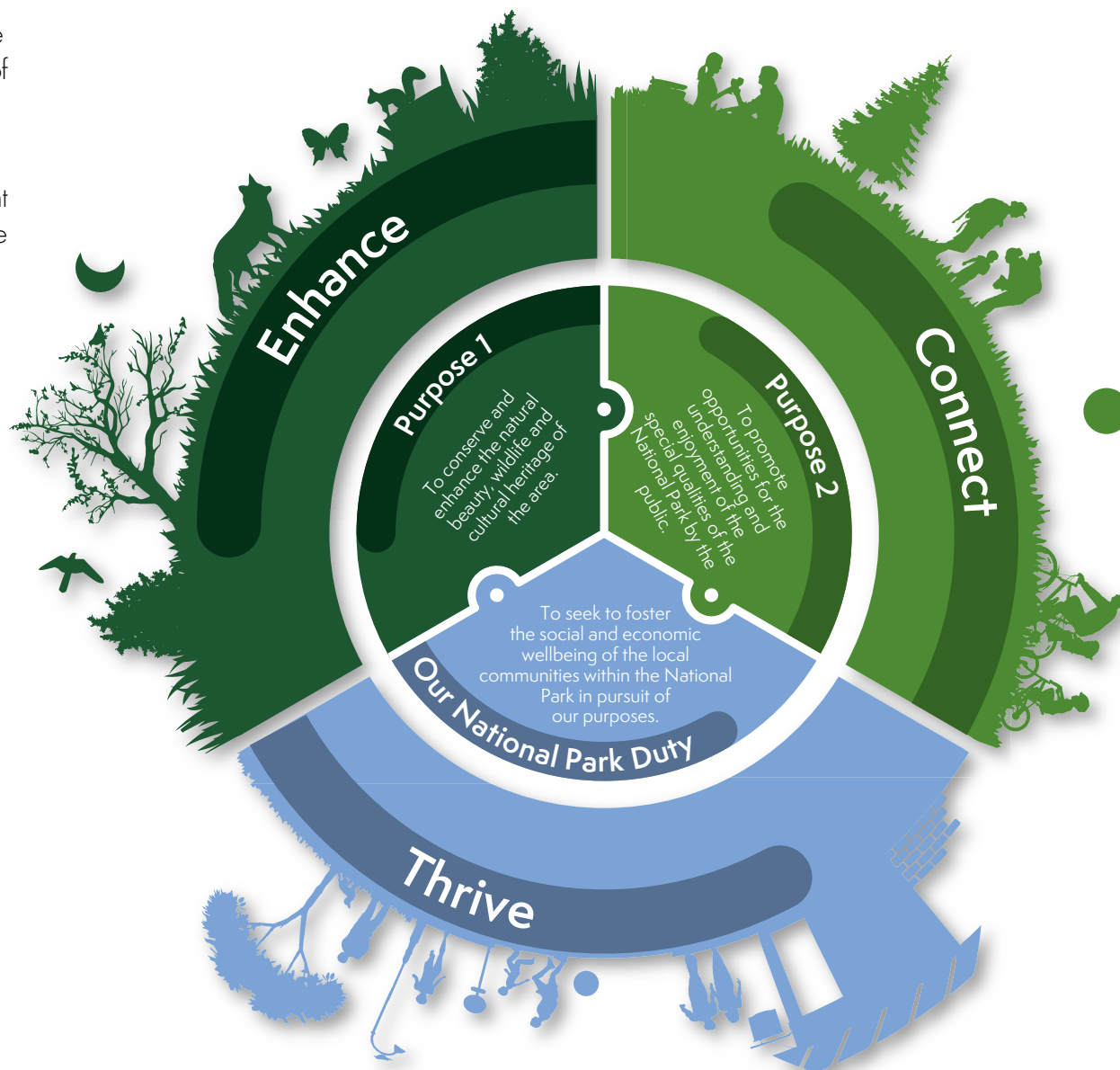
This Annual Review highlights some of our key achievements for 2021/22 which link to the objectives laid out in our [Corporate Plan 2021/22](#)

Cover image: © Wayne Spring – Early morning flight



OUR PURPOSES AND DUTY

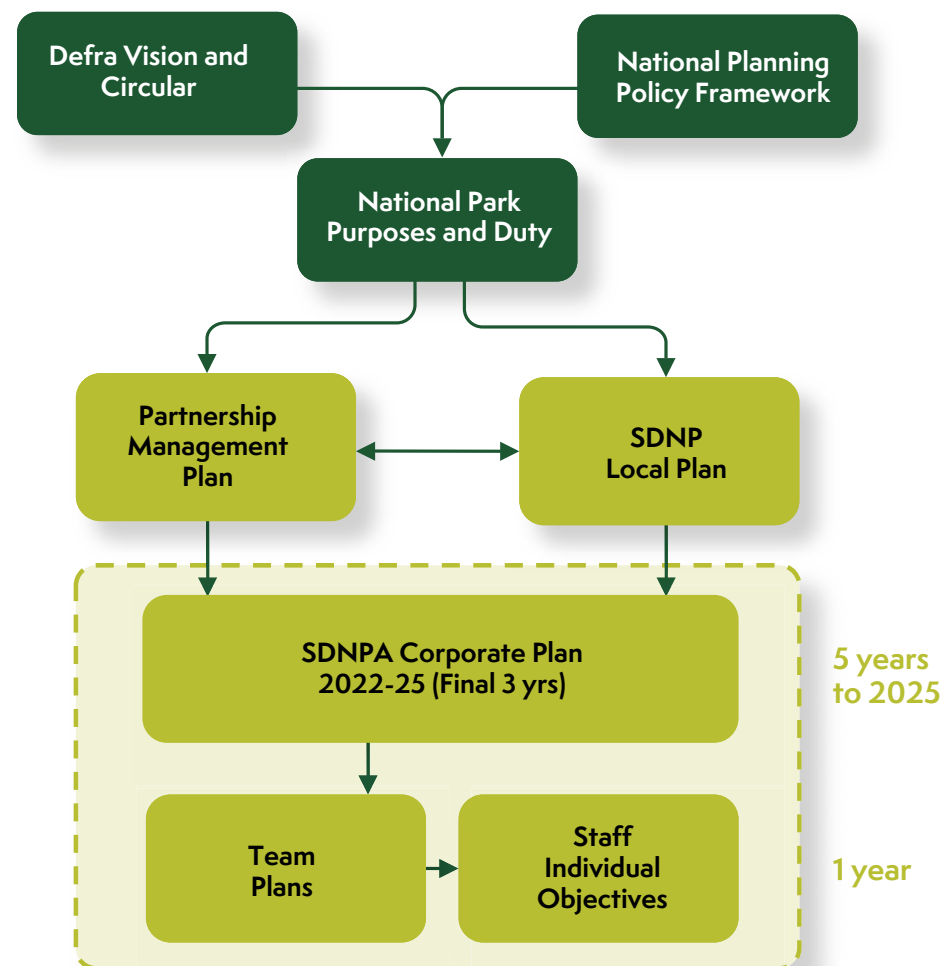
- **Our first Purpose is:** To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
- **Our second Purpose is:** To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.
- **The Duty on the SDNPA is:** To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



THE CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH WE WORK

The diagram sets out the policy and strategic framework steering the work of the South Downs National Park Authority. 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 the success measures will be monitored by the South Downs National Park Authority annually and published in the **Annual Review**.



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 2021/22

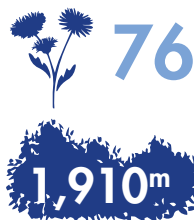
NATURE RECOVERY

#ReNature

Campaign
Launch

**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK**

LANDSCAPE & BIODIVERSITY



HEDGEROW
...laid.

CHALK GRASSLAND, WOODLAND,
HEATHLAND & RIVER SITES

123

...maintained
and enhanced
across the
National Park



HEATHLANDS REUNITED (Yr5)

67ha

...of restoration work
(**966ha** in total)



FARMING IN A PROTECTED LANDSCAPE (FiPL)

72 projects supported
with **£629K**
awarded



TREES FOR THE DOWNS

12k trees planted at 30 sites
dedicated to the Queen
for the Jubilee



**OUR 206 SOUTH DOWNS
VOLUNTEER RANGERS spent...**



days
supporting
national park
work



days of warden
surveying on the
South Downs
Way

BURSARIES

15

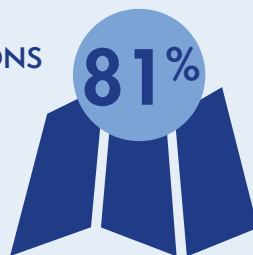
...to writers from BAME
backgrounds, to focus
new creative writing on
the South Downs
landscape



PLANNING APPLICATIONS

(major, minor
and other) dealt
with within
agreed
timescales

81%



CIL FUNDING
£1.37m

...awarded to **29**
projects



SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK

in person engagement

7,230

at Pop Ups
(Summer 2021)



EDUCATION

3,866



...school children from our more deprived
communities visited, thanks to our grants for
schools and colleges

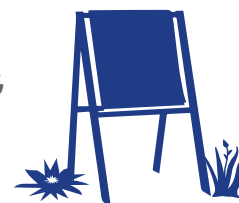
2,023

...children enjoyed in-school sessions from
providers in the South Downs Learning
Network

OUTSIDE LEARNING

29

...online teacher training sessions supporting
544 teachers to take learning outside



SIGNAGE

...additional
entry signs
installed
(**49** in total to
date)

SOCIAL MEDIA REACH



65,747 +14% ↗

Total followers

18.4% ↗

Youtube subscribers

WEBSITE VISITORS

1.57m 5% ↗
unique visits



8,786 8% ↗

E-NEWSLETTER

signups to date



EVENTS & ENGAGEMENT

VIRTUAL



262k

Total content
reach



27k

Video
views

IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT

8,236

at Pop Up Events (HeRe and SDNP)
Dark Skies Festival, Secrets of the Heath



SOUTH DOWNS WAY



1,000+

new Waymarkers on the
SDW and Serpent Trail



27

...gates repaired or
replaced

ACCESS



31

...new signs installed on
the England Coast Path
National Trail

CASE STUDY: HEATHLANDS REUNITED

Heathlands Reunited was a five-year landscape scale partnership project. The project aimed to improve the condition of threatened heathland habitats in the South Downs National Park, and enthuse and inspire people to visit them, learn more about them, and use them responsibly. The project was supported by 11 partner organisations working across 34 heathland sites within the National Park and Wealden Heath sites beyond its central northern boundary.

The intended outcomes of the project were:

- **Heritage will be** – better managed, in better condition, identified/recorded
- **People will have** – developed skills, learnt about heritage, volunteered time
- **For communities, environmental impacts will be reduced;** more people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage, the local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit.

Partners contributed nearly £1 million in match funding (cash and in-kind) towards the total project cost of £2.37 million. This included a cash contribution from the South Downs National Park Authority of £150,000. The remaining funding came from a grant of £1.44 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The partnership worked together with a wide range of stakeholders to reverse heathland decline and to improve heathland heritage.

The project has exceeded most of its capital works targets, with the result that heathland heritage is bigger and better. The final area completed was **966ha** which exceeded the original aim of **666ha**. The project has also been successful in raising the profile of heathlands both at higher levels within partner organisations and beyond the project area.

For communities, environmental impacts will be reduced; more people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage, the local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit. During the project, a total of **15,764** people attended **209** in-person events and a further **105,755** attended/viewed **30** virtual events.

In addition, over the course of the project, **698** participants made up of volunteers and partner staff attended 60 training sessions. These figures surpassed the anticipated numbers. Across the project activities, participants (including participants in training events, volunteers and members of the community) have reported an increase in their awareness and understanding of the importance of heathlands.

Volunteer recruitment was a great success, **114** volunteers were recruited directly to assist the project to join existing volunteers from partner organisations. Volunteer time amounted to **6,212** days, exceeding the target of **5,700** volunteer days.

The success of the project has spawned a new "Heathlands Reunited Wealden Heath SAMM" project, bringing together 12 likeminded organisations to help protect and enhance the Shortheath Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Wealden Heath Special Protection Area (SPA), funded by East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) and Whitehill Town Council (WTC) through Section 106 (S106) developer contributions. These sites sit on the boundary of the South Downs National Park. The project will inform, engage and involve local communities to use their heathland in a responsible way and protect them for future generations.



CASE STUDY: SEVEN SISTERS

Ownership of the iconic Seven Sisters Country Park was transferred from East Sussex County Council to the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) in July 2021, following a two-year negotiating process.

Seven Sisters Country Park is a unique place. It comprises 280 hectares of chalk cliffs, meandering river valley and open chalk grassland. It's home to grazing livestock, rare flora and fauna and is a corridor for a large number of migrating birds.

The Authority is making a long-term commitment to Seven Sisters Country Park and is working with the South Downs National Park Trust to make substantial investment in the site. This investment underpins the Authority's long-term plans to conserve and enhance Seven Sisters Country Park to ensure that it continues to be an iconic, healthy and cherished place for future generations. The initial phase of work costing just under £2m is almost complete at Exceat, including a refurbished visitor centre, new and accessible toilet facilities, a locally-sourced and sustainable takeaway food service, and better signage. There will also be renovated accommodation at Foxholes, allowing more people to spend a night enjoying the dark night skies reserve. The renovated visitor centre and grab-and-go food offering are due to be opened to the public by early summer.

Majestic short-eared owls were spotted at the Park this winter, delighting birdwatchers and walkers alike, captivated by their aerial acrobatics as they hunt for food. The bird of prey is an incredible spectacle of nature, but, up until recently, seeing one of these owls would have been an extremely rare sight at the country park. It comes after rangers at Seven Sisters worked hard to manage the vegetation in the chalk grassland landscape, including introducing cattle and ponies which have been rotated around the site.

The Authority have been engaging with local stakeholders and parishes throughout the transfer process, and will continue this engagement as owners of the site. Public consultations were held in February 2020, and the feedback obtained was used to inform the vision and planning application for the works at the Park. A new website has been set up for Seven Sisters, which you can visit here: sevensisters.org.uk



© SDNPA/Sam Moore

The Authority hopes to continue to enhance the Park further in 2022, thanks to additional funds raised by the South Downs National Park Trust. This work will include improvements to the Pump Barn at Exceat, and completion of the Foxhole cottages and facilities block at the Camping Barn.



© Peter Brooks

SEVEN SISTERS

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:

Enhance

Develop strategies and support or lead strategic overarching partnerships and projects that deliver the first Purpose of National Parks: **to conserve wildlife, the natural beauty of the landscape and cultural heritage.**

We have continued to work with a variety of partners to deliver key outcomes which conserve and enhance the landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets in the South Downs National Park (SDNP). We are also managing the impacts of large-scale and cumulative small-scale developments. Progress against some of our key priorities as laid out in the Corporate Plan are summarised below:

OUTCOMES 1-4 IN THE PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020-25

- Outcome 1 – Landscape & Natural Beauty
- Outcome 2 – Increasing Resilience
- Outcome 3 – Habitats & Species
- Outcome 4 – Arts & Heritage

Each Outcome will be illustrated with a case study in the following pages.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO IN OUR CORPORATE PLAN	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Deliver the strategic work streams for the People and Nature Network (Green Infrastructure)	The East Winchester Landscape Conversation final report and all the appendices are on the SDNPA website. Infrastructure and Environment Strategy Lead to act as lead coordinator within the Winchester area looking at the various work streams ahead. Please see the case study on page 10.
Restore nature at scale. Develop and implement a South Downs Delivery Plan for Wildlife. Work with regional and local partners (inc. Local Nature Partners (LNPs) and South East Protected Landscapes (SEPL) to define Nature Recovery Networks (NRNs) and Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	Our aim is for 33% of National Park land, or 13,000ha, to be dedicated for nature by 2030. To help us achieve this we launched a Call for Nature Sites (C4NS) window for landowners to express interest in restoring nature on their sites. We received an impressive 76 Expressions of Interest (EOIs) by the closing date, which are now being triaged with a lead officer allocated to take them forwards. A wide range of projects were put forward for consideration, including chalk grassland creation, pond installation, mixed woodland planting, and wildflower meadow creation.
Aim to achieve climate neutrality for the National Park Authority	As well as discussions with partners regarding development of the SDNPA approach to offsetting the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions that it can't reduce; SDNPA's latest actions have been looking at fossil fuel use in SDNPA vehicles. Members of the sustainability group have arranged for an EV 4WD demo after undertaking research with Ranger staff and Seven Sisters Country Park staff to evaluate its ability and application.

OUTCOME 1: LANDSCAPE & NATURAL BEAUTY

CASE STUDY

EAST WINCHESTER LANDSCAPE CONVERSATION

In 2018 the South Downs National Park Authority published the People and Nature Network (PANN)

It sets out how taking a Green Infrastructure approach to environmental issues over the South East region could create multiple benefits for nature, people and the economy.

The study identified twelve individual strategic areas or 'hot spots' where targeted collaborative action would be needed owing to a range of interlinked and complex environmental issues in these places. One of these hot spots is the area **East of Winchester**, currently experiencing development pressure; under supply of natural greenspace; recreational pressure on sensitive sites; traffic, roads and non-motorised users in conflict, water quality problems, flooding and one of the lowest provisions per KM2 of public rights of way in the whole of the National Park. These issues are combining to erode the quality of the landscape for both people and nature – there is no doubt that this part of the National Park is under pressure.

A study was commissioned to look at how to restore East Winchester, specifically, the health, vitality and abundance of the landscape and nature. At the heart of this study lies the forward plan which was conceived with local stakeholders as the decision makers. The report and forward plan were published in February 2022.

SUCCESSSES

Many individuals and organisations could be potential partners to work together with the National Park Authority to find solutions and convene around common goals and ambitions. To start these conversations, SDNPA invited local stakeholders to come together and talk in a series of three workshops to discuss the issues, possible solutions and actions to address these issues. We also talked to over 500 members of the public in a series of pop up consultation events in and around Winchester, including an event for young people kindly hosted at the Winchester Science Centre.

The process of shaping the results of the many discussions, opinions and ideas is set out in a report; the 'East Winchester Landscape Conversation' which concludes with the

forward plan for action. This is the stakeholder's forward plan for landscape restoration which the South Downs National Park Authority helped to coalesce and take shape.

CHALLENGES

Many people in Winchester didn't know anything about the South Downs National Park (SDNP) despite it being on the doorstep. Comments such as 'there's nothing to do in the South Downs' were made. There is a long term issue around the offer from the SDNP to the people of Winchester.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Networking at the workshops helped stakeholders who had not previously worked together find synergies between themselves and others. Since then there have been several initiatives which have developed as a result of the East Winchester Landscape Conversation.

LOOKING AHEAD

There was an aspiration from the stakeholders to continue as a Landscape Forum and this will be investigated further during 2022. There is further work which could be done to link with Health and Well Being, educational and volunteering groups and organisations in and around Winchester. Since the workshop events several new initiatives have started in the East Winchester Area and are in development by stakeholders – watch this space. The PANN will continue to provide useful evidence, especially on the 'people, climate, nature' aspects of the forthcoming requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).



OUTCOME 2: INCREASING RESILIENCE CASE STUDY

CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

Taking immediate and effective action on Climate Change is a priority for the National Park Authority. It is one of the biggest challenges facing the National Park. The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) has a key role in meeting the challenges arising from the climate and nature emergency in terms of advocacy, influence and delivery. Through the development of our Climate Change strategy and Action Plan we set out how we will work to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of Climate Change on the landscape, habitats, communities and economy of the National Park.

SUCCESSSES

In 2021 the SDNPA commissioned Small World Consultants to produce a carbon baseline assessment for the National Park. Published in January 2022, this essential piece of evidence work helps the National Park to achieve Net-Zero by its target date of 2040.

This project also sought to develop and apply a standard approach for a carbon baseline and metrics for all of the UK National Park Authorities. Including targets for land use, land cover change and forestry, all of the UK National Parks have signed-up, along with a number of AONBs and Conservation Boards.

SDNPA played a key part in an application to join the 'Race to Zero' for the UK National Parks, submitted in November 2022.

CHALLENGES

The Climate Change agenda is very broad, and the SDNPA needs to focus on the areas where we can have the greatest impact and influence. This includes advocacy at a national level, achieved through our work with the Family of UK National Parks at COP26 in Glasgow. We also need to deliver effectively at a strategic, park-wide scale and help support local, community based action whilst also working beyond our boundaries developing adaptation responses at landscape scale.

The challenge of delivering emission reductions to meet Net-Zero targets is enormous and there is a huge funding and resource gap. New sources of funding, especially

from the private sector, are needed to address this gap.

Delivery of Net-Zero targets requires major changes in land use and land management. As an example, 20% of land needs to be taken out of intensive agriculture whilst maintaining food production levels. This is an example of the potential conflict between different land uses – 'less space, more pressure'.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

The SDNPA currently act as convenor for the UK National Park Climate Change & Energy Group. This group seeks to coordinate Climate Action across the UK family of National Parks (including Scotland and Wales). The group have developed a national delivery plan, working together across priority areas. An example has been the work to establish shared metrics and targets for Net-Zero.

LOOKING AHEAD

Work towards our Net-Zero target for the South Downs National Park and deliver emissions reductions through:

- Nature-based solutions
- Community based Net-Zero planning and projects
- The launch of the Climate Change digital Resource Hub
- Engagement with the launch of the 'Count Us In' campaign

OUTCOME 3: HABITATS & SPECIES CASE STUDY

BIODIVERSITY MONITORING

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. National Parks have a key role in conserving and enhancing 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. To address this we have developed the Biodiversity Monitoring framework, which focuses on five key areas,

- Habitat extent
- Habitat condition
- Species
- Projects and habitat management
- Planning

SUCCESSSES

In this first year, we have adopted the framework, established a working group and developed an annual work plan. We have developed three species monitoring programmes for farmland birds, butterflies and dragonflies, which give park wide data that can be compared with national trends. In addition we have been obtaining data that can refine our knowledge of habitat extent.

CHALLENGES

Collecting and collating statistically relevant data is a massive task. The main challenge is the resource to undertake this, internally and in partner organisations. Another challenge is to develop a methodology to monitor condition of our key habitats which is not too time consuming and a set of focused species monitoring programmes that can be compared nationally.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

It is important that we work with partners both to develop suitable methodology for monitoring biodiversity and in the collection and collation of data. The biological record centres are core to this as custodians of a considerable amount of data. The species monitoring programmes are developed with others, for example, the farmland bird survey has been developed with six partner organisations. It involves co-ordination by the British Trust for Ornithology and numerous volunteers carrying out surveys and submitting data. Likewise, Butterfly conservation and the British Dragonfly Society have helped by developing their current monitoring programmes to fit the National Park boundary.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our action plan for year two includes

- Trial rapid habitat condition assessment methodologies
- Identifying priority and iconic species for the South Downs
- Developing a fourth species monitoring programme using the National Plant Monitoring scheme

© SDNPA/Anne Purkis



OUTCOME 4: ARTS & HERITAGE CASE STUDY

CONSERVE HERITAGE

Cultural heritage in the National Park is being actively used to inspire new audiences about its special landscapes, and the landscapes, in turn, are continuing to inspire creativity. Its unique value is in helping us to engage with the present, by understanding our human journey.

SUCCESSSES

Over the course of 2021-22, 11 projects were in live delivery. Collectively, the projects and activities supported by SDNPA reached 35,196 participants, delivered through 30 partner organisations, and benefitted from input by over 50 freelance creatives. In addition, new digital assets including podcasts (such as The Full Harvest with Applause Rural Touring), digital interpretation (10 new short films at Cissbury Ring, developed in partnership with the National Trust and Worthing Museum) and Augmented Reality experiences (through seven AR experiences from LYT Productions) at Tide Mills.

CHALLENGES

The continued uncertainties facing cultural heritage organisations, as well as the high demands on time and resource, has continued to require flexibility as we rebuild after the pandemic but also reassess our priorities and principles in light of impacts to our communities and rural economies.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

SDNPA cultural heritage work is delivered wholly through partnership. We benefit from a wide variety of skills, perspectives and opportunities thanks to our partners, and they are also crucial in supporting our mission to address equity and access to countryside for a wider variety of people. The alignment between the DCMS sectors and partners and the strategic priorities is well evidenced through comparison of the Landscape Review (Glover, 2019) and the Arts Council England 10 year strategy, 'Let's Create'.

LOOKING AHEAD

Cultural heritage projects will continue to focus on equity, using its resources to work with priority audiences who have faced the greatest barriers to experiencing and finding belonging in countryside. Creativity and culture present a powerful opportunity for people to find and tell their own stories.

We also have potential to explore the role of cultural heritage in communicating the generational change ahead for landscape in terms of both climate change and our responses to it. Looking back to the deep time changes in the landscape, we can work with communities to explore what new futures for our rural spaces could be through archaeology, art and creative writing.



OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS: ENHANCE

CALL FOR NATURE SITES

In 2021, SDNPA launched an initiative inviting interested landowners, land managers, communities, businesses, and conservation groups to put forward possible sites where new wildlife habitat could be created, contributing to nature recovery in the South Downs National Park.

We were looking to identify potential projects, ranging from well-developed project ideas, through to expressions of interest in putting forward a site to explore further.

The Call for Nature Sites is a pilot approach that we are testing to help deliver our nature recovery ambitions as set out in our **#ReNature** Campaign. It is based upon the concept of the 'call for sites' approach used in planning but adapted to help identify potential sites for nature recovery projects.

The first 2 month 'window for applications' closed in January 2022 with **76** expressions of interest received. Proposals of all sizes and scales have been put forward and SDNPA are now supporting the development of suitable projects, providing specialist advice and help in matching with appropriate funding mechanisms.



© SDNPA

WOODLAND OPPORTUNITY MAPPING

Sussex Nature Partnership, Woodland Trust and South Downs National Park Authority have collaborated to produce a Woodland Opportunity Map for Sussex and the areas of the South Downs National Park in Hampshire. This is a GIS based tool to help farmers, landowners and managers with initial guidance on identifying sites suitable for woodland creation in Sussex and South Downs National Park. It uses a methodology applied in other sensitive landscapes, such as Nidderdale AONB and Yorkshire Dales National Park. It provides a high level indication of suitability which does not include all factors for consideration and so must be followed by scrutiny of a more complete set of information. But it will act as a useful first screening of where opportunities for woodland creation in this area of the south-east are most likely to occur and where extra care may be needed to understand sensitivities of a site during project planning and design.



© SDNPA

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:

Connect

Develop strategies and support or lead strategic overarching partnerships and projects which deliver the second Purpose of National Parks: **to promote understanding and enjoyment and improve health and well-being through volunteering & learning, high quality access management and providing information and events.**

We have continued to promote opportunities for awareness, learning and engagement, seeking to ensure quality access management and accessibility, and supporting the development of sustainable tourism. Progress against some of our key priorities as laid out in the Corporate Plan are summarised below:

OUTCOMES 5-8 IN THE PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020-25.

- Outcome 5 – Outstanding Experiences
- Outcome 6 – Lifelong Learning
- Outcome 7 – Health & Wellbeing
- Outcome 8 – Creating Custodians

Each Outcome will be illustrated with a case study in the following pages.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO IN OUR CORPORATE PLAN	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Deliver the Families Outreach Project using the John Muir Award (JMA)	This was a highly successful and inspirational two-year project. We had set out to partner with 10 community organisations over the two years, engaging with 60 families who would achieve their Family John Muir Awards. Instead, due to COVID-19 and the measures we put in place, we engaged with families and organisations in a very different way. Families and individuals achieved 104 John Muir Awards, and 60 families experienced in person sessions. We also engaged with 11 community organisations.
Link into social prescribing and place based health networks to increase use of the National Park for health and well-being (H&WB) via social prescribing	The Sussex Local Nature Partnership steering meeting in March focused on working collaboratively on a joined up approach to developing access to green open spaces for health, linked to the development of Local Nature recovery strategies. We want to ensure the community voice is heard alongside health and environmental NGOs and Local Government. Initial discussions with the Seven Sisters Manager have identified a location for Health and Wellbeing activities to take place.
Target socially deprived communities to enable schools to access outside learning opportunities via the South Downs Travel Grant	The South Downs National Park Travel Grant Scheme targets schools with over 10% of students on Free School Meals in our most deprived urban communities around the National Park and aims to reduce the main barrier to outdoor learning identified by teachers in our schools survey; the cost of transport. The Travel Grant enables these schools to have subsidised coach travel to visit one of over 100 outdoor learning providers on the South Downs National Park Learning Map and supports our network approach to connecting schools and learning providers. For 2021/22 the grant fund was £20,000 . This enabled 3,866 students from 65 schools to benefit from Learning Outside the Classroom in the SDNP.

OUTCOME 5: OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCES

CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE ACCESS

The resumption of access 'works on the ground' in 2021/22 has seen some notable successes and a particular challenge.

SUCCESSSES

In October 2021, after delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, construction works was able to commence on Egrets Way Phase 5 at Riverside Park, Newhaven. A total of 680m of route was completed during the year.

Enabling works took place in preparation for the next phase of the Centurion Way shared use path extension and further design work and ecology surveys were commissioned for Egrets Way phase 6.

A new boardwalk bridge at Iping Common forms part of a new Serpent Trail 'Snakelet' and 'Miles without Stiles' route. The bridge enables walkers and mobility scooters to avoid a particularly boggy area of path.

Improved and more accessible approach ramp to the iconic Alfriston White Bridge, which forms part of the South Downs Way, was completed. This replaced old retaining walls, replaced the handrails and created new mounting and dismounting areas, passing places and waiting areas.

The establishment works to create the approved route of the new England Coast Path National Trail, through the South Downs National Park, was completed with over 30 new signs installed and over 600metres of new surface improvements.

CHALLENGES

The discovery of Ash Dieback in trees along the Centurion Way led to the temporary closure of 1.2km of route on public safety grounds. Following ecological surveys, work to remove infected trees took place in autumn 2021. The popularity of the Centurion Way as a recreational route was reflected in the high volume of calls and emails from the general public enquiring about its reopening. Frustration at the five month closure

was also evidenced by trespass and repeated damage to security fencing on a number of occasions.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

As members of the South Downs Way National Trail Partnership, Hampshire County Council is leading on design and planning work for the new South Downs Way Chilcomb link, improving safety and connectivity for cyclists and horse riders alongside the A31 between the M3 and Chilcomb.

In partnership with Brighton and Hove County Council and East Sussex County Council, the Falmer to Woodingdean path was given a face-lift with the installation of new surfacing. The new smoother and wider surface means it is now accessible for all, including wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Our support for Community Rail Partnerships continued this year with opportunities to promote visits by sustainable transport through artwork and interpretation at Bishopstone and Amberley stations and at bus stops near Haslemere station.

LOOKING AHEAD

- Completion of Egrets Way Phase 5
- Commencement of Egrets Way Phase 6
- Work begins on a new section of Centurion Way at the former Railway Station, Singleton
- Horse riders and cyclists using the South Downs Way at Chilcomb will benefit from a new link.



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OUTCOME 6: LIFELONG LEARNING CASE STUDY

LEARNING, OUTREACH AND VOLUNTEERING

Generation Green was a 16-month project connecting young people to nature and increasing opportunities for pathways to green employment. It was the first project delivered by the Access Unlimited coalition, funded through the Green Recovery Fund.

The project engaged young people aged 8-25 that are traditionally less likely (due to social, economic and cultural factors) to connect with nature, or engage with nature conservation activities.

The SDNPA teamed up with So Sussex, Clarion Housing and Sussex Clubs for Young People to deliver nature based discovery days for schools and youth groups including residential experiences enabling young people to get a taste of a night under the stars in the SDNP.

SUCCESSSES

- **29** online teacher training sessions were delivered by learning providers within the SDNP **Learning Network** providing nature connection training for over 880 teachers
- **25** Discovery Day educational sessions for schools were delivered by So Sussex reaching a total of 330 pupils
- **3** residential experiences for schools were delivered by So Sussex at YHA Truleigh Hill and YHA South Downs
- **4** South Downs Youth Action residential visits took place including a Youth Ambassador training weekend, a 5-night residential for the Lithuanian Society South Coast and two youth group visits in collaboration with Clarion Housing partners in London. These residential experiences benefitted 130 young people.

CHALLENGES

Covid continued to present challenges to group visits and this led to some cancellations and postponements. Fortunately, we were able to amend booking dates to ensure that visits took place and the project achieved all of its engagement targets.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Generation Green was a partnership between SDNPA, YHA, So Sussex, Clarion Housing and Sussex Clubs for Young People, bringing together a wide range of expertise in creating inspiring residencials, nature connection and youth engagement. In addition, we worked collaboratively across the wider SDNP Learning Network to:

- Deliver the online teacher training programme
- Deliver a programme of School Visit Grants enabling 21 schools to access outdoor education within the SDNP

LOOKING AHEAD

We are working with the Access Unlimited consortium to explore future funding, which will build on the pilot project successes and extend the opportunities to connect young people with nature and pathways to green employment.



OUTCOME 7: HEALTH & WELLBEING CASE STUDY

HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

We want to empower new audiences, within and in a 10km radius of the National Park, to experience the National Park through a variety of ways; walking, arts, cycling, connecting to nature. In 2021-22 we delivered year one of our Health and well-being strategy.

SUCCESSES

'A sense of nature' a programme of Mindful Walks, with Chichester Social Prescribers and Pulborough GP surgery, were delivered to participants of Pulborough. Connecting people to their local green spaces, each other and nature to support their health and wellbeing.

"It has made me realise I need to slow down in life and take more time for myself and that it is ok to say no to others"

Timescape, a partnership between Artscape, Weald and Downland Living Museum and Butser Ancient Farm launched in July. This explored the relationship between people, place and cultural heritage. Participant's experiencing a range of health conditions and from areas of deprivation created artefacts using traditional artisan techniques.

"The only time I go out each week is to come to Timescape, where I can meet people, be in a beautiful location and learn and create, how lucky am I?"

We undertook research to understand where green social prescribing was happening in the National Park and the barriers for providers and social prescribers to making better use of it to support people.

CHALLENGES

Our target audiences continued to experience the impact of Covid during 2021-22. Social isolation and loneliness, complex physical and mental health needs meant it was challenging for some to engage. NHS colleagues were diverted to support vaccination programmes. Where this involved social prescribers, it meant that they were unable to maintain levels of engagement.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Our key partners were; National Academy of Social Prescribing, Sussex Local Nature Partnership, Public Health Teams, the voluntary sector and cultural heritage organisations.

LOOKING AHEAD

During 2022-23 we will develop a grant scheme to help community transport organisations to develop befriending services to support people to access activities in the National Park. We will pilot projects focussing on loneliness and social isolation. We will connect activity providers to places in the National Park that they can deliver green social prescribing from. Projects which address health inequalities are our priority.



OUTCOME 8: CREATING CUSTODIANS CASE STUDY

SOUTH DOWNS YOUTH ACTION

South Downs Youth Action (SDYA) is a flexible programme of youth volunteering, designed to create exciting new opportunities for young people to get involved in practical action to support the SDNP. It includes:

South Downs Youth Action days – dynamic, fun, flexible and varied volunteering activities supporting nature recovery and climate action. Sessions are open to both individuals and youth groups.

South Downs Youth Ambassadors – a volunteer role for 16-25 year olds to promote youth voice, influence policy and encourage other young people to connect with the SDNP

Youth Action Fund – offers grants of £100-£1000 to organisations supporting young people to take positive social and environmental action to support the SDNP. Funded through the SDNP Trust and Clarion Housing/#iwillfornature.

SUCCESSES

- **20** SDYA day events held from July – November 2021 engaging a total of 248 young people
- The first ever SDNP Youth Ambassador training weekend held on 2-3 October at YHA South Downs
- **3** Youth Ambassadors attended the inaugural NPUK Youth Voice conference in the Peak District in March
- The Youth Action Fund supported 13 organisations across the SDNP including a SDNP discovery project with young refugees and asylum seekers, young people with complex needs taking part in heathland conservation, a youth group litter picking by bike, a Space to Breathe summer camp for girls with mental health challenges and young people with learning disabilities creating Great Outdoor films celebrating inclusive access

CHALLENGES

- Sign-up by individuals to SDYA day events remained lower than anticipated this year, potentially due to the ongoing impact of Covid infections. As a result we have widened our communication channels to better promote and recruit to these opportunities
- Reaching young people from under-served communities is an ongoing challenge, however, the strong partnerships with community based organisations such as Clarion Housing is actively addressing this and having a positive impact on engagement

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

SDYA days were delivered with a wide range of partners including Action for Conservation, Adur Outdoors, Brighton University, Buzz Active, Midhurst Green Volunteers, Selborne and Winchester Farm Cluster, Sussex Clubs for Young People, Sussex Wildlife Trust and YHA.

LOOKING AHEAD

- 10 further **South Downs Youth Action** days are planned for Spring and Summer 2022.
- The SDNP Youth Ambassadors have planned an exciting programme of activity and will continue to champion youth voice across the SDNP and further afield!



OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS: CONNECT

WE SEE YOU NOW: SEVEN SISTERS WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE

Alinah Azadeh is a writer, artist and cultural activist and the first Writer-in-Residence for Seven Sisters Country Park and the wider Sussex Heritage Coast.

She is also creative lead on We See You Now (WSYN) a landscape and literature project commissioned by the South Downs National Park Authority and funded by SDNPA and Arts Council England. The project is dedicated to exploring diverse voices and connections to this iconic coastal area, through new stories and poetry, across digital, live and print platforms.

Project highlights include:

We See You Now (Prologue): The original audio story by Alinah Azadeh inspired by a walk from Birling Gap towards Cuckmere, which led to the We See You Now project.

- The Hidden Valley: Performed as part of BBC 3 The Essay 'Into the Wild' season, reflecting a walk from the edge of the South Downs to the sea.
- The Colour of Chalk: A Podcast series featuring walk and talk 'in conversation' pieces with writers, activists and ecologists.



© Jeff Travis

LYT PRODUCTIONS AT TIDE MILLS

This inclusive, community focused project brought Tide Mills to life in September 2021. Despite suffering the impacts of the pandemic, LYT Productions with support from a wide network of partners and funders, including SDNPA, delivered a phenomenal creative immersive experience at Tide Mills in Newhaven, a site that had once been a village, now abandoned and returning to nature. An estimated 25,000 people attended the Celebration Week, and the project worked with 13 schools, three colleges, 10 community groups and over 250 people volunteered. The site came alive thanks to performances by actors and musicians, heritage crafts people and artworks inspired by the history of the site.

"The project was just magical, I am still buzzing from being submerged in the stories, singing, performance, art and pizza bread! My 6 year old said it was the best night of her life!"

Visitor to Celebration Week



© SDNPA/Jan Knowlson

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:

Thrive

Develop strategies and support or lead strategic overarching partnerships and projects which deliver the Duty of National Parks: **to build sustainable communities which are engaged and shaping their environment and supporting sustainable businesses and tourism.**

We are continuing to provide information and support to help communities better understand their environment and the impact of their actions on it, as well as making sure they are engaged in the design and development of their local surroundings. We are supporting the growth of sustainable local businesses. Progress against some of our key priorities as laid out in the Corporate Plan is summarised below update:

OUTCOMES 9 AND 10 IN THE PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020-25.

- Outcome 9 – Great Places to Live
- Outcome 10 – Great Places to Work

Each Outcome will be illustrated with a case study in the following pages.

WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO IN OUR CORPORATE PLAN	WHAT WE HAVE DONE
Participate in the Environmental Land Management (ELM) National Pilot	Details of the Defra Landscape Recovery Pilot were announced in January 2022. The Arun to Adur Farmers Group were keen to look at the possibilities, and we met with them and the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) in February. They decided that direct participation in the pilot was not appropriate, but they would look to participate in applications along the Arun (SDNPA led) and Adur (Knepp Estate led). The Local Nature Recovery Pilot will be launched later in 2022 with several of the farmer groups seeing this as their opportunity to be involved.
Create a Business Network for likeminded local economic and social enterprise partners who positively contribute to the National Park	There are 21 businesses assisting with the development of the business community in the capacity of a business focus group. The design and mechanics of the business network platform are now 95% complete. The platform has been tested in a real-time environment with the 20 businesses that make up the Business Focus Group (BFG) and their feedback has informed the last stages of the development. The Platform is ready for launch and Go Live mid-2022.
Effectively and efficiently operate all processes and systems for incoming and outgoing monies related to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 legal agreements	During 2021/22 we collected £161,962.17 and spent £509,742.39. S106 monies helping to deliver ecological mitigation in Bordon, sports pavilion refurb in Petworth, tree and hedgerow planting and provision of a car club in Lewes. Over 400 projects are being assessed for inclusion on the 2022 IBP (i.e. spending of 2021/22 CIL Receipts). In 2021/22 we gave £818,809 to different projects across the Park and £509,054.57 directly to Parish/Town Councils. The CIL collected in 2021/22 was £2,589,066.17. CIL projects funded in 2021/22 include: play and sports equipment in Stedham and Iping, a new sports pavilion in Fernhurst, Natural Flood Management projects in Liss, and new outdoor education facilities at a school in Droxford.

OUTCOME 9: GREAT PLACES TO LIVE CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

This year saw two significant achievements from a planning perspective. Firstly, a milestone was reached as the final piece in the housing strategy for the National Park was completed after a community voted overwhelmingly for its neighbourhood plan.

The referendum at Twyford, in Hampshire, marked the final step in the process of completing the housing allocations set out in the South Downs Local Plan.

The award-winning Local Plan was formally adopted in 2019, but several Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) still needed to be completed and voted on by the community.

Meanwhile, more than £1.37m of new funding was made available to help local communities via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

SUCCESSSES

The referendum on the Twyford Neighbourhood Development Plan saw 349 Yes votes and 70 No votes (83% to 17%). It means 40 NDPs are now incorporated into the Local Plan for the National Park – a process that started in 2014.

More than £1.37m benefitted almost 30 community schemes across Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex. As well as the £1.37m, 22 parish or town councils across the National Park took a share of just over £256,000 to support grassroots projects in their area.

Among the inspiring projects were a mix of initiatives to help better connect urban areas to the countryside, including new Miles Without Stiles routes in Hampshire. Over 130 miles of stile-free routes will be created around Winchester and from Hambledon to Rowlands Castle.

In West Sussex, funding will help to create the first phase of a shared-use traffic-free path connecting the south of Midhurst to the town centre.

In East Sussex, a cash injection will help pay for Phase 6 of Egrets Way, connecting Rise Farm to Rodmell in the beautiful Ouse Valley.

The people of Fernhurst will also benefit from a modernised and expanded sports pavilion, while new play equipment will be installed at Lavant and Liss.

CHALLENGES

The CIL initiative requires significant communication and administration with local community groups and parishes, while the local referenda require considerable planning in advance and close liaison with parish councils to effectively communicate the process.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Both these initiatives worked in partnership with local communities, parish councils and local and county authorities. We would thank each and every person who has contributed and given their time to the Neighbourhood Development Plans. These adopted plans are a powerful way of local people helping to shape where and what development happens in their communities.

LOOKING AHEAD

This substantial CIL funding underlines the tremendous value of good planning and showcases the benefits that flow from high-quality development in a protected landscape such as the South Downs.



OUTCOME 10: GREAT PLACES TO WORK CASE STUDY

RURAL ECONOMY AND TOURISM

Enterprises in the South Downs have a crucial role to play in delivering on our National Park Purposes and achieving our Corporate Priorities. Owning the majority of land designated as a protected landscape, upwards of 80%, they are the custodians of the landscape and key delivery partner.

The diverse enterprises in the South Downs contribute to the National Park in numerous ways, whether through producing fabulous food and drink, providing great places to stay, making space for nature or showcasing incredible heritage.

SUCCESSES

- The creation of Our South Downs with a mission to “Promote stronger, shorter rural supply chains and support businesses in their pursuit of sustainability”.
- 609 businesses now subscribed to quarterly Enterprise Newsletter
- 21 businesses who sit on our Business Focus Group helping to shape our many initiatives including Our South Downs and Green South Downs.
- The continued development of Green South Downs (the bespoke sustainability accreditation programme for South Downs businesses) in partnership with Green Tourism.
- Four Estates have progressed to the later stages of Whole Estate Plan (WEP) endorsement.
- Securing £65K funding from Coast to Capital LEP to create a Natural Capital Economic Case.
- Jointly securing £705K from UK Community Renewal Fund towards developing investment plans for a sustainable visitor economy.
- Leading on UK National Parks Sustainable Tourism Officer (STO) Group and National Park Experiences Steering Group.



- Hosted UK STO site visits attended by 9 National Parks (March 2022), and coordinating the development of the regenerative tourism paper and National Park Experiences legacy.

CHALLENGES

The economic fallout from the pandemic coupled with the effects of Brexit on our land-based sector and more generally the continued issues around logistics, labour shortages, price fluctuations, supply chain problems and fuel prices have contributed to a fragile state for the UK economy, a state echoed in the South East Region.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

- Rural West Sussex Partnership
- Sussex Modern
- UKCRF Delivery Group
- National Park Experience Collection Steering Group
- UK National Park Sustainable Tourism Officers Group
- Sussex Visitor Economy Advisory Group
- West Sussex Economy Managers Group

LOOKING AHEAD

As we move into the next financial year, our focus will:

- Continue to enhance the Our South Downs platform
- Complete and launch Green South Downs
- Continue to collaborate with partners to explore the Natural Capital (Economic Case) and to test the Revolving Fund concept.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND CASE STUDY

THE BEES AND SEAS PROJECT, WORTHING

'We are Food Pioneers' Community Interest Company (CIC) seeks to support vulnerable groups living in food poverty.

In 2021, the Bees & Seas Project connected communities across land and sea to re-purpose a derelict urban council yard in Worthing awarded by the Council, into a buzzing pollinator hub extending habitat links to Dankton Barnyard in Sompting. Working with 'The Friends of Brooklands Park', 'Breathing Spaces' and 'Creative Waves', the project created an ecological, natural asset for the community as well as delivered a programme of activities and training centred on pollinators.

The Sustainable Communities Fund was pleased to award a grant of £7,500 towards the project. This was matched by over £10,000 in material donations, local business sponsorship and grants from organisations such as Worthing Community Chest, Peoples Postcode Lottery Trust, Sussex Community Foundation and Sussex Police. The project received a great deal of in-kind support through the donation of materials as well as professional expertise from Adur and Worthing Council Rangers.

Despite the challenges of project delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Brooklands Park site now has a series of native habitat gardens. This includes a vegetated shingle garden 'stepping stone' from the sea, a chalk grassland 'stepping stone' garden to the Downs and a range of native wood, hedge, meadow plants and trees to give hungry pollinators a sanctuary on their journey through the landscape.

A natural log tree hive installed at Dankton Barnyard was swiftly colonised by wild bees following installation. Two shipping containers have been vibrantly painted with locally themed artwork and provide educational space and storage.

The success of match funding enabled the activity programme to be extended to deliver 42 sessions at a Bees & Seas event in Brooklands Park from 20th – 23rd Aug 2021. Over 2,400 people attended, volunteered or participated across the three days. Local schools were engaged and three groups of students from Lancing College were given projects to manage and present at the event. Bee keeper and pollinator training was delivered for 20 adults and six young people.

The CIC has since re-branded as We are Pollinator Pioneers and is planning a second phase to clear and extend the site for more hives. A fence and hawthorn perimeter will add to security as well as contribute more pollinator-friendly planting. The intention is to hold educational workshops annually.



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© SDNPA



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OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS: THRIVE

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The SDNPA is able to offer Affordable Housing Grants to not for profit organisations who are looking to provide affordable housing to be held in perpetuity, this ensures the retention of affordable homes for future generations. Community Land Trusts (CLT's) are one of many providers of affordable housing, and have a particular focus on providing homes for local people. This enables families to stay within their community long term. By working alongside CLT's, in conjunction with Housing Hubs, the SDNPA is well placed to support the provision of affordable housing across the whole of the National Park.

Midhurst Community Land Trust initially identified an opportunity to purchase two new homes in the centre of Midhurst and consequently sought advice from the SDNPA in order to progress and inform their project. By engaging in discussions with the Authority at an early stage the CLT were able to check and review the design and sustainability criteria for the dwellings as well as inform their funding strategy. This early engagement ensured the homes for the CLT were secured through a S106 agreement. Following the submission of an Affordable Housing Grant application to the SDNPA, funding totalling £60,000 was transferred to MCLT upon practical completion in May 2021, with the new residents moving into the dwellings in early June 2021. The Affordable Housing Grant secured by the CLT, along with other funding, resulted in a reduction of rental levels to 70% of market rates as well as enabling them to offer in-perpetuity leases.



© SDNPA

FARMING IN A PROTECTED LANDSCAPE (FiPL)

Farming is going through a significant period of uncertainty and change as we transition from the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to a new agricultural support system Environmental Land Management (ELM).

As a result, the Government developed an Agricultural Transition Plan to provide details on the changes taking place and the development of new schemes. The Farming in Protected Landscape Programme (FiPL), a three year programme (from July 2021 to March 2024), forms parts of the Agricultural Transition Plan (ATP).

FiPL is open to all farmers and land managers within protected landscapes. They can apply for funding to carry out projects that meet one or more of the FiPL programme outcomes (Climate, Nature, People and Place) and support delivery of their Protected Landscape's management plan.

Within the South Downs National Park, FiPL is being delivered by the Authority's Farming Team. A Local Assessment Panel, comprising predominately of farmers, was developed to consider and decide on applications for projects above £5,000.

For 2021/22, 72 projects, from 54 applications, have been supported through £629,052 of FiPL funding within the South Downs National Park. This equates to supporting approx. 41,415ha of land.



© 2020 vision/Guy Edwardes

ON THE GROUND AND GRASSROOTS PROJECTS

Relationships are fostered and developed daily between the National Park Authority and the local councils, with Officers attending AGMs, special meetings and workshops with the 176 Town and Parish councils across the National Park. Together numerous projects are initiated every year 'on the ground'. Here are just a few highlights from 2021/22:

BUTTERFLY BANK

A thousand plug plants have gone into the ground at Seaford College, near Petworth, to create a south-facing "butterfly bank" that Rangers hope will be teeming with life by the summer.

Around 30 children rolled up their sleeves to help plant a variety of specially-chosen plants and wildflowers creating a new wildlife corridor. The plants, such as vipers bugloss, agrimony and birdsfoot trefoil, will provide much-needed food for caterpillars that will later transform into butterflies and moths.

It's hoped the butterfly bank will support a large variety of species, including the common blue, marbled white, green hairstreak, and rarer species, such as the grizzled skipper, Duke of Burgundy and small blue.

The planting comes after rangers helped the school transform an old waste area, creating a new bank that replicates the chalky habitat on the South Downs that attracts butterflies.



© Neil Hulme

ENABLE ABILITY – DEAD HEDGING

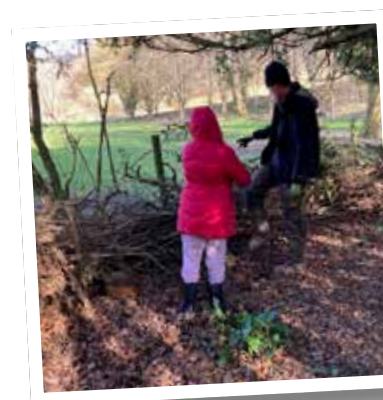
Based in Portsmouth, Enable Ability are a really inspirational charity for young people with disabilities. Altogether they provide for approximately 500 children and adults via a growing number of different services.

The Western Area Rangers, supported by SDNPA Outreach and Volunteering staff, were keen to set up a volunteering programme to help young people with disabilities develop life skills, confidence and gain some work experience.

At the beginning of March, the Western Rangers and SDNPA staff, ran their first taster session – dead hedging at Queen Elizabeth Country Park. This is a common technique using off-cuts from trees to create a natural fence. The group also took part in tree surveying helping to inform Hampshire County Council's tree species records.

As many of the group can get very anxious before they go anywhere new, the Western Area Rangers created a video at the site to show the group in advance what they would be doing.

The day was a resounding success and an incredibly rewarding experience for all involved.



© SDNPA

SERPENT TRAIL RELAUNCH

The Serpent Trail is a 65-mile long path, snaking back and forth along the ridges between Haslemere and Petersfield, and linking several areas of rare lowland heathland habitat within the National Park.

In May 2021, SDNPA 'relaunched' the Serpent Trail virtually via social media after a series of improvements were made to the existing Trail. One of the most significant updates has been the waymarkers, to help improve navigation along the Trail. There are now two colours of marker – a purple one for the "tail route" starting at Haslemere and ending at Petersfield, and a green one for the "head route", from Petersfield to Haslemere. The Wealden Heath ranger team have worked extremely hard to replace over a thousand old markers, including where the Trail has been re-routed to reduce the amount of time on roads. The Serpent Trail logo has also been redesigned.

A lot of effort has also gone into a fabulous revamp of the Serpent Trail Guide. The Trail is now split into eleven stages, with updated maps, details of public transport and descriptions of the Trail itself. There is also a Visitor's Guide section with lots of information on the wildlife, history and cultural aspects of the Trail. The new Guide is available online now at southdowns.gov.uk/get-active/on-foot/serpent-trail

Printed booklets are also available from the South Downs Centre reception in Midhurst.



© SDNPA/Olivia French

SHIFTING THE GAZE

In 2021, **Writing Our Legacy** offered 15 bursaries of £500 each as part of 'Shifting the Gaze' – a project working with Black, Asian and ethnically diverse established and emerging writers from across the South East. The bursaries allowed the writers to do a three-month research and development project over winter with a focus on the landscape of the South Downs National Park. In 2022, the talented wordsmiths will be using their creative flair to produce prose, poetry and other chronicles.

The programme is funded by South Downs National Park Authority in association with New Writing South.

SEAFORD HEAD SAM

As delegates arrived in Glasgow for COP26 in November, a series of drones flew over Seaford Head, a coastal Local Nature Reserve in East Sussex. This

marked the start of a new project delivered in partnership with Historic England, Archaeology South East (University College London), Seaford Town Council and SDNPA. Seaford Head is home to a Scheduled Monument, dominated by an Iron Age Hillfort. It was last subject to archaeological attention in the 1870s, when the noted Victorian archaeologist, Augustus Lane Fox (later known as Augustus Pitt-Rivers) visited the site. Lane Fox noted that "at least one half of this camp [has been lost] by the erosion of the sea."



© Deb Pople

Up until a few years ago, the monument would have appeared much as it had to Lane Fox, but since 2015, intensified weather events have accelerated cliff losses, with major sections of the ancient monument and its wider landscape setting having been lost. The rate of accelerated loss, a cause for concern, has however resulted in the appearance of previously unrecorded archaeological features visible in the cliff's chalk profile.

A network of partners came together, securing funding (totalling just over £33,000) for a systematic survey of the Scheduled Monument at Seaford Head. This survey has built on the initial body of work by Lane-Fox in the 19th century and will not only help us to understand the site better and identify areas for further research, but will take the first steps towards the only viable mitigation option ahead for a site of this kind, which is preservation by record – where research and captured knowledge essentially acts as a proxy for the physical site itself, existing beyond the lifespan of the monument or site.



SHORT STORY COMPETITION

This year the South Downs National Park Authority hosted a story writing competition for children and teenagers, in partnership with the MADhurst Festival 2021.

More than 140 young people across three age categories let their imaginations run wild as they wrote intriguing short stories inspired by the South Downs National Park. The winning stories were brought vividly to life through the story-telling powers of actor Hugh Bonneville, who read the stories aloud for a film recording which has been published on the SDNPA website.

The prize-giving ceremony took place at Midhurst Town Council Street Party, which is part of the MADhurst 2021 Festival. Prizes included a goodie bag of items donated by the South Downs National Park Authority and book tokens purchased jointly by MADhurst and the National Park.



© SDNPA

TREES FOR THE DOWNS

Wild Heart Hill family owned campsite near Findon, West Sussex teamed up with the South Downs National Park Authority to plant 1500 trees as part of the Trees for the Downs programme.

Native trees were chosen specifically to enhance the wildlife, increase species diversity and help mitigate climate change.



© Wild Heart Hill

Wild Heart Hill Camp ran five community tree planting events during the Spring as a way of engaging local people with nature. Local children were tasked with painting the tree tubes that will protect the trees from resident deer and rabbits. This helped to connect with a wider audience, highlight the wildlife that will benefit from the trees and create an engaging and thought-provoking artistic trail.

In addition to the native trees, an avenue of disease resistant elms were planted in March 2022 in honour of the Queens Jubilee, helped by children from Reflections Small School.



HOW THE AUTHORITY IS FUNDED

The main source of funding, for all National Park Authorities, is a **National Park Grant from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)**. In 2021-22 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) received a grant totalling around **£10.5 million**. This is the second year where a fixed cash settlement was received.

As the Planning Authority for the National Park, a significant part of our budget is dedicated to processing and determining planning applications for development. In 2021-22 the SDNPA received income of just over **£3.4 million** through planning activities (including Community Infrastructure Levy). This is an increase of 26% compared to 2020-21.

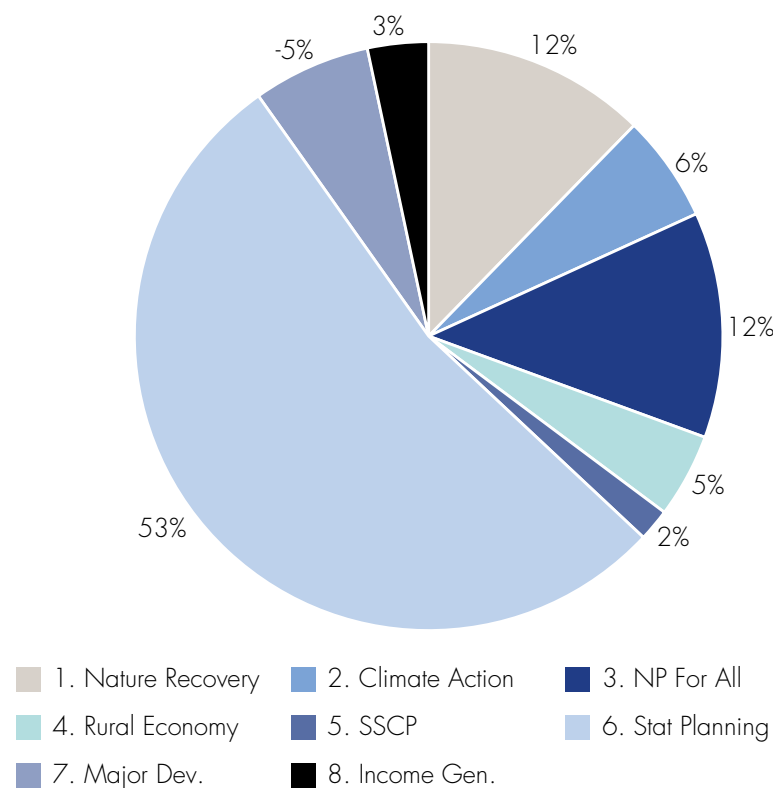
The SDNPA was also successful in attracting significant funding for projects to deliver the Partnership Management Plan. During 2021-22 the SDNPA received **£2.0 million** of income through specific grants and contributions in addition to funds secured by other partners to deliver work in the National Park. An increase of 25% on the previous year.

In total the income received by the SDNPA in 2021-22 was **£17.6 million**, compared to £14.9 million in 2020-21.

HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT

As well as the statutory duty to act as planning authority for the National Park, and the need to provide proper governance by supporting the roles of Members, Audits etc., the SDNPA spends the funds it has available in pursuit of the purposes and duty. The allocation of how those funds are spent is illustrated in the following chart:

Provisional Outturn 2021/22 against Corporate Plan Priorities



THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK VISION

At the creation of the National Park Authority we set an ambitious vision for the South Downs National Park. By 2050:

- the iconic English lowland landscapes and heritage will have been conserved and greatly enhanced. These inspirational and distinctive places, where people live, work, farm and relax, are adapting well to the impacts of climate change and other pressures; people will understand, value, and look after the vital natural services that the National Park provides. Large areas of high-quality and well-managed habitat will form a network supporting wildlife throughout the landscape;
- opportunities will exist for everyone to discover, enjoy, understand and value the National Park and its special qualities. The relationship between people and landscape will enhance their lives and inspire them to become actively involved in caring for it and using its resources more responsibly;
- its special qualities will underpin the economic and social well-being of the communities in and around it, which will be more self-sustaining and empowered to shape their own future. Its villages and market towns will be thriving centres for residents, visitors and businesses and supporting the wider rural community;
- successful farming, forestry, tourism and other business activities within the National Park will actively contribute to, and derive economic benefit from, its unique identity and special qualities.

This document demonstrates that we are well on track to achieve our vision for the National Park. For more information on how we and our partners are delivering this vision please have a look at the following documents:

- **Partnership Management Plan 2020–2025**
- **Corporate Plan 2020–2025 (Year 2 Action Plan – 2021–22)**
- **Corporate Plan 2020–2025 (Year 3 Action Plan – 2022–23)**



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

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For your guide to everything there is to
see and do in the National Park visit
southdowns.gov.uk/discovery-map