

Report to **Policy & Resources Committee**
Date **20 July 2023**
By **Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager**
Title of Report **Annual Review of Planning Performance: Financial Year 2022/23**
Note

Recommendation: Committee is recommended to

- 1. Receive and note the Annual Review of Planning Performance.**
 - 2. Consider whether it wishes to make any recommendations to Officers relating to performance arising from the report.**
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I. Introduction

- I.1 Planning is one of the strongest tools we have for furthering the National Park's statutory purposes and duty as well as being an important statutory function of the Authority. Planning also plays an important part in helping deliver the vision, objectives and outcomes of the National Park's Partnership Management Plan (PMP).
- I.2 The SDNPA is one of the largest planning authorities in the country, both geographically and in terms of the number of applications and other related matters dealt with. Consequently the Authority's Planning Directorate, together with our five host authorities, interacts with many thousands of people a year and this contact may be an individual's only contact with the Authority.
- I.3 Whilst a summary of all appeal decisions is reported to Planning Committee on a quarterly basis it is Policy and Resources Committee that has wider oversight of the Authority's planning performance. This report sets out, in a presentation at Appendix I, an overview of planning performance in the financial year 2022/23. Information is provided on:
 - i) Selected Case Studies as examples of delivery of the Partnership Management Plan
 - ii) Overall Workload
 - iii) Section 101 agreements
 - iv) Validation
 - v) Speed of decision making
 - vi) Appeals
 - vii) Enforcement
 - viii) Ensuring quality
 - ix) Current performance focus
 - x) Challenges

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Planning performance, as an Authority and within that of the five host authorities, is subject to regular performance management with performance being consistently monitored, evaluated and reported on a wide variety of metrics. Planning performance is also discussed with the host authorities at a senior officer level, as well as at meetings the Authority Chair and Chief Executive have with their counterparts at the host authorities. It is also rigorously monitored by central Government through quarterly 'statistical returns'.
- 2.2 Overall planning performance continues to be good and all government targets have been met. New Section 101 agency agreements with our host authorities came into effect on 1 October 2022 and these incorporate more ambitious targets in terms of speed of decision making.
- 2.3 Appeal performance was very good in the financial year whilst our Enforcement teams have continued to deal with a high number of complaints and correspondence about alleged breaches across the Park.
- 2.4 As always - and as the attached presentation illustrates - there is always room for improvement including addressing variations in host authority performance. The value of these arrangements should not however be underestimated and Lewes District Council who have struggled for some time have improved markedly over the year.
- 2.5 Moving forward, dealing with the current level of vacancies in the SDNPA planning team will be key. We are attempting to fill all vacant posts within the Planning Department and have made some alterations to make posts more attractive to the market. However, recruiting experienced planners appears to be becoming more difficult, not only locally but nationally and in the private as well as the public sector. Whilst the fundamentals of the Authority's Planning function are sound (including an award winning Local Plan and commendation just last month for a particular scheme from the Royal Town Planning Institute), and whilst the medium term outlook is good, it is fair to say that the short term outlook is challenging.
- 2.6 Finally, the summary at Appendix I provides an overview of planning performance but it is important to note that each year the Authority also produces an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) each December. The AMR reports on a number of planning documents such as the South Downs Local Plan, neighbourhood development plans and waste and minerals plans. It considers the performance of policies across the National Park, and trends against various indicators including those directly affected by the planning process as well as those more indirectly affected.
- 2.7 The AMR includes all indicators which are monitored along with any relevant targets, and which Local Plan policy each indicator relates to. An output is set out for each indicator followed by a brief commentary highlighting the key findings of the output and relating these back to local and Government policies.

3. Planning Newsletter

- 3.1 Since Autumn 2017 the Authority has produced a newsletter three times a year covering key planning news. The newsletter also showcases some of the Authority's key achievements in planning and the distribution list has grown to over 1,400 people. The last newsletter, from Spring 2023, is included for reference at Appendix 2.

4. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No further decisions required. Another update on planning performance will be presented to Policy and Resources Committee in 2024.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	Not directly – the delivery of planning services are resourced from the Authority's core budget and income brought in from Planning.

How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Performance management is established practice for ensuring value for money.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None, but note there is social value to the partnership arrangements
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	As this is a monitoring report there are no direct equality considerations arising out of this report. The Planning system is delivered in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Any individual projects such as the Local Plan also go through the Authority's internal Equality Diversity and Inclusion assessment
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None arising directly. The Planning function is undertaken in accordance with all appropriate data protection requirements.
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy: I,	None directly arising from this monitoring report.

5. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 5.1 There are risks to the Authority and the National Park if the Planning system is not operating efficiently or effectively. However, there are limited risks arising from this report itself.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Variation in host authority performance overall may be subject to adverse media comment	Medium	Low	Officers monitor performance regularly and addressing performance variations is discussed, with actions agreed, at senior officer level. An annual update on planning performance to Members is an important part of performance monitoring and local government openness.

Mike Hughes**South Downs National Park Authority**

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Appendices 1. Presentation – Annual Review of Planning Performance – Financial Year 2022/23

2. SDNPA Planning Newsletter, Spring 2023

SDNPA Consultees Chief Executive; Director of Planning; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services

External Consultees None

Background Documents Web links:

SDNPA Annual Monitoring Reports:

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/authority-monitoring-reports/>

Annual Review of Planning Performance - Financial Year 2022/23

Policy and Resources Committee – 20th July, 2023



Contents

- Case Studies – Delivery of Partnership Management Plan
- Overall Workload
- Section 101 agreements
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- Challenges



Partnership Management Plan (PMP)

- The SDNPA PMP 2020-2025 is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications
- Used proportionally and appropriately – unlikely to be key issue in a householder extension
- In addition to the PMP Vision and 10 Outcomes the SDNPA PMP identifies 5 Major Issues:
 - Climate Emergency
 - Economy
 - Wellbeing
 - Biodiversity
 - New Housing and Infrastructure
- Case Studies of planning permissions issued in 2022/23 are provided showing how the Authority's planning function helps deliver the PMP (and the Authority's Corporate Plan)



Case Studies (decisions from 2022/23)

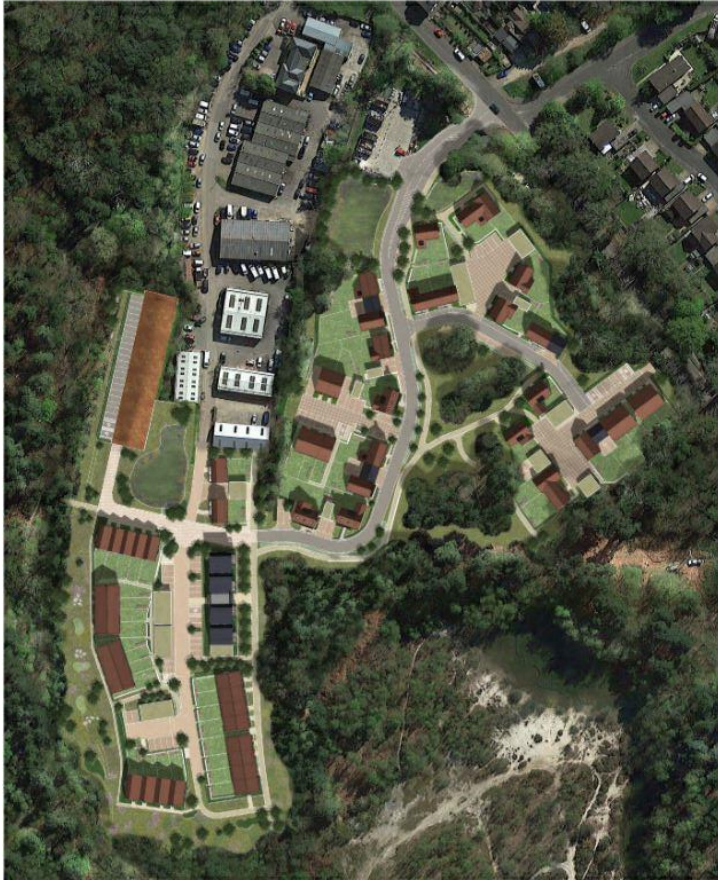


The Climate Emergency

Brickworks, Midhurst

- 69 dwellings, 36% affordable
- 40% reduction in CO₂ emissions
- 8 Passive Houses
- Water efficiency at 84.7 litres per person, per day
- Biodiversity Net Gain of 42.5%
- 10% green roofs
- Reptile enhancement works
- Financial contribution for access improvements to

Midhurst Common



Economy

Hillside Nursery, Bury

- 7 flexible commercial workspace suites (650 sq m GIA) in a village location and on a redundant site
- 7 homes (2 of which are affordable)
- EV Charging
- Over 30% Biodiversity Net Gain
- Fabric efficiency, solar panels and green roofs to meet SDNPA sustainability standards

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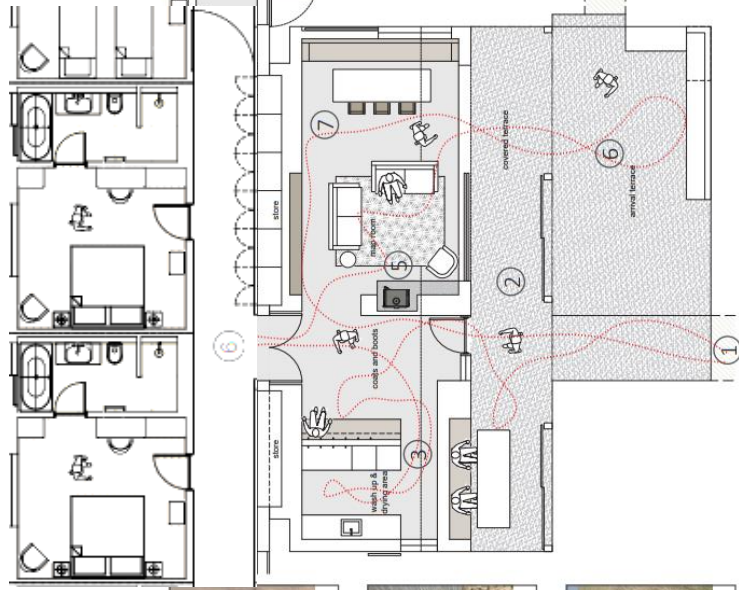
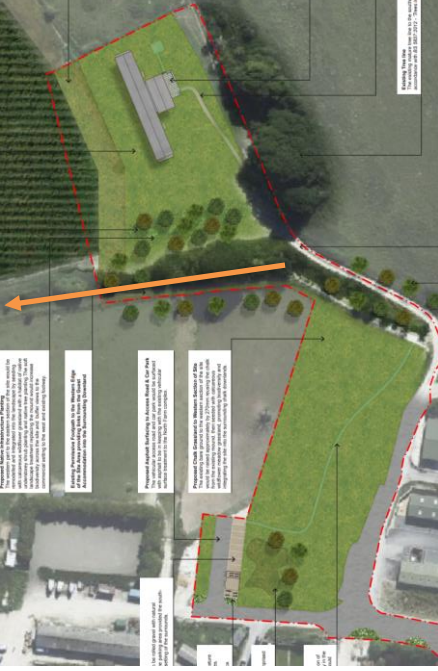
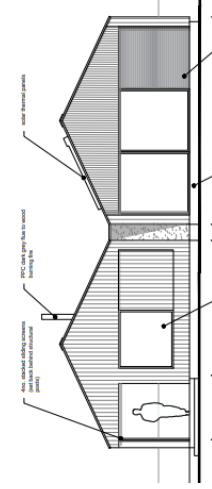
Wellbeing

North Farm, Wiston

- Mid-range room-only holiday accommodation on PRow network by Chantonbury Ring in place of redundant pheasant hatchery

- Focus on communal spaces, interaction, shared experiences

- Highly sustainable development, incl. rammed chalk, local sweet chestnut, solar thermal panels, ground source heat system, rainwater and greywater recycling, passive design, integrated e-bike charging/storage, access by foot
- Extensive species-rich chalk wildflower habitat enhancement
- Permissive path connecting PRowS



Shared Space



Drying room



Covered Entrance



Landscaped paths



Communal fire



Map Room



Seating Terrace

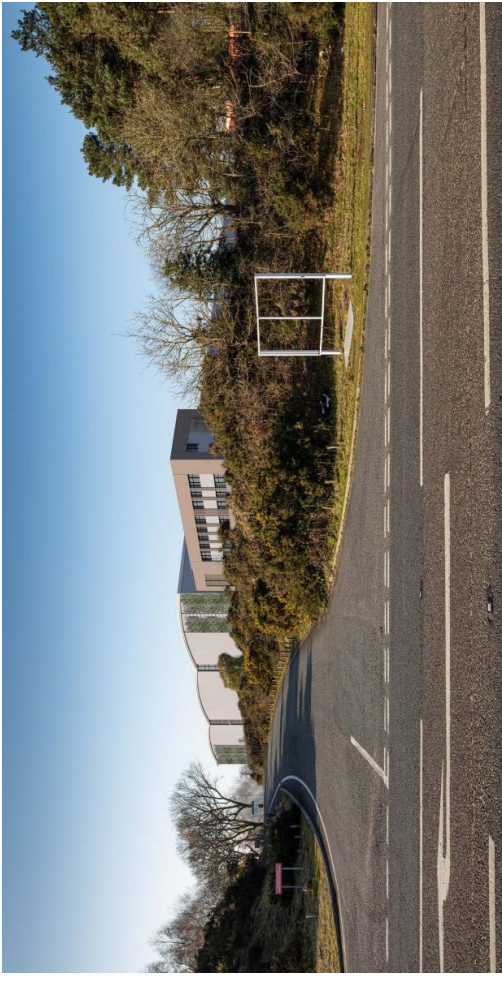


Biodiversity

Longmoor Enterprise Park, Longmoor

- 147 native trees – additional 120 trees compared to existing
- 108% Biodiversity Net Gain and 100% gain in hedgerow habitat
- Retention of rare acid grassland
- Over 350 new jobs
- 39 EV charging points
- BREEAM Excellent
- Carbon positive (PV panels generate more electricity than the buildings use)
- Some green roofs

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New Housing and Infrastructure

AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT 2022

A THRIVING LIVING LANDSCAPE

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

35% ...average gain in a sample of planning permissions

DESIGN GUIDE SPD ADOPTED

Sets clear expectations for new development to adhere to high standards of design quality

NEW POND AND WETLAND HABITAT CREATED

6 new ponds across the National Park and

6.8 ha ...of wetland at Lewes Brooks

WEALDEN HEATHS

The limit has been reached within a zone that provides exceptional bird habitat, therefore no permissions will be granted for additional new dwellings

PEOPLE CONNECTED WITH PLACES

99

UNITS

...were permitted for Visitor Accommodation

40

including:

HOLIDAY LODGES

680 metres

MULTI-USE FOOTPATH

...completed on the Egrets Way

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

2,008

HOMES WITH PLANNING PERMISSION

of which:

507 ARE AFFORDABLE

172

NEW HOMES ...were completed

5,470m²

AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS

...converted, or a change of use, to be repurposed for employment floorspace

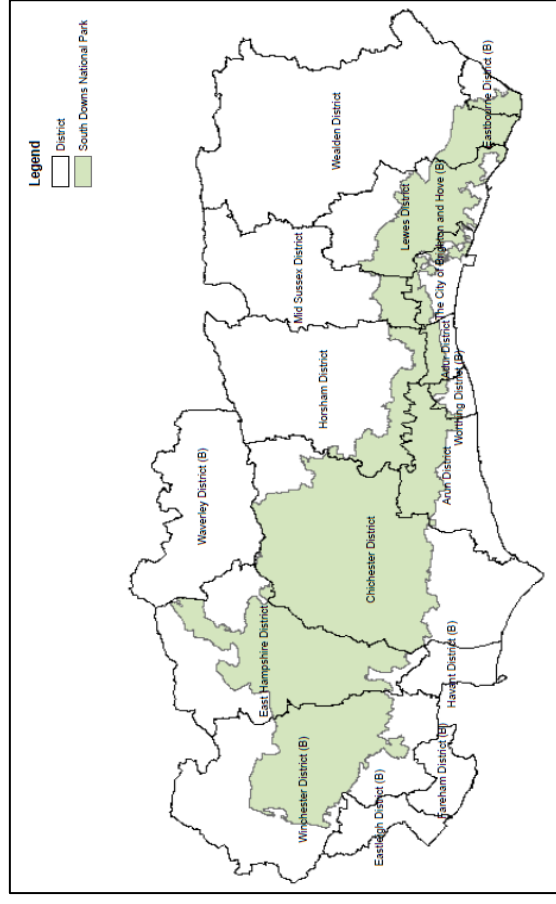
SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Performance Statistics

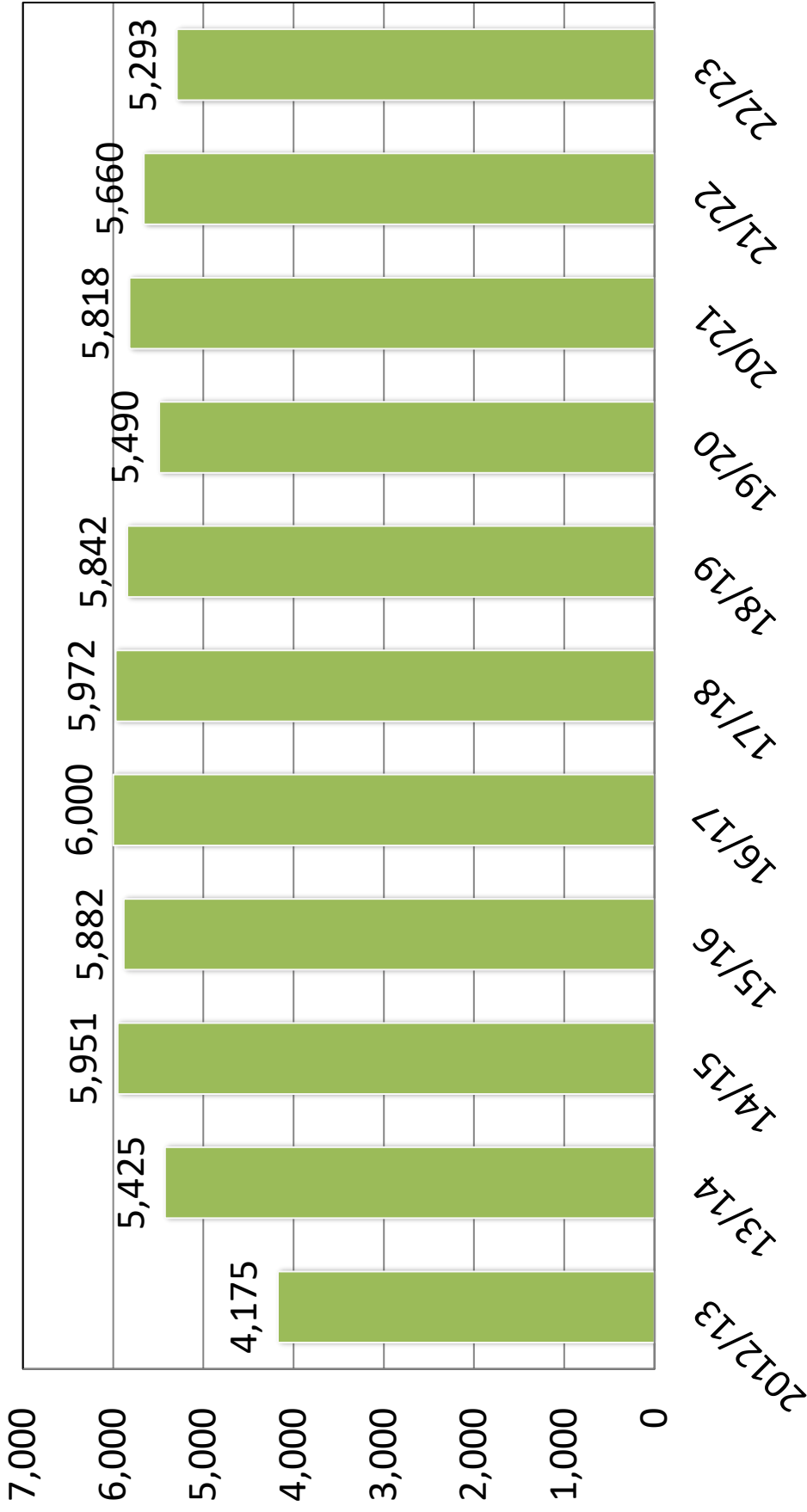


Overall Workload

- The SDNPA is one of the largest Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in England:
 - Covers one of the largest geographic areas
 - Within the top 30 largest planning authorities in the country, as measured by the number of applications dealt with (there are just over 300 LPAs in England)
 - We determine more planning applications than most London Boroughs



Overall Workload – All Cases



Section 101 Contracts

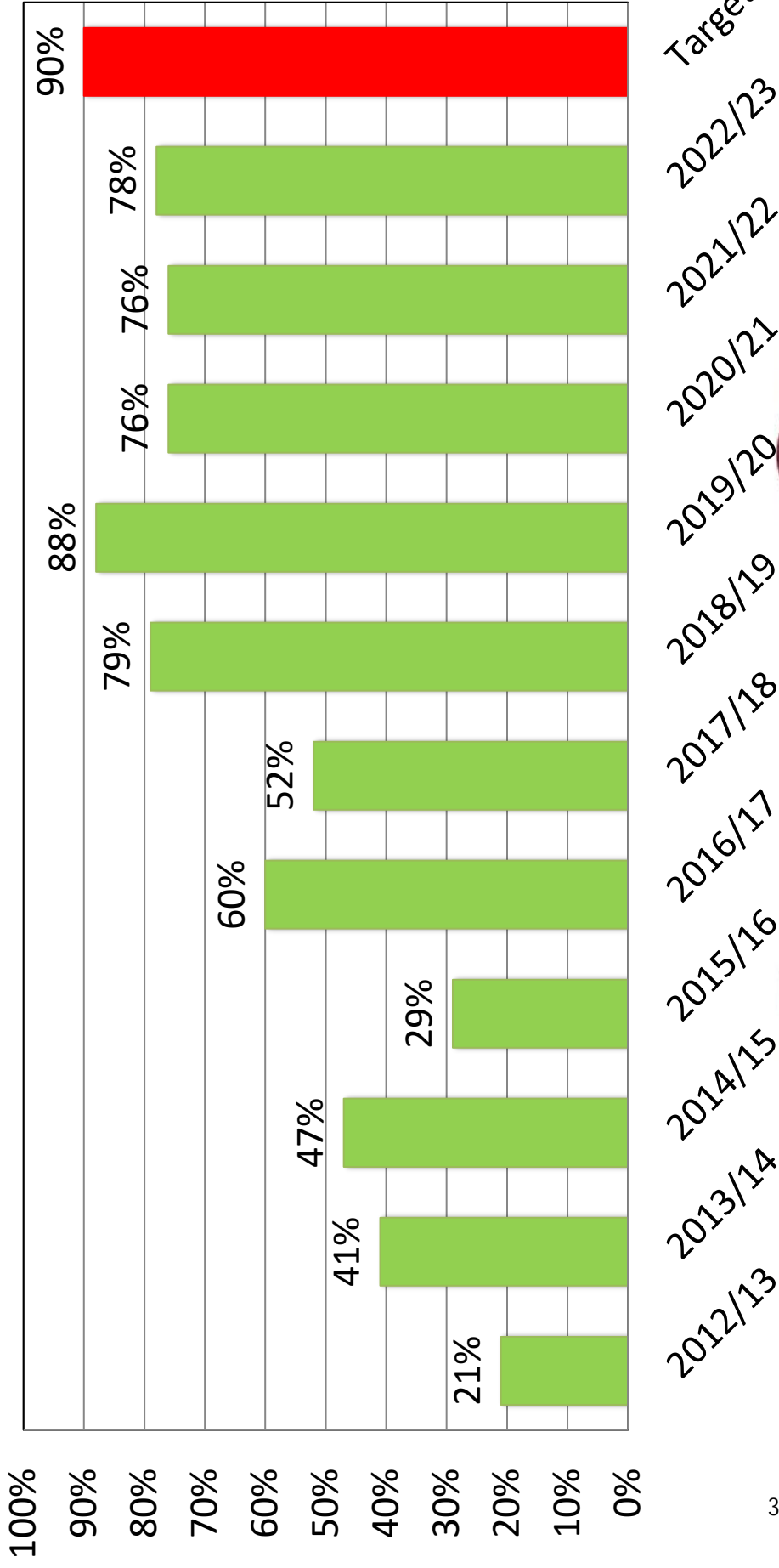
- SDNPA itself deals with all planning matters (planning applications, enforcement and appeals) within the following District Council areas where they lie within the National Park:
 - Adur
 - Arun
 - Brighton and Hove
 - Mid Sussex
 - Wealden
 - Worthing
- SDNPA deals with all minerals and waste matters across the National Park.
- We have contracts with 5 host authorities to deliver planning services (planning applications, enforcement and appeals) on our behalf.
- The host authorities deal with approximately 80% of all planning applications handled by SDNPA.

Validation Performance

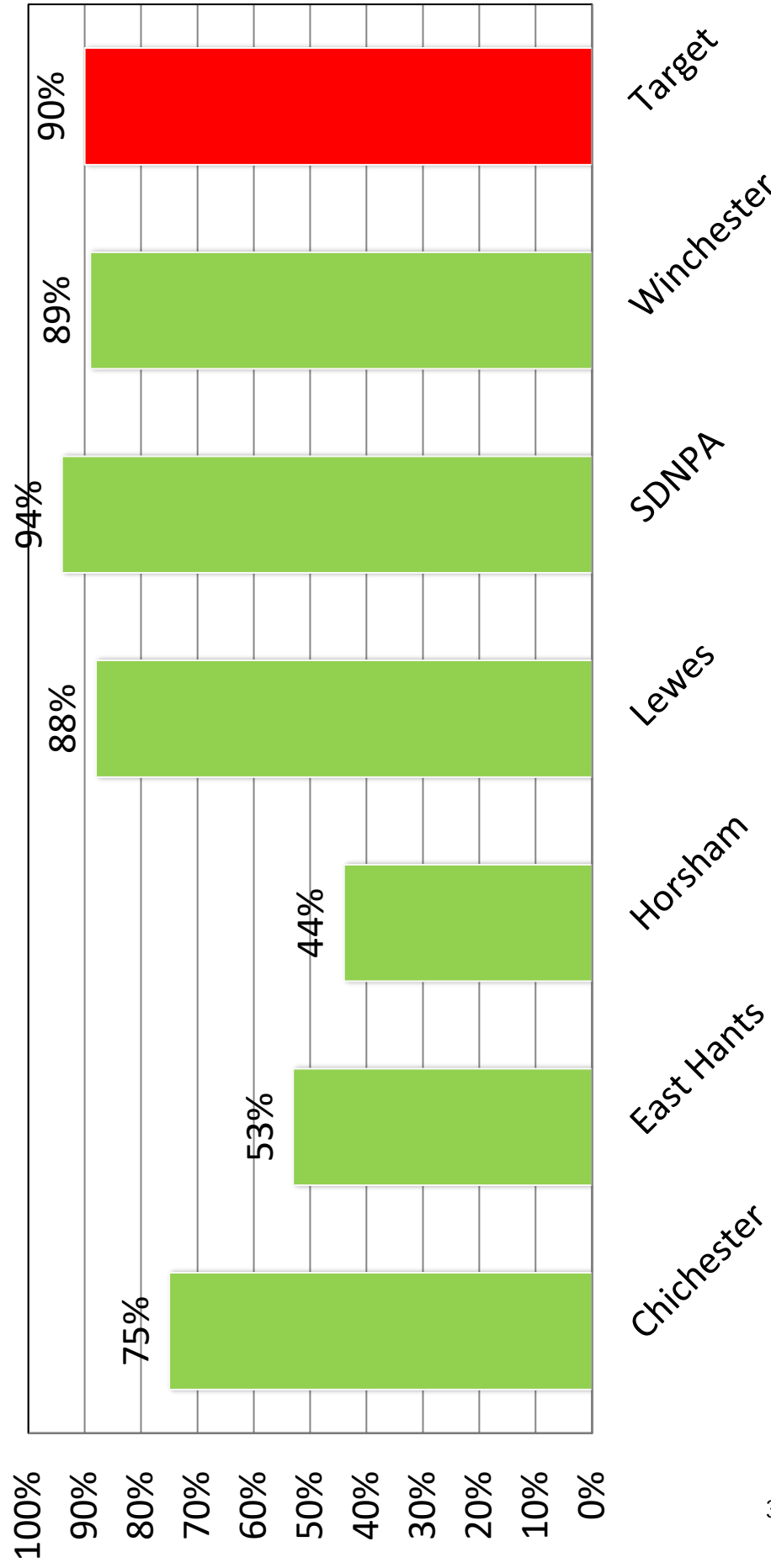
- Validation is the proportion of all applications that are either made valid or invalidated (with reasons) within 5 working days
- This is a SDNPA performance measure, we do not report this performance to Government
- Speed - and accuracy - of validation is an important factor in user's experience of the planning system
- There has been wide variation in host authority performance on this metric in the past.
- Validation performance remains below our internal target.



Validation Performance (within 5 working days)



2022/23 Validation performance by host authority (within 5 working days)



Different types of planning applications

- **Major** = 10+ dwellings, over a 1,000 sq m of floorspace, site area exceeds half a hectare, minerals applications, waste applications.
- **Others** - 1-9 dwellings; up to 999 sq m of office, industrial, retail floorspace; householders; change of use, listed building consent.
- Taken together they are known as 'PS2' applications
- A consistent benchmark for performance management and consultation requirements across England.



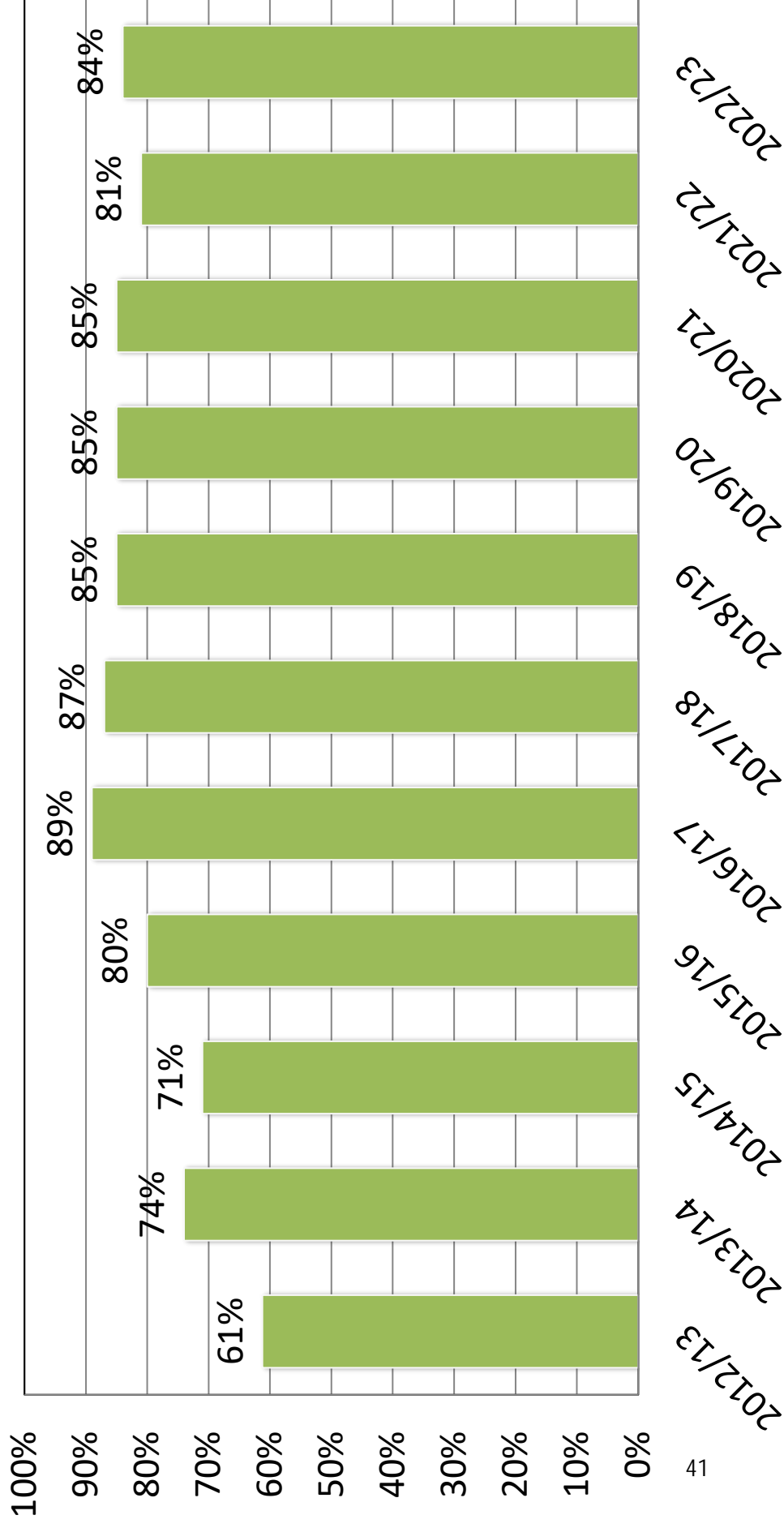
Government Requirements – Speed of Decision Making

- That at least 60% of **major** applications are determined within time. There is a 13 week target determination period (16 weeks if EIA development)
- That at least 70% of **‘others’** are determined within time. There is a 8 week target determination period.
- If these targets are not met it could result in the Authority being put into special measures and having planning powers removed. The Authority is comfortably in excess of these targets.
- There is also a quality criterion. No more than 10% of our total planning decisions can be overturned at appeal in a 2 year period. For the 2 year period the Government specify (October 2020 to September 2022) less than 1% of our total decisions have been overturned by the Planning Inspectorate.



Speed of Decision Making Overall

– PS2 applications in time



Speed of Decision Making 2021/22 and 2022/23 - **MAJORS**

	2021/22		2022/23	
	Total Number of applications	%age in time	Total Number of applications	%age in time
SDNPA				
OVERALL	54	89%	49	80%
Chichester	7	100%	8	88%
East Hants	5	60%	5	40%
Horsham	0	N/a	1	100%
Lewes	1	100%	0	N/a
SDNPA	38	89%	28	82%
Winchester	3	100%	7	86%



Speed of Decision Making 2021/22 and 2022/23 - OTHERS

	2021/22		2022/23	
	Total Number of applications	%age in time	Total Number of applications	%age in time
SDNPA				
OVERALL	2,175	81%	2,088	84%
Chichester	657	83%	586	83%
East Hants	446	85%	433	72%
Horsham	103	82%	72	89%
Lewes	385	59%	465	88%
SDNPA	306	91%	251	89%
Winchester	278	88%	281	92%



Minerals and Waste

	Total number of applications determined in 2021/22	Total number of applications determined in 2022/23	Percentage in time
Majors	6	6	100% (in 2021/22) and 67% in 2022/23

- Government require at least 60% of these decisions to be made on time
- Again there is a quality criterion from government. No more than 10% of our total minerals and waste decisions can be overturned at appeal in a 2 year period. This means that if we lost just 2 appeals we would not meet this criterion and would be at risk of designation. This is a risk common to most Mineral Planning Authorities, especially National Park Authorities, given the low numbers of applications involved.



Appeal Performance - Dismissed



Appeal Performance

	Total number of appeal decisions received	Number dismissed	Percentage dismissed
2022/23	65	50	77%
2021/22	60	41	68%
2020/21	81	54	67%
2019/20	123	85	69%
2018/19	106	73	69%
2017/18	80	56	70%

- A summary of all appeal decisions is reported to Planning Committee quarterly



Planning Enforcement

- We report the number of enforcement notices to Government each quarter but there is no requirement to report on speed of enforcement
- In 2022/23 608 new enforcement cases were opened whilst 674 cases were closed.
- In 2021/22 687 new enforcement cases were opened, whilst 688 cases were closed.
- In 2020/21 669 new enforcement cases were opened, whilst 558 cases were closed (impact of Covid).
- The Authority monitors the time taken to determine enforcement cases and Link officers run through older cases with host authorities regularly



Planning Enforcement by host authority – Last 5 years

Host Authority	Enforcement cases OPENED between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2023	Enforcement cases CLOSED between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2023
Chichester	734	761
East Hampshire	667	670
Horsham	155	141
Lewes	431	428
SDNPA	970	978
Winchester	378	370

Ensuring Quality – Regular Performance Management

- Role of link officers and senior officers
- Regular relationship meetings with senior staff at the host authorities
- Regular officer groups – development management, enforcement and technical support to share good practice and updated procedures
- Agreed action plans produced where there are specific matters of concern
- All complaints received reviewed
- Agents' forum every 6 months



Current Performance Focus

1. Maintaining speed of decision making given staff vacancies
2. Speeding up dealing with enforcement cases
3. Improving communication and ease of telephone access to planning officers



Main Challenges

- Vacancies and continued difficulty recruiting qualified and experienced planners is an issue for most LPAs in the South East. The SDNPA Development Management team is under particular pressure with a quarter of posts vacant.
- Inflation placing pressure on our contract costs (and wages)
- Maintaining and improving service quality given continued pressure on public sector budgets.
- Development industry facing increasing materials (costs of materials, labour, inflation, supply chains and landowner expectations) such that delivering policy compliant sites is harder



Thank You



SOUTH DOWNS PLANNING

NEWS FROM YOUR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY



Welcome to the planning newsletter for the South Downs National Park Authority

Send your comments to us at planningnewsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

New employment space is given the green light

A high-quality mixed-use development offering homes and office space has been approved for a West Sussex village.

The Authority's Planning Committee voted to approve plans submitted by MJH Executive Homes for seven residential and seven commercial units in place of the vacant and derelict glasshouses at Hillside Nursery, in the Bury Common area of Bury.

The site is a protected employment site under the made Bury Neighbourhood Plan.

However, when the business closed and no offers were forthcoming for a commercial-only use, a mixed use with a commercial focus was agreed in principle.

The parish council was involved in pre-application discussions and, after the initial submission was considered overdeveloped and too suburban, National Park planners worked with the applicant to help create a landscape-led scheme.

The revised proposal found a positive balance between a wide range of commercial and environmental considerations and has been designed to enhance the local area. The housing is a mixture of affordable and market units, ranging in size from three to four bedrooms, arranged around an attractive central yard.



The layout has been inspired by the area's working agricultural heritage.

Important vegetative boundaries will be retained and new planting introduced, delivering over 30 per cent biodiversity net gain.

The project includes approximately 500sqm (net) of business space in seven units, starting from 53sqm, with external amenity space for employees. These facilities would be suitable for small-scale and low-impact office, research and development and light industry uses for which there is local demand.

Naomi Langford, Major Projects Officer, said: "This is a well-conceived contemporary scheme that has been driven by a solid understanding of the special qualities of the site and surroundings. The commercial and affordable provisions are of particular value to the National Park's economy and communities."

Extra care hub gets go ahead



Plans for a new 56-apartment extra care scheme and community hub have been given the green light.

The National Park's Planning Committee voted to approve the proposals for the demolition of Bulmer House, Petersfield – a vacant 1970s building that was once a care home run by Hampshire County Council.

The 100 per cent affordable scheme will deliver 37 one-bedroom flats and 19 two-bedroom flats, as well as a number of community facilities including a lounge, day centre, bistro, hair salon, and activity room.

Planning permission, subject to a Section 106 agreement, was granted to Housing 21 following a previous refusal over concerns about size and scale.

The site is allocated in the Petersfield Neighbourhood Development Plan (PNDP) and includes several eco-friendly features, including an 'Excellent' BREEAM rating, solar panels, electric hot water systems, green roofs and electric vehicle charging points.

The day centre, which can also be used by the wider community, will offer a 'one stop shop' for a variety of services for people with care needs including dementia, financial, legal and benefits advice, health clinics and extra support for carers.

The new building will have a carefully considered architectural approach with a variety of gables at varying heights and flat roofs at the higher parts of the property.

Richard Ferguson, Development Management Lead, said: "While it's a large development, the site is located reasonably centrally within Petersfield, on a brownfield site, among a mix of uses and scales of buildings. A significant number of trees are also being retained.

"This is an opportunity to deliver significant accommodation and welfare benefits to the local community, where there is a lack of accommodation of this tenure.

"The scheme will provide much-needed affordable accommodation for older people."

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY Climate action with new homes



A new net-zero-carbon development in the National Park is due to start this year and be completed by spring 2024.

The homes will be built on the site of the former Pells Church of England School in Lewes, providing 32 homes for affordable rent and shared ownership, including four Lewes Low Cost homes.

It comes after the proposals were approved by the National Park Authority.

The school closed permanently in August 2017 and the 0.9 hectare site is now owned by Raven Housing Trust, which is a registered provider of social housing.

As well as being Raven's second completely net-zero-carbon development, the Lewes development will be its first to be built using Modern Methods of Construction – a construction technique that generally delivers high-quality homes at a quicker rate.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning at the National Park Authority, said: "This is a high-quality development providing much-needed affordable housing for local communities within the National Park.

"The development's environmental credentials are significant. As well as providing much cheaper energy bills to residents, these zero-carbon homes dovetail with our priorities of nature recovery and climate action,

They will be built using Homes England funding, as well as Raven's own funds, in addition to £630,000 of funding provided by the National Park Authority. This pot of money comes from developer contributions and is ringfenced specifically to deliver new affordable housing schemes.

Raven's Stephen Clements, assistant director of development, said: "We're thrilled to have exchanged contracts on the Pells development in Lewes."

"The site contributes further to our net-zero ambitions, and will provide a good number of affordable, modern homes in a time when a secure home is more important than ever."

Coronation and conservation...



Whatever one's view, the coronation of King Charles III was a spectacle that captured the attention with all its regalia and ancient ceremonial rituals. And

whether you are a fan of royalty or otherwise, the crowning of King Charles does have some significance in the sphere of planning, design and architecture.

As many will know, the future monarch sparked a long-running debate about what architecture (and more widely planning) is about, following his now infamous after-dinner speech at the Royal Institute for British Architects' 150th anniversary celebrations in 1984. His description of the proposed extension to the National Gallery in London as a 'monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend' may have been the reason for the original contemporary designs being scrapped in favour of a more classical design. It certainly caused a stir amongst 'the professionals' and, whilst not best timed given all the pre-work, was a reminder that planning is literally a public-facing example of state intervention designed for the public good.

Some years later, his 1989 book *A Vision of Britain: A Personal View of Architecture* argued for the need to consider the unique character of places and always consider the quality of finish. Along with the usual list of planning and architectural tomes of the day, his book and illustrations (very unfashionable at the time and I suspect may well be so still in some quarters) and the concept of all things 'connected' made an impression on me as I decided what to do for the future.

More recently, his 2000-word essay in *The Architectural Review* set out 10 principles for urban masterplanning that Charles said "mix the best of the old with the best of the new" and provide a template for designing places "according to the human scale and with nature at the heart of the process". He was very careful to make clear this was not an anti-modern approach and his concern was with the future. Many of his recommendations echo the ethos of National Park planning and our comprehensive design guide only adopted last year. For example, strong references to scale, harmony, developments designed to fit within the landscape they occupy, emphasis on use of local building material and acknowledging (not copying) regional traditional styles, as well as seeking to put the pedestrian at the centre of the design process.

Charles was one of the first public figures to speak passionately and frankly about the biodiversity and climate crisis. Whether you agree with his viewpoint or

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

not, and how he expressed his views, I think having a figurehead with such a profound interest in placemaking for the future is to be celebrated, particularly when considering the pressures that National Parks face. With preparations for COP 28 to be held in the United Arab Emirates and controversies emerging it will be interesting whether our now King will enter the fray once more!

Conservation can be king, one might say, and that's certainly true for Nephcote, which is featured in this newsletter after becoming the first new Conservation Area since the National Park's inception. This designation is significant and really does underline the importance of human interaction with the landscape over several centuries to get the South Downs we see today. The input of Findon Neighbourhood Planning Group is to be commended.

Turning to other matters, a fundamental shift is coming later this year with the introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. It's crucial we all get prepared for these important changes. There may be some short-term pain, but I think the long-term outcome will be worth it when it comes to nature recovery. The National Park has big ambitions for creating new spaces for nature to thrive and, as you'll read about in this newsletter, ReNature credits will be one of the most exciting and innovative ways we can achieve this. ReNaturing spaces will not only bring benefits to biodiversity but as importantly will make the National Park an even better place to live for its local communities and provide health and well-being benefits for all those able to live work or spend time here.

One point I would like to make about BNG is that all habitats play a part, not just those measured or scoring well. Wildlife does not adhere to human-made administrative boundaries or definitions, whether physical or paper-based. We may need to consider much loved and habitat-rich areas or pockets of land that, whilst not 'scoring' much, are deserving of our attention and conservation.

We've had a plethora of big consultations in recent times, including around updates on Biodiversity Net Gain, and guidance on Local Nature Recovery Partnerships. There will be more, I am sure. These consultations have underlined the need for greater resources, as well as additional training, directed at Local Planning Authorities. Personally I think a more joined-up approach between Defra and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities that streamlines some of these consultations would be desirable. After all, we all share the same goal of a better balance between growth and nature recovery at all scale.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning

Biodiversity Net Gain news



Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is coming soon and make sure you're prepared!

That's the call to action from Katharine Stuart, Planning Policy Lead for the National Park, who has helped to put together a useful technical advice note to help support applicants.

The BNG Interim Technical

Advice Note provides guidance on the scope of BNG requirements and key principles to guide habitat creation and enhancement measures that make a valuable contribution to nature recovery. The document also provides guidance around landscape character and habitat that is bigger, better and more joined up.

Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development which leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. The principle of the BNG requirement was set out in the Environment Act 2021 and is expected to be mandatory from this November.

The BNG requirement is coming in two phases – from November 2023 for developments in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, unless exempt. The BNG requirement will apply to small sites from April 2024.

Katharine said: "The government is busy putting out lots of guidance – with lots more to come. Most notably the BNG Regulations which are critical in setting out the practical requirements for how BNG will work.

"The Authority has been successful early adopters of BNG principles. We have a policy requirement for net gains for biodiversity set out in policy SD9(1)(b) in our Local Plan adopted in 2019.

"Through our Annual Monitoring Report, a sample of the larger sites have showed an average BNG of 34 per cent, which is very encouraging.

"Please do check out our Technical Advice Note. We'll updating it later this year to take account of any updates."

And Kate added: "We know that it will not always be possible for BNG habitat creation and enhancement to be delivered on the site of the development. The Authority's green financing work is how we are supporting exemplar nature recovery projects that can provide BNG offsetting credits."

[Read the BNG TAN here.](#)

Enforcement action taken



Butser Hill in East Hampshire

An alpaca farmer has been ordered to remove his mobile home from a sensitive site in the South Downs National Park after a protracted legal battle with East Hampshire's Planning Enforcement team.

Mr and Mrs Giles had planned to use land at Lone Barn Farm, Church Lane, in Greatham, to run a business importing and breeding alpacas.

In 2021 they appealed against a ruling from East Hampshire District Council – acting on behalf of the National Park Authority – to remove the mobile home they had installed on the land and the associated infrastructure they had built there without permission.

The matter was settled by the Planning Inspectorate on 4 April, which sided with the Authority. The couple now has eight months to remove their mobile home, as well as a septic tank, a stable, the concrete hard-standing it rests on and any other domestic structures.

The legal arguments rested on whether the business had a sound financial plan behind it and whether it was necessary for the couple to live on site all year round.

The Planning Inspectorate ruled that neither of these questions were satisfactorily answered by the appellants. The land must now be returned to its former use as an agricultural site.

This is a significant case which demonstrates how determined we are to see these cases through to the end."



Mike Hughes, Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager for the National Park, said: "The National Park was designated for the entire nation for its incredible landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage and developing without planning consent is a serious breach. Developers need to know that if they breach national planning regulations we have the resources to take decisive action."

New BNG, Nitrate and Phosphate Broker Service



An innovative scheme to restore biodiversity and deliver nature-based climate action has been launched by the National Park Authority.

“ReNature Credits” will bring together developers and landowners to unlock private finance streams that deliver multiple benefits for nature recovery, including restoring lost habitats, woodland creation and wildflower meadows.

It comes as the compliance and offsetting market widens significantly this year with the introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain from November for most types of development.

Developers will be able to acquire ReNature Credits through the National Park Authority’s brokerage service for phosphates, nitrates, and Biodiversity Net Gain. Carbon offsetting may also be introduced at a later date.

The National Park Authority is uniquely placed as a Local Planning Authority with thousands of hectares of land already identified for biodiversity restoration as part of its existing ReNature initiative.



Launched two years ago, the ReNature campaign is aiming to create 13,000 hectares of new wildlife habitat and, following a “Call for Sites” among landowners, dozens of sites are ready for large-scale nature recovery. Currently 25 per cent of the National Park is managed for nature and the Authority wants to increase this to 33 per cent by 2030.

Acting as a sustainability-focused broker, the Authority will work with developers and landowners to maximise benefits for nature and local communities within the National Park. The brokerage service is initially

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launching with two strategic sites: Iford Estate and Warnford Park Estate.



Nick Heasman, Countryside and Policy Manager for the Authority, said: “We’re excited to be launching this bespoke service to help achieve our ambitious goals for nature recovery and climate change.

“Nutrient credits and biodiversity units are not a new thing in the planning world, but they often don’t have a joined-up approach that delivers nature benefits at a landscape scale.

“This is where “ReNature Credits” are different. As a National Park covering 1,600km² and with over 1,000 different landowners, we can identify the very best areas for biodiversity restoration and ensure habitat connectivity that will deliver tangible, long-term benefits for both nature and people.”

Developers with a need to purchase ReNature Credits for their upcoming projects, within or outside the National Park, can acquire them through the SDNPA ReNature Credits brokerage service.

Nick added: “We want to be very clear that this is not about incentivising more development in and around the National Park.

“This innovative scheme will ensure that the sustainable development that does take place over the next decade will benefit nature and people locally, funneling private investment into the places where it’s needed most.

“As this scheme grows over the next few years, it will also create a number of new green jobs in the sector.”

ReNature Credits offer developers a transparently priced, simple process that delivers the highest quality nature restoration, allowing them to better support sustainability and biodiversity.

To acquire credits or to get in touch with the National Park’s team delivering ReNature Credits, visit <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/renature-credits/>

To see a detailed FAQ explaining the scheme, visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/renature-credits/faqs/



Update on Lewes “Phoenix”



The consultation period for plans to build a new community of 700 homes and cultural, business and flexible workspace in Lewes has been extended.

Human Nature (Lewes) Ltd has submitted a planning application to the South Downs National Park Authority for the redevelopment of the North Street Industrial Estate and Springman House, in North Street, Lewes.

The statutory consultation period has now been extended from 21 April to 26 May.

Kelly Porter, Major Projects Lead, said: “This is a major planning application for Lewes and it’s important everyone has the opportunity to have their say. After listening to local voices and given the complexity of the plans, this extension gives the public and all interested parties an additional five weeks to submit comments on these plans. ”

Visit the [**public access system**](#) and search for reference number SDNP/23/00526/OUT to view the plans in detail.

The site is allocated for development in the National Park’s Local Plan. The proposals are phased. One element of the consultation relates to proposals for full planning permission to demolish existing buildings, construct flood defences, highways improvements, and the construction of buildings, of up to five storeys, to provide 44 dwellings.

Outline planning permission is being sought for further phases that would include buildings of up to six storeys comprising 656 dwellings, as well as up to 3,279m² business, employment and flexible workspace. The outline plans propose new parking provisions focusing on a mobility hub off The Causeway, highway improvements, including a realignment of North Street and Phoenix Place, a recycling and re-use centre, and construction of a new footbridge over the River Ouse. It’s hoped a decision will be made during the autumn.

New rain garden for school



Imagine a school playground that offers a fun and engaging space for children and teaches them about the environment and sustainable water management.

That’s exactly what Wallands Primary School and The Aquifer Partnership (TAP) have created with its inspiring rainscape project, thanks to £160,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy funding from the National Park.

The playground in Lewes has been transformed into a vibrant, sustainable, and educational space that now serves as a living classroom for students.

This unique outdoor learning environment combines various sustainable drainage elements, such as rain planters, permeable paving, meadow basins, and wildlife-attracting plants, to create an ecosystem that showcases the beauty and functionality of sustainable practices.

The Aquifer Partnership, which includes the National Park Authority among several partners, is focused on protecting the precious groundwater in the Brighton Chalk Block that supplies drinking water to around 400,000 people.

Aimee Felus, Programme Delivery Manager for TAP, said: “Wallands Primary School rainscape is the first rainscape to be created in Lewes!

“The children were involved through the process, helping right from the outset to design the rainscape, through to planting the final grasses and seeding the wildflower meadow basins. The system is designed to take water from the school roof and use it throughout the playground to water new planters and wildflower areas and to become a positive play feature.

“As the water is held on the school site it reduces run off which in turn reduces flood risk further down the hill. There are so many other benefits too – flourishing wildlife, greening and shading the space, which will be especially important to cool the playground during our increasingly hot summers.”

Affordable housing for parish



Wickham Community Land Trust recently received funding from the Authority's Affordable Housing Grant scheme for the delivery of affordable homes in Wickham parish.

Five properties have been made available for rent and they will be retained as affordable housing in perpetuity.

Purchase of the second phase of housing was completed in January 2023 with two open days being held shortly afterwards.

The first open day enabled local residents to view one of the homes with second event providing an opportunity for those who assisted with funding to tour the property.

Gill Welsman, SDNPA's Planning Project Management Officer who promotes and facilitates the Affordable Housing Grant scheme, attended one of the open days. She said: "It was fabulous to see first-hand the impact our grants have on local communities and the successful provision of exceptional affordable homes that will be retained as affordable well into the future."

Further information on the work of Wickham Community Land Trust is available on their website.

If you would like to enquire about an SDNPA Affordable Housing Grant please email affordablehousing@southdowns.gov.uk or visit our [grants webpage](#).

Section 106 update for Petersfield

Work has completed on the extension to the entrance lobby at the Avenue Pavilion in Petersfield. The project, led by Petersfield Town Council, has enabled the front porch area to be closed to the elements, as well as improving accessibility to changing rooms whilst providing better security for all those who use the community facility.

Gill added: "The project demonstrates the impact that developer funding through the planning system can have in terms of supporting projects to make improvements to existing community facilities."

Investing in communities

Community Infrastructure Levy payments to local parishes were as follows in April 2023:

Binsted Parish Council	£6,228.58
Bishops Waltham Parish Council	£661.36
Buriton Parish Council	£22,806.32
Cheriton Parish Council	£900.00
Droxford Parish Council	£830.74
East Dean and Friston Parish Council	£9,470.72
East Meon Parish Council	£47,514.00
Fittleworth Parish Council	£61,118.66
Fulking Parish Council	£450.00
Graffham Parish Council	£17,002.25
Harting Parish Council	£4,595.93
Kingston (Nr Lewes) Parish Council	£4,828.24
Lewes Town Council	£14,142.16
Liss Parish Council	£11,340.15
Long Man Parish Council	£1,037.19
Midhurst Town Council	£2,623.70
Northchapel Parish Council	£1,453.22
Petersfield Town Council	£41,827.47
Sheet Parish Council	£1,148.70
Slindon Parish Council	£69.41
Soberton Parish Council	£30.00
Tichborne Parish Council	£1,472.32
West Meon Parish Council	£285.30
Total	£251,836.42



The South Downs Way near Amberley in West Sussex

Celebrating outstanding flair for architecture and heritage



One Garden Brighton, winner of last year's South Downs Award

A special trophy will be presented to a scheme that promotes outstanding design in the National Park.

For the third year running, the National Park Authority is sponsoring The South Downs Award as part of the Sussex Heritage Trust Awards.

The Awards aims to showcase the highest quality new buildings, conservation and rejuvenation projects, while also celebrating traditional craftsmanship and skills.

Now in its 25th year, the Awards scheme has also announced a brand-new category: The Eco Award. Sponsored by Cowan Architects, this Award aims to recognise a project's commitment to excellence in sustainability, biodiversity and energy efficiency. Winners of the Awards receive a hand-crafted slate presented by the President of the Sussex Heritage Trust, The Rt Hon Lord Egremont DL at the awards ceremony and lunch on 4 July.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning, said: "We're delighted to be sponsoring these prestigious awards once again. The standard of all entries has been very high and the category winner will have gone that extra mile to make a positive contribution to this treasured landscape. I'm looking forward to the awards ceremony!"

Further categories include: Building Crafts Award sponsored by Pilbeam Construction, The Public and Community Award sponsored by Gravetye Manor, The Commercial Award sponsored by Savills, The Large Scale Residential Award sponsored by Covers Timber and Builders Merchants, The Mid-Scale Residential Award sponsored by Henry Adams, The Small Scale Residential Award sponsored by RH and RW Clutton, The Landscape and Gardens Award sponsored by The Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust, The Ecclesiastical Building Award sponsored by Valley Builders and The Sussex Heritage Trust Person of the Year Award.

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New conservation area is born to reflect links to landscape



The first new Conservation Area since the National Park's inception has been created in the hamlet of Nepcote – underlining the importance of sheep husbandry to the Downs landscape.

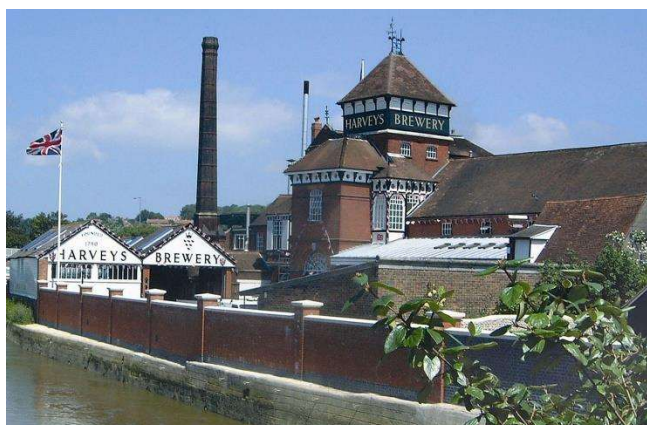
When the National Park was created in 2010, it inherited 166 Conservation Areas from its predecessor authorities, meaning there were very few opportunities for new designations.

However, Findon Neighbourhood Planning Group proposed that a new Conservation Area be considered, with a focus on Nepcote Green, near Worthing. This is an attractive open space that has long been the location of one of the most important sheep fairs in Sussex.

Following public consultation, the Authority's Planning Committee voted to designate a new Conservation Area based on the area's special architectural and historic interest. The designation covers Nepcote Green, Cissbury parkland that originates in the early 19th century, and the hamlet of Nepcote. A key feature on the Green is the Wattle House, a building purposely constructed in the late 18th century to house the wattles used to create sheep pens during the fair. These types of buildings are now rare. The Cissbury Estate comprises a relatively modest country house with 18th century origins.

David Boyson, Conservation Officer, said: "Nepcote is an unusual Conservation Area in the sense that its as much about space as buildings, if not more so. The two main spaces are Nepcote Green and the Cissbury Estate. Both are attractive parts of the wider landscape in their own right and also have a degree of historic interest which is more specific to each. Sheep husbandry is fundamental to the formation and maintenance of the Downs landscape and Nepcote Green is home to one of the region's most significant sheep fairs, giving it a particular resonance in the locality and region."

Public consultation launched for Lewes Conservation Area



The Lewes Conservation Area is under the spotlight as part of a public consultation being launched by the South Downs National Park Authority.

The Conservation Area, which covers most of the central part of the town, has been in existence for many years and predates the creation of the National Park in 2010. Conservation Areas have been identified as having high historic or architectural interest.

The National Park Authority's consultation will be reviewing the Lewes Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) and the Article 4 Direction for Lewes Conservation Area. Article 4 Direction restricts the scope of permitted development rights on properties or land and offers additional protection to the townscape.

The public consultation will take place between 30 May and 11 July and includes an online survey.

Members of the Authority's planning team will be available to answer any queries relating to the CAAMP and Article 4 Direction at two public drop-in sessions to be held at Lewes Library:

• **2pm-6pm on Thursday 15 June**

• **10am-2pm on Saturday 17 June**

Mark Waller-Gutierrez, Specialist Lead, whose team oversees Conservation Areas, said: "Lewes is renowned for its iconic downland setting and high level of preservation in the town's many buildings and open spaces.

"The Conservation Area was created well before the inception of the National Park and this is a good opportunity to make sure that the existing planning documents are up-to-date and incorporate any recent changes in the Conservation Area. These documents are important and help to direct future planning in the town." Take part in the survey and download copies of the draft documents by visiting [this webpage](#).

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New planning brief is adopted



Amy Tyler-Jones, Planning Policy Lead, gives an update.

A **Planning Brief** for the Brooks Road area in central Lewes has been agreed by Planning Committee for use for development management purposes.

Much of the Brooks Road area is protected as a principal employment site under Policy SD35 of the South Downs Local Plan.

This is the highest level of protection provided by the Local Plan for existing employment sites. The area also contains a mix of uses including residential and the Planning Brief has been prepared as a proactive response to a number of redevelopment proposals in the area.

A public consultation took place between October and December last year.

Development Management Statistics	Oct-Dec 22	Jan- Mar 23
Appeals submitted to the Planning Inspectorate	22	19
Appeals started	16	16
Appeals determined	21	22
Appeals successfully defended	14	14
Submissions received	1081	1029
Statutory submissions received via the Planning Portal	949	868
Statutory submissions determined	1156	1007
Neighbours notified	4855	4696
Representations received	1043	1551
Consultations issued	2850	2877
Conditions imposed	3978	3004
Enquiries for planning advice	254	311
Enforcement complaints received	155	170
Enforcement cases opened	132	143
Enforcement related site inspections	140	88
Enforcement notices served	4	2
Enforcement cases closed	181	184

Meet the team...Katharine Stuart



Three words that sum up your job in planning?

Collaboration, ideas, evidence

Okay, so what's your role at the National Park?

I'm one of three Planning Policy Leads. I'm the Lead for the Local Plan Review and within that my specialist area is Purpose 1 policy – landscape, biodiversity and heritage.

What appealed to you about working in planning?

I have a BSc Environmental Sciences degree and when I came across Planning as a possible career path I was excited about the prospects of blending the two. My goal is to help achieve good outcomes for nature and contribute to nature's recovery through planning.

Can you describe your typical day?

Each day is different and varies over time depending on what stage the Local Plan is at! We are currently at the early stages of the Local Plan Review. A typical day at the moment might involve a Local Plan Review Officer Meeting to share ideas, get input and track progress on all the various strands of work underway, followed by a meeting with colleagues at neighbouring authorities in West Sussex on addressing water neutrality, and then an afternoon of desktop assessments and site visits for the Land Availability Assessment.

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Best thing about working in planning for a National Park?

The people! I'm grateful to work with such fab colleagues.

I'd also say the purposes and duty of the National Park. These help to provide clear focus for the organisation and help to inspire and support our ambitious and innovative policies such as SD2 Ecosystem Services.

What do you love about the South Downs National Park?

The varied landscapes and habitats.

Currently reading/watching?

I have just finished the second instalment of Richard Osman's Thursday Murder Club – a very entertaining read.

I'm a few pages into my next book – Why Women Grow by Alice Vincent. Based on a series of interviews about women's connection with the land and growing flowers, food and herbs.

Dream holiday destination and why?

All of Scotland! One day I would love to take an extended trip and really explore.

Describe your perfect day (when not working, of course!)

An early start to the beach for a walk, spending some time in my suntrap garden with my cat, followed by a summer's evening catch up with friends.



Planning Committees

The next Planning Committee meetings will be held on 8 June and 13 July.

You can watch the meetings on-demand for up to six months after the meeting through our [webcasting portal](#).

You can look at previous and upcoming agendas on the website [here](#).

Picture credits:

P5 right – Adam Huttly