

# SOUTH DOWNS PLANNING NEWS

UPDATES FROM YOUR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

## Affordable housing gets the green light

**Much-needed affordable housing will be delivered after plans were approved for three village sites.**

The National Park Authority's Planning Committee voted to give the go-ahead to new development in Easebourne, West Sussex, including the conversion of a listed former school to three new homes.

Outline approval was also given to create up to 1,000 square metres of floor space by the Cowdray Farm Shop and Cafe to provide local employment.

Fifty-eight homes will be provided in total for the trio of sites, which are allocated in the South Downs Local Plan.

Twenty will be affordable and will be primarily rented tenure, including five that will be passive house certified. Two will be offered in the first instance to essential workers on the nearby Cowdray Estate.

The Egmont Road site (*below*) will provide one- and two-bedroom houses and flats, using a contemporary



Artist's impression of development from A272

interpretation of the Victorian and Edwardian properties in the vicinity.

Development on the former school site will achieve a sympathetic conversion and adaptation to the core of the listed building to incorporate three flats, and takes a traditional approach to the new homes. The scheme will reduce flood risk and improve agricultural drainage, as well as improve pedestrian access to the primary school and recreation ground.

The re-development of the Estate Works Yard blends a traditional development on the Conservation Area frontage with a more contemporary approach behind, and includes up to 1,000sq m of new employment space. It will deliver a new pedestrian route connecting through to Cowdray Park and a new crossing on Easebourne Lane.

Naomi Langford, Major Projects Officer, said: "These high-quality proposals respond positively to the characters of the individual sites and immediate surroundings, complementing the village of Easebourne and providing much-needed affordable homes."

## New homes in heart of market town



**Thirty-four flats are to be built in a prominent town centre location to replace a vacant brownfield site.**

Plans put forward by 6a Vision Homes for the demolition of a workshop building in Lavant Street, close to the railway station in Petersfield, were approved by the National Park's Planning Committee.

The residential and commercial scheme includes a three-storey contemporary-style 'landmark' building that will feature a ground-floor café 'hub' and flexible office space above.



The scheme will incorporate high levels of sustainability, including a fully electric heating and hot water system that includes solar panels and

battery storage, green roofs, re-using the existing building's fabric to save on embedded carbon. There will be significant reductions in CO2 emissions beyond Building Regulations, utilising PassivHaus principles, and electric vehicle charging points.

Richard Ferguson, Development Management Lead for the west of the National Park, said: "These proposals facilitate the re-development of a vacant brownfield site with a well-designed contemporary landmark scheme opposite the station, in a sustainable location, to deliver new commercial space and smaller housing stock, including affordable housing, in the heart of Petersfield and a gateway location into the National Park.

"The excellent transport links and central location are likely to make these homes very appealing to younger buyers.

"The proposals will also preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area."

## Appeal is dismissed by Planning Inspector



**A planning appeal to relocate a nursery to a greenfield site in the National Park to free up land for 70 homes has been dismissed by the Government Planning Inspector.**

The decisions of the South Downs National Park Authority and Arun District Council on two related planning applications were upheld by the relevant inspectors.

It comes after permission was refused for a new 70-home development at Lansdowne Nursery, off the A259 at Ferring, just outside the National Park boundary.

The applicant wanted to relocate the nursery business to a greenfield site at Gravel Pit, Loves Corner, Long Furlong, near Clapham, in West Sussex.

In relation to the proposed development at Long Furlong, the inspector found that the appeal scheme would "would radically change the character and appearance of the site, which would be "heavily urbanised by the access works and the construction of an internal road, car park and other built features, including a café, lighting and signage." He added: "The appeal scheme would result in a moderate and thus meaningful residual adverse impact on the landscape. The intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside would be harmed."

Regarding the homes just outside the National Park, the inspector said: "I find that the development would harm the character and appearance of the area, giving rise to intrusive sprawl. In this regard it would not be sensitively located in relation to the National Park, and attempts to avoid or minimise adverse impacts would do very little to alter the harm that would arise."

## Fine of £12,000 after breaching planning rules



**A horse-owner who built stables, plumbed in a caravan and placed a shipping container on rural land in the National Park has been ordered to pay more than £12,000 in fines and costs and told to return the site to its original condition.**

Jane Soul, 65, of Eastleigh, was originally served with enforcement notices ordering her to remove stables and stop keeping horses on land in Privett back in 2013. She initially complied with those notices, but between 2016 and 2020 she started to redevelop the site with new, larger stables and new hard surfacing.

She then purchased further land to the south of the site and placed a residential style caravan and shipping container with a catchment tank. The caravan was fitted with mains water connection, drainage, and had gas connected for heat and cooking. More shelters were erected and she continued to keep horses on the site.

As a result, planning enforcement officers, working on behalf of the South Downs National Park Authority, issued a further order in 2021, ordering her to remove the development.

Soul appeared at Basingstoke Magistrates Court on September 4 this year where she was found guilty of breaching all three notices. The judge said Soul's actions showed a deliberate failure to comply with the planning authority and that the requirements of the notices were 'crystal clear'.

Mike Hughes, Interim Director of Planning at the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "The National Park was designated for its wonderful landscape and natural beauty, to be enjoyed by the whole nation.

"In order to protect this treasured area that brings so many benefits to both nature and people, we need to be tough when planning rules are so blatantly ignored and real damage is done. I would like to commend the enforcement officers for their persistence and resilience in achieving this successful outcome."

## Plans for culture and education hub in Downs



**Major plans have been submitted to turn a former dairy farm into a culture, arts and education hub.**

Plans have been put forward to the National Park Authority for Black Robin Farm, off Beachy Head Road, Eastbourne.

The applicant, Eastbourne Borough Council, has applied for a change of use of the site to include a cultural and education centre with business studios, refectory and event space, as well as the construction of a new gallery building. The proposals include new pedestrian access and works to the existing vehicle access, associated infrastructure, vehicle parking, and landscaping.

The proposed hub would be operated by Towner Eastbourne.



Naomi Langford, Major Projects Officer, said: "This is a significant and innovative proposal in the landscape."

The formal consultation period on the plans ended last month and it is hoped a decision will be made on the proposals by spring next year.



Current view of the former dairy farm

# Funding boost of £3m for local communities



**New off-road routes for walkers and cyclists, new play areas, school improvements and work to enhance a river are among the projects to benefit from a major funding boost from the South Downs National Park Authority.**

More than £2.5m will benefit 42 community schemes across Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex.

The investment comes from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is paid by developers to support new local infrastructure, with the Authority playing an administrative role.

As well as the £2.5m, 37 parish councils across the National Park will be taking a share of just over £550,000 to support grassroot projects in their area.

The CIL funding is the highest amount ever given out by the National Park Authority.

Among the inspiring projects will be those that help connect people to the countryside, including the creation of a new 2.5-mile walking and cycling route linking Stanmer Park in Brighton to Ditchling Beacon and the South Downs Way.

East Sussex will also see improvements to Malling Recreation Ground in Lewes, as well as the creation of a new “wild” play area for children at Seven Sisters Country Park.

In West Sussex, significant funding is going towards extending the Centurion Way from Chichester along the old railway line to link with the South Downs Way at Cocking. There will also be the refurbishment of the village hall at Bury.

Ecological enhancements will be made to the River Rother to help fish populations.

In Hampshire, a series of projects will benefit from funding, including access improvements at St Catherine’s Hill at Winchester and at Queen Elizabeth Country Park, near Waterlooville, where a dew pond

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will also be restored into a wildlife-rich haven. Petersfield Rugby Club will benefit from a new renewable energy scheme to reduce running costs, while Petersfield Open Air Swimming Pool will be getting new toilet facilities.

Kelly Porter, Major Projects Lead, who helps to oversee CIL funding in the National Park, said: “As 2023 draws to a close, we’re pleased to announce our highest ever amount of CIL funding to help local communities across the region.”



“Having access to green spaces and first-class facilities are vital for the wellbeing of local communities, both inside and outside the National Park. So many of these initiatives will help connect people of all ages with the countryside and it’s wonderful to be able to make that difference.”

The South Downs National Park Authority will open the call for projects for the 2023/24 round of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding on 1 January 2024. The window for submission of Expressions of Interest will be open until 12 April 2024. For more information, guidelines and application forms please visit this [webpage](#)

### **East Sussex**

Malling Recreation Ground, Lewes – path improvements for walkers and cyclists. £67,000

Beachy Head – chaplaincy improvements. £50,000

Lewes Rowing Club – building new clubhouse. £49,000

Linklater Pavilion, Lewes – replacement lift. £15,000

Seven Sisters Country Park – creation of 'Wild Play' area. £50,000

Stanmer Park to Ditchling Beacon Link to South Downs Way – creation of 4.2km off-road route for walkers and cyclists. £181,505.70

### **West Sussex**

Centurion Way Phase 2 – construction of part of a new 5.3km walking and cycling path from West Dean to South Downs Way at Cocking (following the former Chichester to Midhurst Railway Line) £650,000

Midhurst Rother College – canopy to amphitheatre. £125,000

Petworth Park Sports Ground – sports pavilion redevelopment. £100,000

Bury CE Primary School – classroom extension. £100,000

Fittleworth – improvements to Serpent Trail. £100,000

Bury Village Hall – refurbishments including sustainability improvements. £100,000

North Mill, Easebourne – improvements to the River Rother to comply with Water Framework Directive for fish. £50,000

Midhurst Green Walkway – improvements from the Grange Community Leisure Centre to the Old Town including planting and signage. £25,000

Lilac Cottage (part of the Old Library), Midhurst – refurbishment for Midhurst Community Hub. £15,000

## Coveted Design Awards are launched for 2024

**An exciting awards scheme to celebrate outstanding and innovative design in the South Downs National Park returns bigger and better than ever.**

After a five-year break, the prestigious South Downs Designs Awards are back with an extended line-up of categories.

The awards celebrate high standards of urban, architectural and landscape design, as well as promote creativity and understanding of the National Park through design.



The categories will be:

**Residential** – includes completed extensions, single buildings, small and large housing developments, and visitor accommodation.

**Non-residential** – includes completed commercial, industrial, farming, infrastructure, recreation, and leisure developments.

**Conservation** – includes completed historic parks and gardens, historic buildings, monuments, as well as excellent craftsmanship.

**Future projects** – includes projects that celebrate distinction in unbuilt projects on paper and the potential for positive contribution to the National Park, its communities and the planet.

Winners will receive a specially designed trophy, beautifully hand-carved in South Downs oak by acclaimed West Sussex-based sculptor, Alison Crowther. All the shortlisted entries across the four categories will be put forward to a public poll and the project with the most votes will win the People's Choice Award.

Rafael Grosso-Macpherson, Design Officer for the National Park, added: "The scope of our 'future projects' category is really broad. It includes unbuilt projects on paper and the potential for positive contribution to the National Park, its communities and the planet. It could include student projects, concept designs, masterplans, design strategies, and corridor design projects such as watercourses and transport frameworks.

Nominations will open on 1 January, 2024 and finish on 30 April. The shortlist will be announced in the summer of 2024, with a glittering awards ceremony taking place in the autumn.

Visit [www.southdowns.gov.uk/designawards](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/designawards)

Stedham Recreation Grounds – improvements including installation of wheelchair accessible roundabout and accessible path. £11,000

Steyning Downland Scheme – restorative grazing project. £5,570

Park Mill, Shillinglee Road, near Plaistow – restoration project including part of Shillinglee Lake Site of Special Scientific Interest. £50,000

Findon village – new interpretation boards. £2,575

Lavant Village Green – restoration works. £2,000

### **Hampshire**

St Catherine's Hill, Winchester – replacement steps to southern slope and reducing recreational pressures to Site of Special Scientific Interest. £114,650

East Meon Village Hall – refurbishment (including sustainability improvements) £100,000

East Meon Byway 46 – byway improvement works including surfacing and drainage. £25,000

East Meon – improvements to multi-use games area. £7,500

Newman Collard Playing Fields, Liss – drainage improvements works. £78,000

A32 Farringdon, Chawton – flood alleviation scheme. £70,000

Queen Elizabeth Country Park, near Clanfield – improvements to South Downs Way, increasing access for all. £60,000

Queen Elizabeth Country Park, near Clanfield – restoration of Butser Dew Pond £20,000

Churcher's College / Penns Place, Petersfield – 430m permissive path linking south side of Penns Place to River Rother footpath. £50,000

Hampshire-wide – Hampshire County Council's Parish Pollinators Project increasing diversity in hedgerows and other planting. £50,000

Petersfield Open Air Swimming Pool – toilet refurbishment. £50,000

Petersfield Rugby Club – green energy initiative (renewable energy to reduce increasing energy costs) £40,000

Liss Forest Recreation Ground – improvements including replacement play area, drainage improvements and expansion of basketball area. £40,000

East Worldham – public realm and highway improvements. £25,000

Butser Ancient Farm, Chalton – accessibility improvements. £20,000

Twyford Community Centre – refurbishment including sustainability improvements. £20,000

Mingledown Woods, Chawton – access and ecological improvements including tree planting. £20,000

The Ford and Berry Lane, Twyford – footpath improvements £15,000

Petersfield Central Car Park, Park Road – installation of Changing Places Toilet. £15,000

Stroud – replacement bus shelter. £10,000

Allan King Way / Nuns Walk, Winchester – footpath improvements. £8,000

Stepping Stones Playgroup, Sheet – improvements to outdoor learning and play area, including creation of covered play area. £4,000

## New Interim Chief Executive leads Authority



**The South Downs National Park Authority has appointed Tim Slaney as its Interim Chief Executive Officer.**

Following a meeting of Authority Members last week (12 Dec), Tim will succeed Trevor Beattie, who is retiring on 1 January after 12 years at the helm of Britain's youngest National Park.

Trevor was the Authority's first permanent CEO, overseeing the significant progress the National Park has made on biodiversity restoration, landscape enhancement, creating new access routes, raising the profile of the region at a national level and ensuring more people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy the South Downs.

Tim steps up after 12 years on the Authority's Senior Management Team, setting up and leading one of the country's busiest planning teams. During this time as Director he has overseen the creation of the award-winning, landscape-led South Downs Local Plan, a leading neighbourhood community planning programme, new affordable housing, more vital infrastructure for local communities and a groundbreaking Community Infrastructure Levy scheme in a National Park. Tim has taken a leading role on managing operations at Seven Sisters Country Park. He is most proud of the award given by the Royal Town Planning Institute for environmental excellence around planning as a whole, including teambuilding and culture.

Tim said: "It is an honour to be appointed interim Chief Executive of the South Downs National Park Authority and I look forward to building on the tremendous legacy that Trevor has passed on."

Tim will be leading the Authority's team of 180 staff. The process of appointing a permanent Chief Executive Officer will begin next year.

Mike Hughes will step up as Interim Director of Planning during this period.

## Assessing future needs for housing and employment



**An assessment has been made on future needs for housing and employment land in the South Downs National Park.**

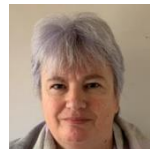
The Authority has published its Housing & Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), which will provide evidence as part of the Local Plan Review.

The South Downs Local Plan reaches its fifth birthday next July and the Government requires Local Plans to be reviewed every five years.

A key element of the Review is updating the evidence for housing and other development needs and assessing the available sites to meet these needs.

The HEDNA has produced a housing need number of 350 homes a year across the National Park – equivalent to 6,300 homes between 2024 and 2042.

The assessment also includes the need for 13.2ha for industrial use and 5.9ha for offices.



Claire Tester, Planning Policy Manager for the National Park, said: "The HEDNA is an important piece of evidence that will help inform the Local Plan Review.

"It's important to stress that these figures are just the starting point and not necessarily the same numbers that we will be planning for in the updated South Downs Local Plan. Our constraints as a National Park and other issues, such as flood risks, will need to be taken into account as part of this detailed and complex process."

The draft Local Plan Review will go through two rounds of formal public consultation prior to independent examination – the first expected between January and March 2025.

Claire added: "It's so important we keep the Local Plan up-to-date so we can make sure that we are meeting the needs of our communities, while also conserving and enhancing the special landscape qualities of the National Park.

The HEDNA can be read [here](#).

## SMEs and planning – what you need to know



### Business planning is more important than ever for an SME in 2024.

Knowing your strategy to support the business and having a firm grip on the numbers is key for success and growth, especially when margins are tightening with the increasing cost of energy and supplies.

But there will be a stage in the lifetime of many a South Downs business when you may have to dabble in a different kind of planning – that of submitting a detailed application to the National Park Authority in order to gain planning permission.

It could be your business is needing extra space, diversifying, implementing cost-saving renewable energy projects or you could be one of the numerous small and medium-sized property developers that are such a crucial part of the local housebuilding industry.

Applying for planning permission in a National Park comes with its own opportunities and challenges. This is a protected landscape, designated for the nation for its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. So, new development must take these factors into account. The bar is set high for any proposal's design and sustainability credentials. The National Park is also about creating opportunities for people to enjoy this amazing space – a key opportunity, therefore, for land and visitor-based or tourism businesses.

Located in the busiest part of England, placemaking is a job the National Park Authority approaches with care, recognising its responsibility. Did you know the National Park Authority deals with over 5,000 planning cases a year and is in the top 30 busiest Planning Authorities in the UK?

With all this in mind, what are the key aspects businesses should consider if seeking planning permission from the National Park Authority? And is there a pearl of wisdom that will ensure a green light to your plans?

“The first port of call for any SME looking to submit a planning application is to engage with us early,” says Mike Hughes, Interim Director of Planning.

“Take pre-application advice and provide as much information as possible, being open and transparent about aspirations, as well as your needs.

“Tell us the bigger picture of what you are doing, especially if you are doing anything in relation to climate action, access for all or any nature recovery work. This is a genuine consideration for us and we will work with you closely if you are able to increase your actions in this area.

“We deal with applications large and small, but if it's a big project we would always recommend you invest in a planning agent. They will have the skills and know-how to navigate the planning system and ensure you have the best possible chance of a successful outcome. It may be costly, but it will save time and most likely cost in the end.

“If you make an application, do look at our One App validation list, in terms of what is required. Bear in mind many of the requirements are set nationally.”



Mike explains that being aware of the policies that apply to your proposal is also important, not just any single policy but the Local Plan as a whole.

In the National Park, the “gold standard” is the South Downs

Local Plan – a detailed summary of all the key policies around where development can take place, design opportunities, the protection of habitats and ecosystem services such as the South Downs Aquifer, renewable energy, and lots more.

There are a plethora of “Supplementary Planning Documents” and “Technical Advice Notes” – basically more detailed guides for applicants that help shape your proposals – around all kinds of aspects, such as parking, building design, dark sky protection and camping and glamping, to name but a few. It's also good to know, for instance, if your proposal is located in a conservation area and what that means for design. You can see now the benefit of hiring a planning agent for all but the most basic of schemes but do feel free to talk to us first!

The South Downs Local Plan also places an emphasis on supporting the rural economy and fostering thriving local communities, so the door is always open to SMEs looking to help meet these goals.

“Don't be afraid to sell your scheme,” adds Mike.

“This is a National Park but it's not a museum. We really do welcome an open conversation about

## Mandatory BNG arrives



**With Biodiversity Net Gain becoming mandatory next month, Ecology Planning Lead Dr Lynsey Robinson gives some useful explanation and background.**



Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a **measurably** better state than it was beforehand. It is intended to deliver measurable improvements

for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. A national mandatory BNG requirement is currently expected to come into effect for new applications for major development from January 2024, following provisions set out in the Environment Act 2021, with more time given to small sites (April 2024) and Nationally Significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) (expected in 2025).

Secondary legislation and associated written guidance is expected from Government in November 2023, which will guide how BNG will be delivered across England, including the date on which BNG will become mandatory in the planning system. Defra are publishing BNG updates on their Land Use blog if you would like to follow progress of the roll out **[Land use: policies and framework \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)**.

Whilst the requirement to demonstrate and deliver at least 10% BNG and the core processes involved in doing so are set out in the national legislation, the requirement can be tailored to local circumstances. The Authority's BNG Technical Advice Note has been informing development in the National Park since it was published in January 2022

**[Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note \(TAN\) - South Downs National Park Authority](#)**. This will be updated in early 2024 to guide BNG delivery within the National Park area, in advance of the regional Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) for Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex which are currently being

proposals that innovate and look to the future. We want to work with you and try and make something happen, that is the buzz of planning. If, however, a scheme is clearly unacceptable, we will try and tell you early."

Asked about whether there's a winning formula to obtaining planning permission in the National Park, Mike says the biggest consideration is landscape and design in its widest sense.

"The fundamental question we will ask is have you considered the landscape in the development of your plans and how have you adapted plans to reflect this?" explains Mike.

"The Authority will always be considering whether any scheme has been landscape led by the applicant or their agents. Respecting the context or the character of the area, for example the building materials reflecting the geology and availability of the locality, or dark night sky considerations and how this has informed the design of the building and surrounding landscaping will always be pivotal in our thinking. The Local Plan reflects this.

"We encourage applicants to briefly tell the story of how you've arrived at your final design and layout.

"Understanding context and responding to it in a positive way gives the best chance for a scheme to succeed, in my experience. Who knows, you could win a South Downs Design Award which we know from previous winners has some value and adds to their brand."

People and communities are at the heart of the National Park, so be sure to connect and liaise with local residents, other businesses and community groups.

"As a basic point we always encourage applicants to undertake some community engagement, irrespective of the size of any particular scheme prior to submitting an application," says Mike.

"This may vary depending on the context, but we would suggest at the least that applicants consult adjoining neighbours. It may be that some suggestions by local residents can be incorporated in the scheme and they feel that their concerns have been heard."

For more information on planning applications, including whether planning permission is needed for a particular proposal, head to this **[webpage](#)**

If you are making an application visit **[www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-applications/apply/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-applications/apply/)**



developed and expected to be available in 2025. BNG and LNRS were both set out in the Environment Act and aim to reverse the decline of biodiversity in England. When available, the LNRS will provide the framework for a strategic approach to off-site BNG delivery, agreeing evidence-based locations to expand and connect existing habitat and provide wider environmental benefits, with the aim of creating locally driven, joined-up outcomes for nature.

In BNG, Biodiversity Units refers to the output of the biodiversity metric and is the term used for the sale of off-site biodiversity units. Statutory Credits are the last resort option for developers provided by Government, if the site's BNG cannot be delivered onsite or via purchasing off-site biodiversity units.

We are following BNG developments and guidance closely and will be working with colleagues, Members and host authorities over the coming months during the BNG roll-out phase. Further updates to follow!

## Acquire BNG units now in first-rate scheme



**A landmark agreement has been signed that marks the first step towards creating large new areas of habitat for wildlife in the South Downs National Park.**

Thirty one hectares of land – almost 100 football pitches – at Iford Estate, in East Sussex, have been signed over for nature recovery.

The large swathe of downland is the first to appear on the National Park Authority's register of land that is formally dedicated for "Biodiversity Net Gain" (BNG) provision.

The 31 hectares is just the start for the Iford estate. The 1,200ha estate, near Lewes, has an ambitious 30-year landscape-scale vision with nature recovery at its heart, using BNG as the main vehicle for securing the necessary investment.

The 'Iford Biodiversity Project' will ultimately see about 800ha of land permanently dedicated to nature recovery, involving the generation of about 3,000 biodiversity units.

The plan involves the creation of floodplain grazing marsh to provide habitat for breeding and overwintering waders, species-rich grassland for rare plants, insects and mammals, as well as tree planting on parts of the farm to link up with existing woodland.

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The National Park Authority hopes that other major landowners may follow suit and dedicate areas for BNG.

Developers can also now get in touch with the National Park Authority to purchase biodiversity units.

Nick Heasman, Countryside and Policy Manager at the National Park, said: "This is a major step forward for the National Park's ReNature initiative, which is looking to create 13,000 hectares of new habitat to help wildlife flourish.

"Biodiversity loss and climate change are two of the biggest long-term issues facing our country and this innovative scheme at Iford will kickstart a regional recovery that will benefit both nature and local communities."

The National Park's brokerage service, officially called "ReNature Credits", hopes to connect landowners and developers to create areas of land for nature recovery.

Nick added: "As a National Park covering 1,600km<sup>2</sup> and with over 1,000 different landowners, we can identify the very best areas for biodiversity restoration and ensure habitat connectivity.

"With mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain coming into force in January for major planning applications, now is a great time to get in touch with the National Park Authority about acquiring credits and giving back to nature. We are offering a simple, seamless and stress-free way of acquiring credits that has the highest levels of integrity and ecological standards."

Iford Estate Manager Ben Taylor said: "Our scheme draws on the extensive habitat and species surveys conducted over the past few years, as well as historical mapping to determine land use patterns, soil sampling and hydrological assessments.

"This is already a diverse and inspirational landscape, with recent surveys showing over 1,300 species present on the Estate, many with conservation status, including 155 species of birds of which 87 are of conservation concern.

"We will increase the diversity of species over the whole estate, whilst still retaining food production as the principal land use on the most fertile land."

To acquire credits or to get in touch with the National Park's team delivering ReNature Credits, visit

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/renature-credits/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/renature-credits/)



**For immediate questions or enquiries call Mark Alden on 01730 819303 or 07850 570297.**

Alternatively, email [ReNaturecredits@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:ReNaturecredits@southdowns.gov.uk)

## Authority monitoring report

## Neighbourhood planning update

The Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) provides local communities with the power to shape development in their area.



Once “made”, a NDP becomes part of the Development Plan for the South Downs National Park, and its policies and proposals are used in the determination of planning applications and appeals.

The Authority has advised parishes not to start any **New NDPs** or **NDP Reviews** until the South Downs Local Plan Review (LPR) has passed its examination stage, which is anticipated for 2026.

However, a number of parishes that started to prepare their NDPs a number of years ago, have made significant progress this year.

The full list of NDPs which have been “made” or are being prepared is available on the [South Downs Neighbourhood Plan webpage](#). In terms of this year:

- The Bramshott & Liphook NDP went out to public consultation in the summer.
- The Peacehaven & Telscombe NDP went out to public consultation in spring and autumn;
- The Rowlands Castle NDP was “made” in November.
- The Rottingdean NDP’s decision statement went to Brighton & Hove City Council’s special committee on 8 December, and a date for the referendum will be announced soon.

If you have any queries about neighbourhood planning, then you can email us at [neighbourhood@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhood@southdowns.gov.uk).

## Minerals and Waste Consultations

Two counties in the National Park are currently undertaking a partial review of their minerals and waste strategies.

The modifications consultation on the [East Sussex Minerals and Waste Local Plan Partial Review](#) closes on 22 December.

The [Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Partial Review](#): Regulation 19 consultation is due to start in January 2024, subject to final agreement by the four other local planning authorities.



We have produced our ninth Authority Monitoring Report, giving an overview of some of the key achievements for 2022-23.

The AMR reports progress on the timetable and milestones for the preparation of documents set out in the Local Development Scheme.

Here are a number of headline findings:

### A Thriving, Living Landscape

- 27% Habitat average; 129% Hedgerow average and 21% Watercourse average Biodiversity Net Gain achieved
- 483 hectares secured to date for Biodiversity & Nutrient Neutrality offsetting across the National Park
- Creation of five wildlife ponds approved

### People Connected with Places

- 850m of non-motorised user footpath completed on the latest phase of the Egrets Way between Newhaven & Piddinghoe
- 13km new non-motorised user link between Lewes and Polegate opened in April 2023
- A total of 117 units of visitor accommodation were permitted
- 15,307sqm (net) of community sports facilities permitted in local venues across the National Park

### Towards a Sustainable Future

- A net total of 1,953 dwellings benefit from planning permission but are unbuilt
- Of these 537 are defined as affordable homes
- 205 dwellings were completed last year in the National Park, of which 63 were affordable
- 9,401m<sup>2</sup> net total of employment floorspace was completed in 2022/23

## Eco-enhancements from small planning applications



A barn owllet in a barn owl box installed on a building



**Adam Duncombe, Development Management Officer, writes about the collective contribution small planning applications can make to nature recovery and climate.**

I have been working as a development management officer for the National Park for around five years now. It's a fantastic place to work and perhaps more importantly it offers the opportunity to help applicants for smaller proposals understand how each proposal can benefit the natural environment and enhance the special qualities of the National Park.

Sometimes reading the headlines the climate change issues we face globally can feel overwhelming for those of us going about our daily lives. During the consideration of an application, I speak to applicants who are very keen to provide eco enhancements to proposals but are worried about the cost when already tight against budgets.

It's important to remember that no matter how small the eco enhancement is, it's a win. The National Parks local development plan policy Ecosystem Services (SD2) explains that "development proposals will be permitted where they have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services" This is a fantastic opportunity for anyone who is developing with the National Park to provide a positive environmental impact.

"That's great, but how much will this cost me?" This is the even better news. Less than you would think. Opportunities for eco enhancements can include measures such as additional native wildflower planting for pollinators within a garden, the introduction of bird, bat boxes and wood piles within a site to provide additional habitats for local wildlife or planting a native hedge or vegetation within the development site.

These are just some of the many enhancements that can easily be achieved and indeed most of the above can be provided from recycled materials or seeds/cuttings from the local area.



The **Ecosystem Services Technical Advice Note** for householders is an essential document for those applying for any householder development within the National Park. Its packed full of practical, easy to follow advice to assist developers when applying for planning permission.

Clearly the more enhancements an applicant puts forward the better and I would urge all applicants, regardless of the scale of the proposal, to really consider how development can add value to the ecosystem.

In closing, the point I want to really highlight is although each of the above examples may feel small and minor in its own right, when considered in the context of the number of planning applications we consider as a whole within the National Park, these so called "small" enhancements are not small at all and as a whole add a tremendous amount of value to our natural environment and provide much needed eco enhancements within the National Park and our country as a whole.

## Planning stats at a glance

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Appeals submitted to the Planning Inspectorate     | <b>31</b>    |
| Appeals started                                    | <b>23</b>    |
| Appeals determined                                 | <b>18</b>    |
| Appeals successfully defended                      | <b>10</b>    |
| Statutory submissions received                     | <b>991</b>   |
| Statutory submissions received via Planning Portal | <b>832</b>   |
| Statutory submissions determined                   | <b>977</b>   |
| Neighbours notified                                | <b>5,967</b> |
| Representations received                           | <b>1,920</b> |
| Consultations issued                               | <b>2,877</b> |
| Conditions imposed                                 | <b>3,470</b> |
| Enquiries for planning advice                      | <b>252</b>   |
| Enforcement complaints received                    | <b>173</b>   |
| Enforcement cases opened                           | <b>155</b>   |
| Enforcement related site inspections               | <b>91</b>    |
| Enforcement notices served                         | <b>13</b>    |
| Enforcement cases closed                           | <b>154</b>   |

*(Figures from 1/7/23 to 30/9/23)*

## Meet the team...



**For this edition we catch up with Philippa Smyth, Principal Development Management Officer.**

### **Three words that sum up your job in planning?**

Consideration, negotiation and balance.

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

I am one of the Principal Development Management Officers in the DM Team. I am responsible for processing some of the more complex planning applications within the National Park. I also hope to be able to support other officers within the team, once I have learnt the SDNPA ropes and have stopped asking so many newbie questions!

### **What appealed to you about working in planning?**

I have always had a bit of a geeky fascination with maps and plans, so I think it started there. I have a huge OS map in my kitchen for planning runs and adventures. I also think our natural and built environments are so important to how we live, work and play and it's exciting to be part of the development and management of these areas.

### **Can you describe your typical day?**

No one day is ever the same in planning! But a day might involve site visits around the Park to make assessments of planning applications on the ground, writing reports and negotiating improvements with applicants and agents. Oh, and many cups of tea!

### **Best thing about working in planning for a National Park?**

It's exciting to play a role in protecting the Park and allowing it to evolve in the most appropriate way. I love getting out and about and seeing the varying landscapes, businesses and communities.

### **What do you love about the South Downs National Park?**

I grew up in the New Forest so the great outdoors has always been an important thing for me. But the South Downs - what an incredible place! Varied landscapes, views for days and lots of destinations for adventures! I have spent a lot of time walking and running in the National Park and it's great that I can spend more time here and play a little part in its future. I have covered most of the South Downs Way in races or in supporting friends who have taken on the whole lot in one day, but hope to join up any bits that I have missed.

### **Currently reading/watching?**

I have recently started watching 'Friends' from the beginning. I'm not sure all of the jokes would be considered appropriate these days!

### **Dream holiday destination and why?**

I am a bit of a homebird but anywhere with big hills, stunning scenery and a chance to get out and about in the landscape.

### **If you could only eat one dish for the rest of your life, what would it be?**

My mum's macaroni cheese. Name me a better dish, I'll wait!

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

A long walk or run with friends, in beautiful countryside followed by a pint and a big bowl of chips!



### **Pic credits**

P2 Richard Reed; P12 (Christmas Card) Larry Van Howe