

Report to **South Downs Policy & Resources Committee**  
Date **29 February 2024**  
By **Countryside & Policy Manager (Eastern Downs)**  
Title of Report **The Chalk Coast National Nature Reserve: proposal to extend Lullington Heath National Nature Reserve to include land at Seven Sisters Country Park**

**Decision**

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**Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:**

- 1. To note and welcome the emergence of the Chalk Coast National Nature Reserve proposal of Natural England which involves the extension of Lullington Heath National Nature Reserve: and,**
  - 2. To recommend to the National Park Authority that the SDNPA apply to Natural England to become an Approved Body under section 35 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and to seek a declaration from Natural England that the land at Seven Sisters Country Park currently designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest also be designated as a National Nature Reserve and become part of the emerging Chalk Coast National Nature Reserve.**
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**I. Introduction**

- I.1** This report has been produced to outline the emergence of the Chalk Coast National Nature Reserve proposal of Natural England which would become the first “ground water inspired” super National Nature Reserve (sNNR). Connecting drinking water, chalk geology and habitats and regenerative farming to provide vital services for people living, working, and visiting this part of the South Downs.
- I.2** It seeks the committee to recommend to the NPA that the SDNPA apply to Natural England to become an approved body and to seek a declaration from Natural England that the land at Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP) owned by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) can voluntarily be included in the extension of Lullington Heath National Nature Reserve (NNR).
- I.3** The focus of SDNPA land to be included in the extended NNR is the land designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within SSCP (as shown in Figure 2).
- I.4** The extended NNR has a working title of The Chalk Coast NNR.
- I.5** The project is being facilitated by Natural England (NE), as part of the England-wide King’s Series of partnership NNRs and is a key element of delivering the Government’s commitments to both reverse the decline in biodiversity and deliver climate resilience.
- I.6** The NNR partnership is about collaborative working and should be viewed as a catalyst for action for nature recovery and climate resilience in a shared landscape, not just a badge or name.

## 2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The **National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949** sets out the purpose of NNRs.
- 2.2 **Section 35 (1) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** states that a NNR will be land which is of national importance, and which is:
- managed as a nature reserve through a Nature Reserve Agreement (NRA) between the landowner and Natural England;
  - held and managed as a nature reserve by Natural England (ie where we have the freehold or leasehold); or,
  - held by an 'Approved Body' (any other organisation approved by Natural England) and managed as a nature reserve.
- 2.3 The **Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006** extended the role of NNRs to include the provision of opportunities for public enjoyment of nature and/or open-air recreation, where these purposes don't conflict with the nature conservation purpose.
- 2.4 **Sections 6 and 7 of the Countryside Act 1968** set out the purposes of a Country Park and an authority's powers in relation to them. The purposes of a Country Park are set out in section 6 as "... providing, or improving, opportunities for the enjoyment of the countryside by the public ..." and in exercising powers in relation to a Country Park the Authority is to have regard to the location of that area in the countryside in relation to an urban or built-up area, and to the availability and adequacy of existing facilities for the enjoyment of the countryside by the public.
- 2.5 The proposal fits under both National Park Purposes;
- Purpose 1: To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, and
- Purpose 2: To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.
- Outcomes 1-3 of the Partnership Management Plan 2020-25; and contributes towards the Nature Recovery High Level Targets in the Corporate Plan 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 2.6 The Chalk Coast NNR would potentially include land owned and/or managed by eight organisations. Covering over 2000 hectares (ha) it will help protect the underlying geology and support natural processes to protect groundwater, as well as allowing for ecological functioning at scale for nature's recovery. The NNR forms the core part of a wider Nature Recovery Project, and both will contribute to the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP) targets. NNRs are also part of the Government's wider plans for nature recovery as a core part of the Nature Recovery Network and 30by30, forming part of the Protected Sites category of 'Areas that Currently Count', set out in the 9 December 2023 paper [Delivering 30by30 on land in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/124444/Delivering_30by30_on_land_in_England_-_GOV.UK.pdf)
- 2.7 There is an opportunity for the core landowners and managers to take advantage of the land managed primarily for nature conservation between Seaford and Eastbourne, to voluntarily declare a National Nature Reserve, approved by the Natural England Board. The NNR would form the beating heart of the larger Seaford to Eastbourne Nature Recovery Project, restoring nature at scale to address water quality, biodiversity loss, climate change, and public health and wellbeing, underpinning local economies. The new Chalk Coast NNR would deliver a joined-up approach to facilitate working relationships across the landscape, resulting in effective and efficient management, which delivers ecosystem services, thriving nature whilst providing savings, in both cost and resource, to the organisations involved. There is a particular emphasis on climate resilience and protecting the quality and quantity of groundwater, which provides drinking water to Seaford and Eastbourne, from two underground aquifers.
- 2.8 The date proposed for the Natural England Board to formally consider the voluntary declaration of the Nature Reserve is November 2024. Regular meetings are now underway

where partners are shaping the NNR, as well as connecting with and involving wider stakeholders.

2.9 The Natural England guidance for NNRs is set out in:

- The Strategy for England's National Nature Reserves (Appendix 1)
- The Selection Principles for National Nature Reserves in England (Appendix 2)
- Natural England Standard National Nature Reserves Management Standards (Appendix 3)

### 3. Issues for consideration

#### Background

- 3.1 Lullington Heath is a National Nature Reserve (NNR) situated above Friston Forest in East Sussex. At only 63ha it is an ecological island of rare chalk heath and grassland in a landscape surrounded by farmland, as well as multiple Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), the majority of which are in unfavourable condition.
- 3.2 The focus for the proposed 2000 ha+ Chalk Coast NNR is framed by the Selection Principles for NNRs: Nature, Science and People (Appendix 2)

#### Nature

- 3.3 Bigger, better, more and joined habitats: To maximise the value of these chalk habitats, they will benefit from improved landscape scale connectivity and appropriate grazing to control the level of scrub and preventing coarse grasses from growing. It is currently proving difficult for managers of the smaller areas within this landscape to operate their own herds, especially when they are not based on site. The NNR could offer access to a potential coordinated 'super herd' in the area notwithstanding the challenges associated with achieving appropriate grazing density and presence of bovine TB locally. This could provide the means to deliver an essential, tailored grazing plan that will optimise the habitat for nationally rare species as well as enhancing the beauty of the landscape by increasing wildflower species. This, in turn, will provide a vital food source for pollinators, as well as restoring nature to enhance the enjoyment and wellbeing of local visitors and tourists to the area. Working together will also strengthen Partners' delivery of England's legal commitment to species abundance and halting extinctions. Joint working through the Chalk Coast NNR will develop ecologically functioning species conservation strategies to put life back into the landscape. Species research has already identified a short-list for targeting, highlighting for example, passage birds and chalk orchids, as well as locally exclusive critically endangered species like the grayling butterfly and wart-biter cricket.

#### Science

- 3.4 Climate resilient groundwater: The drinking water supply for Seaford, Eastbourne, and the surrounding villages, comes from two chalk aquifers within the area. [Recent research](#) by South East Water has shown the quality of the water from the aquifers is deteriorating and without changes in land use above will require costly chemical intervention. The overall volume of water available for abstraction is also under increasing pressure from supply climate change. Managing the land above these underground aquifers to enhance good quality and resilient chalk habitats will enable the natural filtering of unwanted pollutants, such as fertilisers, pesticides, and animal waste. Good management will also increase deep soil moisture to improve water supply and enhance aquifer recharge. This provides clean and plentiful drinking water for residents; especially pertinent as weather extremes become more frequent.

#### People

- 3.5 Seven Sisters Country Park is managed as a visitor attraction, encouraging enjoyment and engagement with nature and the landscape. As a gateway to the South Downs National Park, opportunities are embraced to engage a wide range of audiences with an accessible landscape whilst promoting access, education, conservation and engagement activities with nature. Opportunities are also provided for renature volunteering where people can

practically engage with the management and restoration of the chalk grassland and wildlife habitats.

- 3.6 Since SDNPA took ownership in 2021, significant investment has been made in the visitor centre and other facilities. Raising awareness and telling the story around the landscape, nature and climate change is already underway giving SSCP a central role in engaging the local community and visitors with the National Nature Reserve. Located within the Sussex Heritage Coast, SSCP is one of three current visitor hubs (others being Birling Gap and Beachy Head Story) which can provide this wider narrative. Such an approach has already been developed for the Sussex Heritage Coast with key messages and shared wording. The areas of land proposed to be within the “super NNR” are also connected by the South Downs Way and England Coastal Path as well as having significant open access. There is a great deal of further potential to “connect people with nature” across all of it.

#### The proposed extension

- 3.7 To realise the goals above, a landscape-based approach needs to be taken and this means looking beyond the land already managed as an NNR.
- 3.8 Natural England has approached all of the core partners to gauge their interest in voluntarily declaring their land to be part of the NNR. The extension to the NNR is proposed for the land owned or managed by:
- South Downs National Park Authority and Seven Sisters Country Park
  - South East Water (including Natural England as existing NNR manager)
  - Forestry England
  - Eastbourne Borough Council
  - National Trust
  - Seaford Town Council
  - Sussex Wildlife Trust

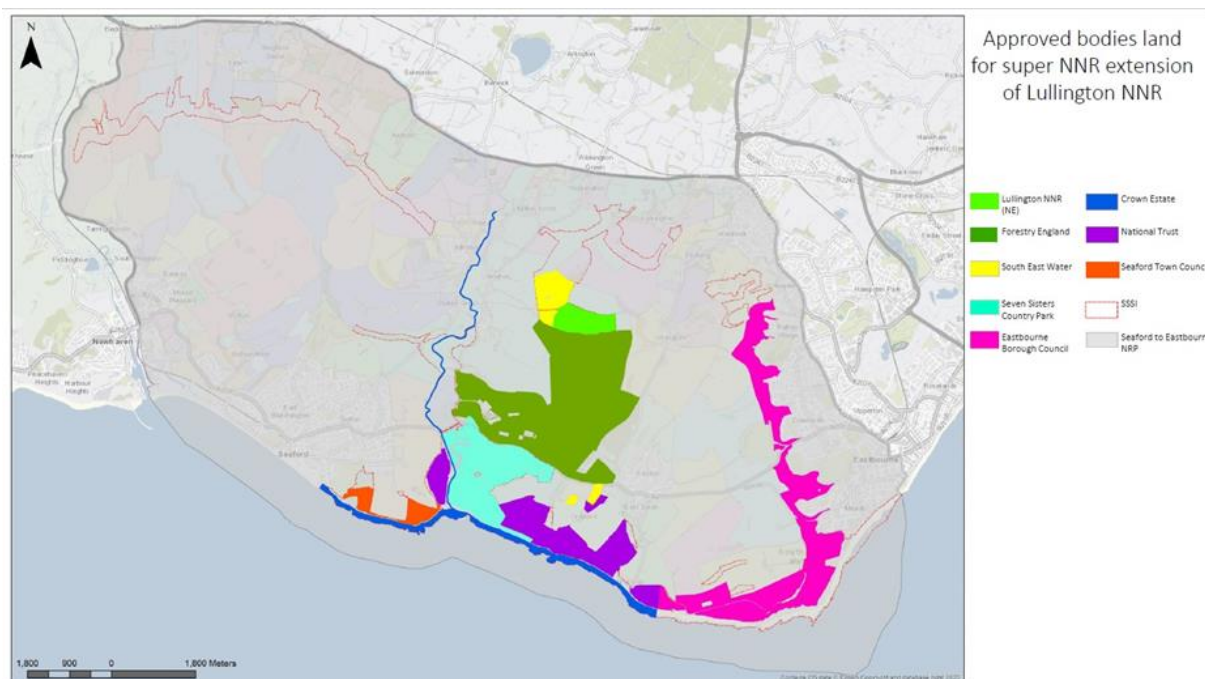


Figure 1: Map of potential partner land

- 3.9 The National Trust, Forestry England, Sussex Wildlife Trust and Natural England are already Approved Bodies, whilst Eastbourne Borough Council, Seaford Town Council and South East Water would also need to become Approved Bodies along with the SDNPA.



### Seven Sisters Country Park

- 3.10 The SSSI land owned and managed by SDNPA at SSCP (Figure 2), which forms the majority of the Country Park, is proposed to be included in the NNR as it meets the Selection Principles for NNRs of already being managed primarily for nature conservation (Appendix 2). The management of the land also for recreational purposes as part of a Country Park is in line with the Natural Environment and Communities Act 2006 as the SDNPA ensures that, whilst opportunities for recreation are provided for, the conservation purpose of the site is not compromised. It has already been demonstrated at other sites around the country, such as Dursledon Country Park in Dorset and Pegwell Bay Country Park in Kent, that the designations of Country Park and NNR can work successfully alongside each other. The proposal is also consistent with the purposes of a Country Park under section 6 of the Countryside Act 1968 due to the site's proximity to the urban and built up areas of Brighton, Peacehaven, Newhaven, Seaford, and Eastbourne and the desirability of providing opportunities for the public to enjoy the countryside at a NNR.

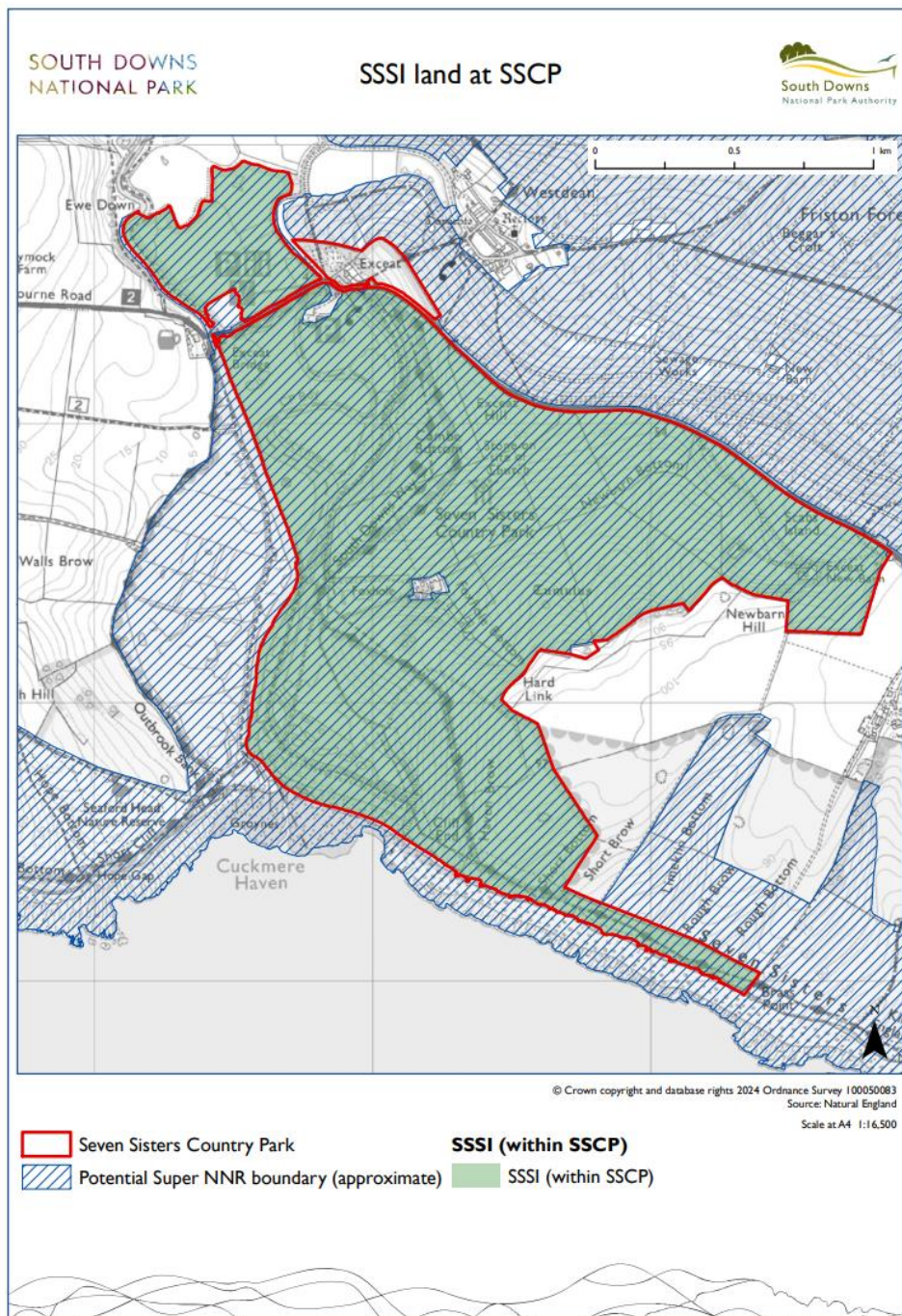


Figure 2: Detail of Seven Sisters Country Park (proposed land for inclusion within the sNNR is contiguous with the SSSI)

### Affiliated Land

- 3.1.1 There is also the potential to affiliate land, outside of the NNR boundary, which does not have nature conservation as its first priority but is being managed with nature conservation as a consideration. An example would be farmland which has food production as its primary objective but is managed to be nature friendly. Such land could benefit from the over-arching join-up of management mentioned above and so contribute positively to a more connected landscape for wildlife. This is not likely to apply on any of the other land owned by the SDNPA at SSCP.

## **4. Benefits**

- 4.1 The initial inspiration for this project came from the need to protect the chalk aquifers. SDNPA already recognises the importance of the aquifer for local communities (both within the National Park and surrounding coastal conurbations) as well as its importance for ecological functioning. This is put in to practice through existing initiatives such as The Aquifer Partnership focused on the Brighton chalk block.
- 4.2 **Connecting the landscape** will help nature to thrive and the SSCP has a key role to play in linking parts of the Seaford to Beachy Head SSSI. The national status and recognised brand of the NNR series, along with strengthening working relationships with other landowners across the local landscape, will build resilience and create confidence that partners can do more together.
- 4.3 **Operating at scale** will provide a better and more cost-effective way of managing this land. Experience from other recently declared Kings Series partnership NNRs has proven that there are also novel funding opportunities. For example, other potential partners in the area are currently considering ways this would enable improvements in biodiversity, access, grazing and interpretation, as well as connecting the site to the wider landscape.
- 4.4 The NNR would have an **over-arching management framework**, that would sit over each organisation's management plan but would not overrule it. The management framework will be developed after the declaration and be co-designed to provide benefits for each partner and enable closer working together. As the partnership NNR declaration is voluntary any agreements made within this document are voluntarily undertaken by the partners. The partnership working together will achieve the agreed outcomes across the NNR. Existing stewardship schemes would fit in the management framework, highlighting outcomes that the schemes enable, rather than dictating what should happen in the scheme.
- 4.5 This would help to deliver national Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) targets by improving the condition of the SSSIs (as part of the NNR), improving the health of the chalk aquifer and creating nature-rich land in the wider area. It will help to ensure that the land is land managed for nature conservation, with wider environmental benefits, in perpetuity by collective agreement. Two funded projects, identified by the eight Chalk Coast core partners, that this project has already enabled, are research projects focused on scrub and soil within the circa 2000 ha NNR landscape.
- 4.6 **Climate resilience** is built into the SSCP Management Plan and many of the SDNPA Plans, such as the Partnership Management Plan, the Local Plan and the Corporate Plan. The area under consideration a super NNR has a long history of discussions and partnerships who have tackled these issues. Working with climate resilience in mind will help enable the necessary changes to the landscape and a partnership will allow support for these conversations with wide-ranging stakeholders. Broad environmental benefits include a healthy and resilient aquifer which in turn helps support good biodiversity and natural processes.
- 4.7 Other benefits include increased access to **funding sources** from both the public and private sector. For example, South East Water has provided support to the existing NNR for many years, and has recently secured the largest WINEP investment in England, incorporating the NNR within its scope. There is also potential for greater support for agri-environment schemes to support landscape-scale ecological function. Resourcing in the form

of a Partnership Officer, to be hosted by one of the partners and funded jointly, is a shared ambition. In addition to Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELM), including Landscape Recovery, other funding opportunities include the Nature Recovery Project Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (which is targeted at activities other than those covered by ELMs, such as management agreements), and the core Nature Recovery Project asset fund (already being used for the scrub and soils research mentioned above). Nature Recovery projects are also a focus for the Government's £500m per annum private finance target, for example the current Corporate Philanthropy Pilot.

## **5. Options & cost implications**

- 5.1 The Lullington Heath NNR extension is a voluntary declaration and would not add any further compulsory land management requirements for the SDNPA in addition to those for the existing SSSI. Compliance with the overarching management framework would be voluntary and would take account of any existing commitments, such as in Countryside Stewardship agreements, with the aim of ensuring that all landowners were able to contribute positively towards the Chalk Coast NNR. Other commitments such as contribution to or hosting of a partnership officer, contribution to projects, community engagement or other financial commitments would again be voluntary and for discussion and agreement by the partners.
- 5.2 Land in the Chalk Coast NNR is required to be managed by an Approved Body (AB), demonstrating the intent to deliver exemplary management, as set out in the NNR Management Standards (Appendix 3), in perpetuity. SDNPA would therefore need to become an Approved Body with respect to the SDNPA SSSI land at SSCP. Other partners may also have to go through the application process to also become Approved Bodies in relation to their land holdings.
- 5.3 If agreed, the SDNPA would be the first National Park Authority to become an Approved Body with a sNNR. Although there is a precedent as the Lake District National Park Authority is a partner in the Wild Ennerdale sNNR albeit the actual management falls to a partnership of Forestry England, United Utilities, National Trust and Natural England. The first landscape scale or super NNR was declared at the Purbeck Heaths, Dorset, whilst the most recent declaration was made at the Mendip Hills. (Appendix 7). NPAs with "regular NNRs" include:
  - Exmoor NP – Hawkcombe Woods NNR; Tarr Steps Woodland NNR
  - Lake District NP – Bassenthwaite Lake NNR, Rusland Moss NNR; Whitbarrow NNR
  - The Broads – How Hill NNR
  - Northumberland NP – Greenlee Lough NNR
- 5.4 Natural England will be engaging with local people and other stakeholders as part of the journey to declaring the Chalk Coast NNR. The intention is to confirm the core NNR partners first, then move on to Affiliated Partner landowners in the area and the local community.
- 5.5 Natural England is currently looking at how best to collaborate with people who live and work locally and have a stake in the landscape including the farm clusters and Parish Councils.
- 5.6 As mentioned, the Chalk Coast NNR forms the heart of the wider Nature Recovery Project (NRP), which covers around 12,000 ha. This provides opportunities for working with a wider range of stakeholders who cannot be part of the NNR.
- 5.7 The NRP will also inform and be part of the county-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- 5.8 If the Chalk Coast NNR declaration takes place, governance arrangements for the NNR partners will need to be agreed collaboratively. These will include how to produce the management framework and agreeing monitoring and reporting requirements, both of which are required by the NNR Management Standards.

- 5.9 SDNPA Officer time will be required pre-declaration to build the case for NNR selection and Approved Body status. Post declaration, time will be needed to contribute to the NNR partnership, help establish governance and ensure that the land at SSCP continues to be managed in accordance with the NNR Management Standards (Appendix 3).
- 5.10 Post declaration the designation of the site as an NNR would be incorporated into existing signage and interpretation.

## 6. Next steps

- 6.1 Subject to Member approval at the NPA, the next step to become an Approved Body for the NNR is for the SDNPA to provide a Letter of Intent (examples in Appendix 4).
- 6.2 SDNPA officers will continue to work with Natural England and the other NNR partners to progress towards NNR Declaration in November 2024. Natural England officers will make the case for SDNPA to become an Approved Body through a standard form (Appendix 5).
- 6.3 Natural England's intention is to come back to SDNPA and the other NNR partners in summer 2024 with an update on the process and for any further decisions to be taken. At this time the SDNPA will need to confirm commitment of the land to the NNR and its role as an Approved Body alongside the other partners. The proposal would then be submitted to the NE Board confirming inclusion of SDNPA's land, its status as an Approved Body, and the 2000+ hectare Chalk Coast NNR boundary.
- 6.4 The development of the overarching Management Framework will follow the Declaration and be a collaborative process involving all the confirmed NNR partners. Natural England will provide officer time to coordinate production.
- 6.5 Establishment of the future governance arrangements for the NNR partners will also follow Declaration. (Appendix 6).
- 6.6 As part of the review of the operating agreement with South Downs Commercial Operations on the management of SSCP any implications arising from the designation as a NNR would be considered.

## 7. Other implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	Yes, the decision whether to apply to become an Approved Body and to seek NNR designation is for recommendation to the NPA.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	The resource implications of the sNNR declaration are mainly around staff time / capacity. NNR status in its own right will not cost more but has the potential to attract external funding.  There will be a requirement to ensure the land at SSCP continues to be managed in accordance with the NNR Management Standards and the management framework even though voluntary.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	By working in partnership at a landscape scale the Authority looks to make effective use of its resources in a bigger, better, more joined up approach to nature. The Value for Money of any projects or other commitments as part of the extended NNR would be assessed at such time as the Authority may be consider undertaking them.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	Partnership Management Plan 2020-25 Outcomes 1-3 Contributes towards the Nature Recovery High Level Targets in the Corporate Plan 2023/24 and 2024/25



<b>Implication</b>	<b>Yes*/No</b>
Links to other projects or partner organisations	<p>This project is working in partnership with Natural England plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South East Water</li> <li>• Forestry England</li> <li>• Eastbourne Borough Council</li> <li>• National Trust</li> <li>• Seaford Town Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust</li> </ul> <p>There is the additional scope to work with potential affiliated landowners/managers.</p> <p>The sNNR is located within the Sussex Heritage Coast which has an existing collaborative approach, as well as part of the future Nature Recovery Project. It could also support the legacy from Changing Chalk Project and the implementation of the Eastbourne Downland Whole Estate Plan.</p>
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	The proposal will support climate resilience at a landscape scale
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	There are no equalities implications arising from this report. Equalities issues are taken into account in relation to any decision taking with regard to the application and administration of any grant funding submission and in the implementation of the wider nature recovery programme and operation of Seven Sisters Country Park.
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

## **8. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

- 8.1 The declaration of the sNNR is voluntary. As a result, there are no guaranteed additional resources or funding.
- 8.2 There is a risk that the development of the overarching Management Framework may not completely align with individual partner site management. However, the proposed area of

land is currently all SSSI and therefore required to be managed in accordance with the legally designated features of interest. This will not change.

- 8.3 There is a minor risk that the NNR declaration could hinder some commercial activity at SSCP, however, as with site management this is already subject to the existing SSSI designation and associated consenting requirements. There is also land elsewhere in the country which operates as both a Country Park involving some level of commercial activity and NNR, demonstrating that the two designations for different purposes can work successfully together.
- 8.4 Should SDNPA not progress with the NNR declaration there is a risk of losing out on a landscape scale approach to nature recovery, ecosystem services and associated benefits. Something which we advocate as a protected landscape and as part of the ReNature Campaign and Nature Recovery programme.
- 8.5 There is also a potential risk in relation to communications and marketing. In terms of marketing there could be “brand” confusion. However, within the National Park we already work with multiple brands such as the Sussex Heritage Coast and the National Trail. The NNR “brand” should also act to attract funding and place a higher priority on the area for nature recovery.
- 8.6 The SDNPA currently has the power to make byelaws for the Country Park, however, if designated a NNR, NE would also have the power to make byelaws for the area of the Country Park designated a NNR. Further details on the process and how any conflicts may be considered has been requested from NE. Officers aim to be able to update the committee at the meeting.

## **CLAIRE KERR**

### **Countryside and Policy Manager (Eastern Downs)**

#### **South Downs National Park Authority**

Contact Officer:	Claire Kerr
Email:	<a href="mailto:Claire.kerr@southdowns.gov.uk">Claire.kerr@southdowns.gov.uk</a>
Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Strategy for England’s National Nature Reserves</li><li>2. The Selection Principles for National Nature Reserves in England</li><li>3. Natural England Standard National Nature Reserves Management Standards</li><li>4. Approved Body Status</li><li>5. Approved Body form template</li><li>6. Partnership NNR Governance</li><li>7. Examples from Mendip Hills Super NNR</li><li>8. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)</li><li>9. Designations Table</li></ol>
SDNPA Consultees	Interim Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Head of Governance; Commercial and Strategic Manager and Monitoring Officer
External Consultees	Natural England
Background Documents	<a href="#">Partnership Management Plan</a> <a href="#">Corporate Plan 2020–2025</a>

[Environmental Improvement Plan](#)

[National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949](#)

[Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#)

[Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#)

[SSSI detail](#)

[Delivering 30by30 on land in England](#)

[Home - TAP](#)

[Nature recovery projects to boost wildlife and access to nature](#)  
(including the Seaford to Eastbourne Nature Recovery Project)

[COP28 Videos / COP28 Video alternative link](#)

[National Nature Reserve](#)





## **The Strategy for England's National Nature Reserves**

This Strategy sets the direction and ambition for England's National Nature Reserves (NNRs). It has been developed by Natural England working in partnership with other NNR managing organisations.

NNR declaration secures nationally important sites for nature and nature recovery, environmental science and people, managed to high standards. The Strategy provides a framework for all those involved to increase the contribution of NNRs to 21<sup>st</sup> century conservation, within and beyond their boundaries.

### **The Vision for NNRs in England**

England's National Nature Reserves are the most important places for nature. We manage them in an exemplary way. They inspire people, promote learning and encourage actions in the wider landscape.

### **Working in Partnership**

England's NNRs are managed by Natural England and a range of other organisations (Approved Bodies). We work in a spirit of partnership to develop the NNR network with joint goals and actions. Our collective expertise drives the contribution of NNRs to nature conservation, nature recovery, science and people.

### **Strategic Priorities for England's National Nature Reserves**

NNRs will be at the core of nature recovery and their abundant wildlife will brim over to enrich surrounding areas. Extensive and joined up NNRs will help restore ecological function and resilience.

NNRs will provide for high quality research and monitoring contributing to land-based and social environmental science, demonstrating innovation and best practice, and inspiring learning. NNR managing organisations will collaborate to optimise the effectiveness and the outcomes of scientific effort.

NNRs provide places for people to connect with nature through access, responsible



recreation, discovery and participation. Our partnership work will increase the range and

variety of engagement opportunities and will welcome new audiences across the NNR series.

New and extended NNRs will be declared to galvanise landscape-scale nature recovery and ambitious science and engagement programmes, secured for the long term.

NNR owners and managers will develop place-based partnerships and increasingly collaborate to secure outcomes for individual NNRs and across the NNR series. The range of partners and Approved Bodies will be broadened.

## **Resourcing**

All NNR managing bodies invest in their reserves and will continue to do so. They are underpinned by a mix of public, charitable and private funding. We will work together to find additional sources of funding that broaden the resource base and improve its resilience.

## Further Information

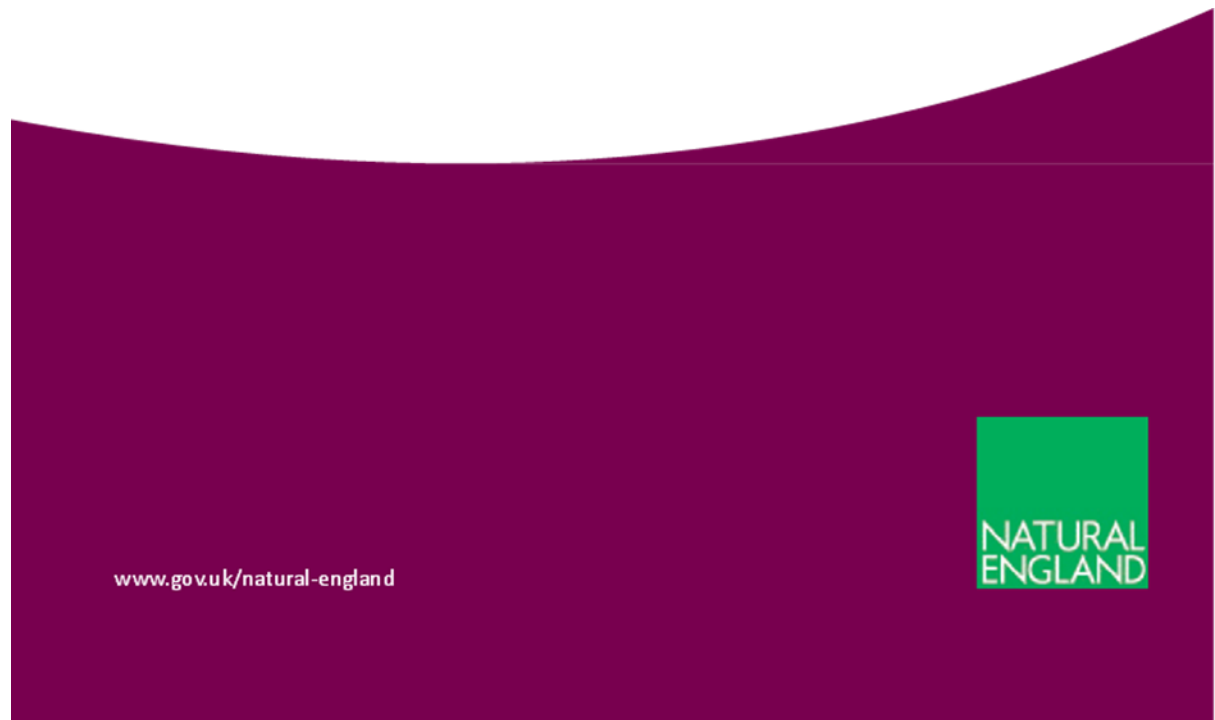
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## The Selection Principles for National Nature Reserves in England

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are exemplary, nationally important nature reserves, where nature conservation is the primary land use and significant other benefits may be provided for people and the environment. They are held by Natural England or bodies approved by Natural England to hold NNRs. These principles are used to select all new and extended NNRs: Natural England's and Approved Bodies'.

### **National Importance: the National Nature Reserve must be of national importance and further the core purposes of NNRs<sup>1</sup>**

New National Nature Reserves should:

#### **Nature:**

- Make a significant contribution to nature recovery in the locality
- and/or safeguard or recover nationally important biodiversity and geodiversity

#### **Science:**

- Provide opportunities for conservation and environmental science

#### **People:**

- Encourage people to experience, engage with and enjoy nature in a variety of ways (where this does not compromise management for the conservation purpose)

Extensions to existing NNRs should add value to the site in accordance with one or more of these purposes.

### **Requirements (the National Nature Reserve must meet these)**

- The site's purpose is to be a nature reserve and the primary land use is nature conservation
- The site is declared NNR in perpetuity or for the long term (>30 years)

<sup>1</sup> Core purposes given by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as amended by Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2006

The site will be managed to exemplary standards (the [NNR Management Standards](#)).

Each managing body has the capability and the control of land use to meet these requirements over the long term.

## **Purposes and attributes: the NNR must have at least one attribute for each purpose that is exemplary (or has realistic potential to become so within a defined timeframe)**

**Core Purpose:** Nature (biodiversity, geodiversity, nature recovery)

### **Attributes:**

- Sufficient size to support or restore ecological functions and natural processes
- Structural diversity, ecosystem heterogeneity and connectivity needed for nature recovery
- Nationally important biodiversity
- Representation of England's geological sequences
- Connection between terrestrial interest features and marine environment

**Core Purpose:** People (access, engagement, inclusion)

### **Attributes:**

- Statutory or permissive public access, managed in ways that are compatible with the site's biodiversity and geodiversity
- Inclusive access and engagement
- Support for active engagement by diverse audiences
- Provision of learning opportunities (formal and informal)

**Core Purpose:** Science (access, engagement, inclusion)

### **Attributes:**

- Research programmes into England's biodiversity and geodiversity
- Experimentation and innovation in any aspect of NNR purposes and conservation management
- Long-term datasets, national monitoring and surveillance schemes
- Citizen science opportunities.

## **Additional benefits: the National Nature Reserve should have attribute/s in at least one of these**

**Core Purpose:** Nature-based solutions (climate change, biodiversity loss)

### **Attributes:**

- Adaptative management to increase resilience to climate change



- Mitigation measures for climate change, including transformative change in the landscape
- Potential to reverse biodiversity loss
- Potential to safeguard vulnerable biodiversity and geodiversity from potential loss through climate change
- Opportunities to trial and research nature-based solutions to climate change and ways of reversing biodiversity loss

**Core Purpose:** Partnership working

**Attributes:**

- A committed partnership of the NNR's managing bodies
- A partnership vision and shared management framework for the whole NNR

**Core Purpose:** Demonstration (sharing learning and good practice)

**Attributes:**

- Potential for demonstration of innovation and new techniques

Potential for active dissemination of information and learning.

## Further Information

This publication can be downloaded from the [Natural England Access to Evidence Catalogue](#). For information on Natural England publications or if you require an alternative format, please contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0300 060 3900 or email [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk).

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Catalogue code: NE808

# Natural England Standard National Nature Reserves Management Standards




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## 1:0 About this standard

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### Background

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) include some of the best examples of England's wildlife and geology. There are 221 NNRs in England covering c105,000 ha. Natural England manages 135 of the NNRs on its own or jointly with others, and the remainder are managed by Approved Bodies.

NNRs were established under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which specified that they were for "preserving flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features of special interest in the area and/or for providing opportunities for the study of, and research into, those features". The Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 extended the role of NNRs to include the provision of opportunities for public enjoyment of nature and/or open-air recreation. The 'three pillars' of nature conservation, research and access are fundamental to NNRs.

Ninety-three percent of the area covered by the NNRs comprises Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

### Natural England's statutory duties and roles in relation to NNRs

Natural England may declare sites which in its opinion meet the criteria that it sets out for National Nature Reserves. It can conversely de-declare NNRs.

Section 35 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 allows Natural England to approve other organisations (Approved Bodies) to manage NNRs. Natural England will use this standard to ensure that potential Approved Bodies understand and have the capabilities needed to meet the standard at a specific site.

Working with the NNR Partnership, Natural England promotes England's NNR series and helps facilitate the exchange of information across the series. This is done by agreeing shared standards across the series with other NNR managers, by facilitating

#### National Nature Reserves Management Standard

Content Owner: Principal Advisor, National Nature Reserves Team, National Operations Content creator: National Nature Reserves Team, National Operations

Version 22/05/2022

the exchange of learning, and by promoting understanding and support for the NNR

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series amongst government and the public. Natural England provides a contact point for each NNR managed by Approved Bodies to support these functions.

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## 2:0 The Standard

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This standard applies to all NNRs, whether they are under Natural England's responsibility or are managed by Approved Bodies. It sets out the key principles for the management of National Nature Reserves (NNRs), and some specific expectations beneath them. It has been created by Natural England in consultation with Approved Bodies in order to support consistent quality of management across all NNR sites.

### **1. The NNR series will seek to represent the best places for England's biodiversity and geodiversity.**

NNRs are selected as being amongst the best examples of England's special biodiversity and geodiversity. Our aspiration is that overtime the series becomes representative of this range of natural heritage. The role of the series is to look after the best examples of those features that rely on conservation action and/or to provide places where good management practice is developed and demonstrated to others.

- Natural England will maintain objective criteria consistent with its Designations Strategy for new NNRs and de-declaring existing sites.

### **2. A management plan for the NNR will be kept up-to-date and will reflect the requirements of this standard.**

Proper management planning is an essential basis for exemplary management and for integrating and meeting all relevant aspects of this standard. A plan has a legal aspect too, by providing the consents required for specified operations likely to damage the special features of SSSIs<sup>1</sup>. The NNR has a management plan that describes a site, identifies key features, analyses and sets objectives and specifies the management and monitoring prescriptions. The management plan is written within a year of the NNR being declared.

- The outcomes of management should be reviewed regularly against objectives and the Plan reviewed at least every five years to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> When relating to underpinning SSSIs and N2K sites, the management plan, and changes to it, should be consented through Natural England's regulatory processes.

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- Records of key management activities are maintained that allow the effectiveness of management interventions to be monitored and reviewed.

**3. The management of designated features and the wider reserve is exemplary.**

The primary management of the NNR should reflect its status as being amongst the country's most important sites for nature conservation. Management should address the needs of its designated nature conservation features, other priority habitats, species and geological interests, its historic environment and the ecosystem services it supports, whilst accommodating likely environmental change. It should consider potential impacts on features due to climate change and any adaptive measures required. The management of designated nature conservation features on NNRs will ensure these features are as a minimum maintained at, or progressing towards, Favourable Condition.

- SSSI features are monitored by Natural England according to Common Standards Monitoring<sup>2</sup>.
- The management of the NNR will contribute to priority species and habitats as specified in national strategies and plans.
- Other aspects of the reserve covered in Sections 4 to 9 of this Standard should also be taken into consideration.

**4. The NNR contributes to safeguarding and restoring ecosystems beyond its boundaries.**

As core wildlife sites, NNRs have an important function in restoring ecosystems at a wider scale than the site itself, notably biodiversity, and in building resilience to climate change. This might be for example by acting as reservoirs and source sites for certain species to connect populations, through demonstrating successful management practices working with natural processes, by coordinating action with others at a larger scale, or by inspiring others to take action. The nature and extent of this function depends on the features on the NNR and the concerted action of partners.

- The management of an NNR will take account of its function in providing and supporting the restoration of ecosystems beyond the site and adaptation to climate change.

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<sup>2</sup> For further information, visit the [Common Standards Monitoring page](#), on JNCC's website.

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**5. The management of the NNR provides opportunities for public enjoyment, quiet recreation and engagement.**

Provision of public access and enjoyment, both physical and intellectual, can be combined with high standards of nature conservation. Audiences should be able to find out why an NNR is of special significance and have an opportunity to learn about and, wherever possible, directly experience these features. The information people see about a site should help reinforce their positive impressions and understanding of the NNR series. The nature and extent of public engagement will depend on the features at the NNR and the resources available.

- The management plan for the NNR should encourage opportunities to engage with a wide range of visitors consistent with the species and habitat objectives in the management plan.
- Physical access to the site for visitors must be considered where compatible with the nature conservation interest of the site and subject to appropriate assessment of potential impacts.
  - Visitor information about the site must be made easily accessible for the public including via a website.
  - It must be clear to visitors when they arrive at the main entrances that the site is a National Nature Reserve. The NNR symbol should be used in new signage at main entrances and principal interpretation materials<sup>3</sup>.
  - The NNR will demonstrate good practice in conservation and visitor management.

**6. Research into the natural environment at an NNR is promoted and knowledge is shared.**

NNRs are often highly regarded as locations for research and study, especially in relation to the special features of the site. Information gathered from NNRs, including land management records, can contribute greatly to our understanding of the natural environment and how it is changing. NNR managers themselves rely on good access to data, historic and current, to inform management decisions. Research can be carried out in-house, by contractors, universities, volunteers, amateur experts and others.

- Opportunities and requests for monitoring, research and study into the natural environment should be positively considered.

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<sup>3</sup> Brand guidelines are available from Natural England.

- The outputs of research must be made available to the wider research community.
- Species records should be well managed and should be made available to the National Biodiversity Network (the NBN).

#### **7. Communities and stakeholders are involved in the management of the NNR.**

Public participation in the management of a site, such as through volunteering, can be very effective in building public understanding and support for the natural environment. It is recognised that the extent to which community participation is feasible will depend upon the particular situation of each site. Management of an NNR should have regard to the views of stakeholders, particularly neighbours and local communities.

- Local communities and stakeholders should be given the opportunity to contribute to how the objectives of the management plan are achieved and to the direct management of the NNR.
- Volunteering opportunities of various types relevant to the reserve should be promoted where feasible.

#### **8. NNR managers will work collaboratively to promote the NNR series and wider goals.**

The collective contribution of NNRs to fulfil statutory purposes and wider policy goals is far greater than the individual contribution from each site. Sharing good management practice, scientific evidence and other information is beneficial and is encouraged.

- Each NNR must have a named first point of contact for the purpose of liaison with others in the network of NNRs.
- NNR managers will provide information when requested by the NNR Partnership in order to support promotion of the series and to establish whether this standard and the purposes of the NNR are being met.
- NNR managers should implement opportunities for collaboration with other nature reserve managers in order to enhance the visitor experience and the effective management of collective reserves.

#### **9. NNRs will support opportunities to demonstrate exemplary conservation management to others**

Many NNRs provide opportunities for innovating and demonstrating environmental land management techniques that can help build skills and knowledge more widely amongst the sector and other land managers. The sites themselves can also act as 'reference points', providing examples of habitats at or exceeding favourable condition.

- Opportunities and requests for developing and demonstrating land management techniques should be positively considered where compatible with the conservation objectives of the NNR.
- In particular, the effectiveness of management interventions should be assessed and the results communicated.

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## **Approved Body status**

### Definition of an Approved Body

The Approved Body status requires the Natural England team to complete a form providing evidence for each category that the National Park can manage the NNR land. Form provided.

All of the questions relate directly to the NNR Management Standards. These can be found in Appendix #. Examples are sections 2 of both the AB form and the NNR Management standards relate to management planning and sections 5 both relate to public enjoyment.

This AB form is currently being completed using the Key management documents that are publicly available on the SDNP website.

Other organisations who are already Approved Bodies involved in this NNR declaration are National Trust, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Forestry England and Natural England.

Also going through this process are South East Water, Eastbourne Borough Council and Seaford Town Council.

Examples of organisations to recently become ABs in other NNR declarations across the country are both The Longleat Estate and Avon Wildlife Trust, as part of The Mendip NNR.

Our completed Approved Body proposal form will be presented to the Natural England Estates Panel/Board along with others and our overall NNR extension proposal form. Laura Newland and Kerrie Curzon will be making the case for all new Approved Bodies, as part of the NNR declaration process, concluding in November 2024.

There are no other steps SDNPA need to take to become an Approved Body, other than your own internal processes, which we are happy to help with.



## National Nature Reserve Approved Body proposal

Section 35 1(c) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 empowers Natural England to approve organisations - Approved Bodies - to hold and manage NNRs.

Natural England's Non-Financial Scheme of Delegation currently assigns the authority to approve to NE Board for new Approved Bodies for new NNRs; and to the Chief Executive Officer for new Approved Bodies for existing NNRs.

This proposal should be completed by Natural England staff, setting out the past, present and likely future achievements of the organisation seeking Approved Body status as relevant to the nine NNR Management Standards. This will usually be summarised for the purpose of the Board or CEO as appropriate, but the full proposal serves as a record of our reasoning.

Note that this is a separate process to proposals to declare or extend NNRs.

### 1. Summary details

Name of organisation: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Address: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Lead contact: [Click here to enter text.](#)

NNR(s) or proposed NNR(s) linked to this proposal: [Click here to enter text.](#)

### 2. NNR management planning

Proper management planning is an essential basis for exemplary management and for integrating and meeting all relevant aspects of the standard. A plan has a legal aspect too, by providing the consents required for specified operations likely to damage the special features of SSSIs. The management plan, and changes to it, must therefore be consented by Natural England's Responsible Officer for the SSSI. Carrying out any of the listed operations without consent may be an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Has the organisation a good track record in successful management planning for protected areas and in keeping plans up-to-date? Have they got sufficient staffing and knowhow to write and review management plans? Have they reviewed management outcomes and kept records of key management activities undertaken?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

### 3. Exemplary management



The primary management of the NNR should reflect its status as being amongst the country's most important sites for nature conservation. Management should address the needs of its designated nature conservation features, other priority habitats and species and the functions required to support these. It should consider potential impacts on features due to climate change and responses.

If the organisation manages SSSIs, what is their past and current condition? Are they able and willing to manage to maintain or progress towards favourable condition? Does their management contribute to priority species and habitats initiatives as specified in Biodiversity 2020?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

#### **4. Contribution to safeguarding and restoring ecosystems beyond the site boundaries**

As core wildlife sites, NNRs potentially have an important function in restoring ecosystems, notably biodiversity, at a wider scale and in building resilience to climate change. This might be for example by acting as reservoirs and source sites for certain species, through demonstrating successful management practices, by coordinating action with others at a larger scale, or by inspiring others to take action. The nature and extent of this function depends on the features on the NNR and the concerted action of partners.

In managing other protected areas, does the organisation take account of their function in providing and supporting the restoration of ecosystems beyond the site boundaries and adaptation to climate change? Do they have the capacity, vision and willingness to do this on the NNR in question?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

#### **5. Providing opportunities for public enjoyment, quiet recreation and engagement**

Provision of public access and enjoyment can be combined with high standards of nature conservation. Visitors should be able to find out why an NNR is of special significance and have an opportunity to learn about and, wherever possible, directly experience these features. The information the public sees about a site should help reinforce their positive impressions and understanding of the NNR series. The nature and extent of public engagement will depend on the features at the NNR and the resources available

How does the organisation manage visitors on other sites? Can they strike a balance between nature conservation and visitor enjoyment? Have they a public website to provide information about the site or the capability of setting one up? Are they willing to use the title (or abbreviation) National Nature Reserve?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

## 6. Undertaking, enabling and communicating research

NNRs are often highly regarded as locations for research and study, especially in relation to the special features of the site. Information gathered from NNRs, including land management records, can contribute greatly to our understanding of the natural environment and how it is changing. NNR managers themselves rely on good access to data, historic and current, to inform management decisions. Good liaison with Local Record Centres (species records) can facilitate this flow of non-confidential knowledge.

Does the organisation positively consider opportunities and requests for monitoring, research and study into the natural environment, especially where they involve looking at long term trends. Do they make species records and the outputs of research available to the wider nature conservation and research community?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

## 7. Involving communities and stakeholders

Public participation in the management of a site, such as through volunteering, can be very effective in building public understanding and support for the natural environment. It is recognised that the extent to which community participation is feasible will depend upon the particular situation of each site. Management of an NNR should have regard to the views of stakeholders, particularly neighbours and local communities.

Does the organisation work with local communities and stakeholders, giving them the opportunity to contribute to how the objectives of the management plan are achieved and to direct management of the NNR. Do they offer volunteering opportunities?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

## 8. Collaboration and networking with other organisations

The collective contribution of NNRs to fulfil statutory purposes and wider policy goals is far greater than the individual contribution from each site. Sharing good management practice, scientific evidence and other information is beneficial and is encouraged.

Has the organisation had a good relationship with Natural England and other organisations? Do they support the collective promotion of NNRs? Do they work in partnership with other protected area managers to enhance site management and visitor experiences?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

## 9. Demonstrating exemplary conservation management to others

Many NNRs provide opportunities for developing and demonstrating environmental land management techniques that can help build skills and knowledge more widely amongst the sector and other land managers. The sites themselves can also act as 'reference points', providing examples of habitats at or exceeding favourable condition.

Does the organisation positively consider opportunities and requests for developing and demonstrating land management techniques where compatible with conservation objectives?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

## 10. Any other comments

[Click here to enter text.](#)

**Completed by:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Date:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Supported by (Area Manager):** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Date:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

Please submit this form to the Estates Panel for assessment via [michael.woodhouse@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:michael.woodhouse@naturalengland.org.uk) and cc [debbie.mayhew@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:debbie.mayhew@naturalengland.org.uk)

### **Partnership NNR governance**

#### Example 1 – Wild Ennerdale NNR

Partners: National Trust, Forestry England, United Utilities (water company), Natural England

Governance: Each of the four partners contribute towards finding a Partnership Officer post. This post is hosted by National Trust.

#### Example 2 – Purbeck Heaths NNR

Partners: National Trust, Forestry England, Dorset Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Rempstone Estate

Governance: NE NNR staff take on overall responsibility for the Partnership.

#### Example 3 – Mendip NNR

Partners: National Trust, Forestry Commission, Longleat – Cheddar Gorge, Mendip AONB, Somerset County Council, North Somerset Council, Avon Wildlife Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Woodland Trust, Bristol Water (check this list – Hanson Quarries?)

Governance: The Memorandum of Understanding and other paperwork is currently co-ordinated by Natural England. This is being developed with partners as they jointly decide on governance. The Mendip Hills AONB (National Landscape) will be chairing the group. The aim is to have a Steering Group that meets annually for those with authority from partner organisations. In addition, there will be regular meetings with partners to discuss current issues and shared objectives.



## Example: Mendip Hills Super NNR

Bringing **wildlife** back



3<sup>rd</sup> February 2023

Dear Sir or Madam,

### **Mendip Hills Super NNR**

Our mission at Avon Wildlife Trust is to enable wildlife's recovery by working in partnership to restore, create and connect habitats; and increase species abundance, and to connect people with nature and help them take action for wildlife where they are.

I would like to confirm that Avon Wildlife Trust are seeking to become an approved body for the Mendip Hills Super NNR, with my full support and that of our board of trustees.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ian Barrett", is written over a horizontal line.

Ian Barrett.

Chief Executive

17 Great George Street, Bristol BS1 5QT  
avonwildlifetrust.org.uk | 01179 177 270  
Reg. in England & Wales No.1495108. Reg. Charity No.280422. VAT No.567564410

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Butterfly Conservation  
Manor Yard, East Lulworth,  
Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP  
T: 01929 400209  
E: [info@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:info@butterfly-conservation.org)  
[www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)  
President Sir David Attenborough CH, FRS

Philip Thorpe  
Natural England  
Somerset National Nature Reserves  
The Avalon Marshes Centre,  
Shapwick Road,  
Westhay,  
Glastonbury,  
Somerset  
BA6 9TT

7<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Dear Mr Thorpe

**RE: Proposed Mendip Hills Super NNR Proposal**

Butterfly Conservation has two nature reserves on the Mendip Hills, Stoke Camp and Westbury Beacon, species interest in the wider landscape and the Mendip Hills has been selected as one of the Landscapes we are focusing on in the coming years.

Butterfly Conservation endorses this ambitious proposal and is delighted to see the wider Mendip landscape recognized for its importance for wildlife.

Yours sincerely



Russel Hobson  
Director of Evidence and Policy

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

## The Chalk Coast Partnership Super NNR

Lullington Heath National Nature Reserve Extension

Part of the Seaford to Eastbourne Nature Recovery Project

Core Documents:

NNR Strategy: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6457692013723648>

NNR Selection Principles: [The Selection Principles for National Nature Reserves in England - NE808 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)

NNR Management Standards: [Natural England Standard: National Nature Reserve Management Standards - NESTND029](#)

Partnership working	
<b>Are East Sussex County Council involved?</b>	ESCC are an essential stakeholder. NE met with Kate Cole, County Ecologist at ESCC on 12 July. Kate advised that we will need to involve the PROW team as we move forward. ESCC (Tourism, PROW and Public Health) attended the Sussex Heritage Coast meeting on 27 July.
<b>Which organisation is leading the project?</b>	The project can be led by any partner. Natural England have committed resources to developing the NNR extension with partners and stakeholders.
<b>What does partnership working actually look like, in terms of staff resourcing?</b>	The NNR offers the opportunity for partners to pool resources and skills and draw in additional resource through specific funding opportunities created by the NNR brand.
<b>Do we have to use the name Super NNR</b>	No, we could frame ourselves as a partnership NNR or landscape-scale NNR. Ultimately, each NNR is given a new name, e.g. Wild Ennerdale NNR, Purbeck Heaths NNR, Mendip NNR. The working name is currently <i>The Chalk Coast NNR</i> .
<b>What kind of funding is associated? How much? For how long?</b>	The Nature Recovery Project has a fund of £150k per annum for this Spending Review. NRPs are expected to be long-term projects. The NNR is an opportunity to attract other public, private and 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector funding.
<b>How much will it cost to run involvement? Including hidden costs.</b>	Staff time during declaration process: Monthly Teams meetings / quarterly face-face / Preparing papers for internal boards or committees to be part of the NNR / becoming an Approved Body After declaration: This will be decided by the partners but may include semi-regular meetings. See below and also the separate Governance document.
<b>How would partners work together?</b>	Partners would develop a joint over-arching management framework which would inform and guide how best to work together. There are a number of examples from other partnership NNRs to draw from. The aim is for the



	<p>meeting on 4 August to agree working arrangements up to the declaration in Nov 2024.</p>
<p><b>Who will be facilitating the on the ground projects?</b></p>	<p>Each partner can lead a project for the wider benefit of all partners</p>
<p><b>Where does the responsibility for the management plan sit?</b></p>	<p>Each Partner would continue to be responsible for the management plan for their own land/land that they manage. The over-arching joint management framework identifies where joint working adds value to the individual plans. It would be co-ordinated by the Partnership, facilitated by Natural England or another partner if they choose.</p> <div data-bbox="667 629 1007 1207" style="text-align: center;"> <pre> graph BT     A[Agri-environment agreements] --&gt; B[Partner Management Plans]     B --&gt; C[Management framework]             </pre> </div> <p>The NNR Management Standard: <a href="#">Natural England Standard: National Nature Reserve Management Standards - NESTND029</a> sets out the key principles for the management of National Nature Reserves (NNRs), and some specific expectations beneath them. It has been created by Natural England in consultation with Approved Bodies in order to support consistent quality of management across all NNR sites.</p> <p>Principle 2 A management plan for the NNR will be kept up-to-date.</p> <p>The NNR has a management plan that describes a site, identifies key features, analyses and sets objectives and specifies the management and monitoring prescriptions. The management plan is written within a year of the NNR being declared.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outcomes of management should be reviewed regularly against objectives and the Plan reviewed at least every five years to ensure it remains fit for purpose.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Records of key management activities are maintained that allow the effectiveness of management interventions to be monitored and reviewed.</li> </ul>
<b>Branding – concerns around multiple branding and fit with individual organisations brands, fit with the SDNP shared identity and fit with the Heritage Coast?</b>	<p>Section 5 of the NNR Management Standard: It must be clear to visitors when they arrive at the main entrances that the site is a National Nature Reserve. The NNR symbol should be used in new signage at main entrances and principal interpretation materials. Brand guidelines are available from Natural England.</p>
<b>Future funding, management, monitoring and delivery?</b>	<p>The NNR Strategy: <a href="https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6457692013723648">https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6457692013723648</a></p> <p>All NNR managing bodies invest in their reserves and will continue to do so. They are underpinned by a mix of public, charitable and private funding. We will work together to find additional sources of funding that broaden the resource base and improve its resilience.</p>
<b>What community engagement has been undertaken/ planned?</b>	<p>Any community engagement will be developed in consultation with the partners. Landowner consultation will happen before stakeholder engagement. This is starting to be planned.</p>
<b>What comms is planned? How will comms be coordinated with the key partners?</b>	<p>Partners will be developing their Comms Plan over the coming year. Other partnership NNRs have held launch events, for example the Lincolnshire Coronation Coast NNR. <a href="#">You can now watch the footage on BBC iPlayer (from 1:19:12 - 1:24:04): BBC One - Charles III: The Coronation Year</a></p>

<b>Designations and land use</b>	
<b>Is the NNR status compatible with others, eg SSSI, National Park, Heritage Coast, Country Park and Local Nature Reserve?</b>	<p>NNR is a tool within the nature recovery toolbox. The land does not have to have any other designation to become an NNR but can be used along-with other mechanisms whose purpose and/or functions may overlap in part.</p> <p>See Qs below re Country Park and Heritage Coast compatibility.</p>
<b>Does the land have to be a SSSI?</b>	<p>No. NNR land does not have to be within a SSSI to be included.</p>
<b>In terms of SSCP, would the land need to be declared an NNR to be part of the sNNR? If so, is this compatible with its status as a Country Park?</b>	<p>The land would need to be mapped as part of the NNR to be part of the NNR. Country Parks are accredited by Natural England against a set of criteria. <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-accreditation-for-your-country-park">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-accreditation-for-your-country-park</a></p>
<b>Heritage Coast compatibility</b>	<p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heritage-coasts-protecting-undeveloped-coast/heritage-coasts-definition-purpose-and-natural-englands-role">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heritage-coasts-protecting-undeveloped-coast/heritage-coasts-definition-purpose-and-natural-englands-role</a></p>

<p><b>What are we committing to?</b></p>	<p>Meeting the NNR Selection Principles: <a href="https://www.naturalengland.org.uk">The Selection Principles for National Nature Reserves in England - NE808 (naturalengland.org.uk)</a></p> <p>NNR Principles: New National Nature Reserves should:</p> <p>Nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a significant contribution to nature recovery in the locality</li> <li>• and/or safeguard or recover nationally important biodiversity and geodiversity</li> </ul> <p>Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for conservation and environmental science</li> </ul> <p>People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage people to experience, engage with and enjoy nature in a variety of ways (where this does not compromise management for the conservation purpose)</li> </ul> <p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site’s purpose is to be a nature reserve and the primary land use is nature conservation</li> <li>• The site is declared NNR in perpetuity or for the long term (&gt;30 years)</li> </ul> <p>The site will be managed to exemplary standards (the NNR Management Standards - see below).</p>
<p><b>How does this fit in with the Nature Recovery Network?</b></p>	<p>NNRs are a tool that can be used to deliver the NRN. The NRN in East Sussex is being defined through the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy over the next 18 months/2 years, led by ESCC. The wider Seaford to Eastbourne Nature Recovery Project is a delivery tool for the NRN now.</p>
<p><b>Does the NNR status change the legality of e.g. planning decisions in the area?</b></p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>What is the difference between the sNNR and NRP?</b></p>	<p>The ‘super’ or partnership NNR has a smaller boundary than the NRP and is limited to land in ownership by organisations who are currently or able to become Approved Bodies and whose land’s primary purpose is nature conservation. The NRP is far wider reaching and includes towns within its boundaries, land that could not be included within the NNR. The NNR will form the ‘beating heart’ of the NRP. The aim is for other landowners to become affiliated members of the NNR partnership over time.</p>
<p><b>Will the NNR declaration affect the ability to set new byelaws on the Country Park?</b></p>	<p>The Country Park byelaws are underpinned by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which is the same Act which underpins both the NNR and the National Park.</p>

Approved Body status	
<b>How do we become an Approved Body?</b>	<p>A Managing (Approved) Body is one that has the capability and the control of land use to meet the following NNR requirements over the long term.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site’s purpose is to be a nature reserve and the primary land use is nature conservation</li> <li>• The site is declared a NNR in perpetuity or for the long term (&gt;30 years)</li> <li>• The site will be managed to exemplary standards (the NNR Management Standards - see below).</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Each partner would approach its board/committee to agree ‘a letter of intent’</li> <li>2. New partners are then approved by the NE Board, under the WCA 1981</li> </ol>
<b>What are the advantages/disadvantages of becoming an Approved Body? What commitments does this place on us? Does it give what we say about what happened in the National Park part of the NNR more weight?</b>	<p>The 4 August Talk and Walk day slides, discussions and this series of Partner Questions seek to will cover this and will be added to by partners over the proceeding months.</p>
<b>If the sNNR did not include SSCP, would we still need/want to be an AB?</b>	<p>Approved Bodies are landowners or those who have long-term management control. If the SSCP wasn’t part of the NNR then there would be no reason for the SDNPA to be an AB.</p>
<b>Any additional/ new burdens on partners/ Authority?</b>	<p>Although designation is voluntary, the expectation is that Approved Bodies work to deliver the NNR Management Standards (below) in order to support consistent quality of management across all NNR sites.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The NNR series will seek to represent the best places for England’s biodiversity and geodiversity.</li> <li>2. A management plan for the NNR will be kept up-to-date and will reflect the requirements of this standard.</li> <li>3. The management of designated features and the wider reserve is exemplary.</li> <li>4. The NNR contributes to safeguarding and restoring ecosystems beyond its boundaries.</li> <li>5. The management of the NNR provides opportunities for public enjoyment, quiet recreation and engagement.</li> <li>6. Research into the natural environment at an NNR is promoted and knowledge is shared.</li> <li>7. Communities and stakeholders are involved in the management of the NNR</li> <li>8. NNR managers will work collaboratively to promote the NNR series and wider goals.</li> <li>9. NNRs will support opportunities to demonstrate exemplary conservation management to others.</li> </ol>

Commercial activities	
<p><b>How would this impact our and the Company’s activities in that area? Commercial and operational implications for running the country park?</b></p>	<p>NNRs were established under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which specified that they were for “preserving flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features of special interest in the area and/or for providing opportunities for the study of, and research into, those features”.</p> <p>The Natural Environment &amp; Rural Communities Act 2006 extended the role of NNRs to include the provision of opportunities for public enjoyment of nature and/or open-air recreation. This does not preclude commercial activities related to the enjoyment of nature or open-air recreation (tbc).</p> <p>Alternatively commercial activities on specific land areas would not be affected as that land would not be part of the NNR map.</p> <p>Operations related to the management of the nature reserve would also not be impacted. It would be useful to understand what other operations there might be.</p>

Timeframe	
<p><b>Is there a timeframe for the AB decision from the Board/Committee?</b></p>	<p>Currently pencilled in for November 2024.</p>

**Designations Table**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Law</b>	<b>Regulations and guidance</b>	<b>Managing body</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>SSSI</b>	Originally set up by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, but the current legal framework is provided by the <b>Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981</b> in England and Wales	There are certain activities that cannot be carried out on SSSI land without consulting Natural England and getting consent first - <b>ORNECs</b> (Operations Requiring Natural England Consent). These activities vary between sites.	<b>Owner/occupier</b> of the land. Natural England is the responsible authority for notifying and assessing the condition of SSSIs in England.	Designated
<b>NNR</b>	Established under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.	Key principals and benchmarks for management are set out in the <b>NNR Management Standards</b> . Each site is supported by a Management Plan.	<b>Natural England or an Approved Body</b> , these are organisations approved by Natural England to manage an NNR.	Voluntary declaration
<b>National Park</b>	Established under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.	They are legally protected areas. Planning permission is needed for developments from National Park authorities. The National Park Authority adopts the <b>National Park Management Plan</b> .	Managed by a <b>National Park Authority</b> . Much of the land within national parks is privately owned.	Designated
<b>Country Park</b>	Established in the Countryside Commission, under the <b>Countryside Act 1968</b> .	They must meet <b>accreditation criteria</b> to be designated e.g. no more than 5% of the area should be built upon (excluding car parks), free to enter and accessible.	Most parks are owned and managed by <b>local authorities</b> , although other <b>organisations</b> and <b>private individuals</b> can also run them.	Voluntary
<b>LNR</b>	Established under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949	The land manager needs to protect the LNR’s special interest with a Management Plan. Local authorities and town and parish councils can create <b>LNR byelaws</b> .	<b>Local authority owned</b> . Local authorities can run LNRs independently or can involve groups such as community groups, conservations bodies and Natural England.	Voluntary

Links:

- [Sites of special scientific interest: managing your land - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sites-of-special-scientific-interest-managing-your-land)
- [Natural England Standard: National Nature Reserve Management Standards - NESTND029](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-england-standard-national-nature-reserve-management-standards)
- [National Nature Reserves in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-nature-reserves-in-england)
- [More Information on National Park Management Plans: National Parks England](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/more-information-on-national-park-management-plans)
- [Get accreditation for a country park you manage in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-accreditation-for-a-country-park-you-manage-in-england)
- [Local nature reserves: setting up and management - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-nature-reserves-setting-up-and-management)
- [Heritage coasts: definition, purpose and Natural England's role - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/heritage-coasts-definition-purpose-and-natural-england-s-role)

