

SOUTH DOWNS PLANNING NEWS

UPDATES FROM YOUR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Green light for farm and new pathway plans

The future of a 17th century listed barn has been secured and a new public right of way will be created as part of a farm redevelopment in the National Park.

The Planning Committee voted to grant approval to plans for a new farmyard at Grace's Farm, Martyr Worthy, to help secure the future of the three-generation family farm.

The 1,200-acre farm is mainly arable, comprising wheat, winter barley, spring barley, oilseed rape and maize. There is also over 120 acres of temporary and permanent pasture used to support around 117 beef cattle.



Some of the barns and stables are no longer suitable for modern agriculture, so the scheme will see two listed farm buildings converted to residential use, including one

rural worker dwelling and three market residential units.

The National Park Authority has worked with Hampshire County Council's Countryside Access team to negotiate the extension of the Watercress Way westwards towards Winchester along the course of the old Winchester to Alton railway.

There will also be a new footpath to run south from the farm to Easton.



The Threshing Barn that dates back to the 1600s

The scheme includes significant biodiversity net gain. More than 200 trees will be planted, as well as the planting of 4,836 native hedge plants.

Swift bricks, swallow cups, sparrow terraces, starling bird boxes, and insect hotels are all incorporated into the redevelopment.

Sarah Round, Principal Development Management Officer, said: "This high-quality scheme conserves the long-term sustainable future of two heritage assets and delivers significant ecological benefits to aid nature recovery in the National Park.



"The plans also help to deliver a key public right of way link as set out in the South Downs Local Plan.

"Farming and farmers really are the lifeblood of the National Park and this development will deliver economic and social benefits to our rural economy."

Planning approval helps nature



Much-needed improvements to encourage more birdlife at RSPB Pulborough Brooks have been given the green light by the Authority.

Members of the Planning Committee voted unanimously to approve plans to install four new hydrological structures to help control water levels and ensure areas don't dry out.

The 159-hectare site mainly consists of grazing marsh and a series of ditches, serving as part of the River Arun's floodplain and home to species such as lapwing, nightingale, short-eared owl and the incredibly rare Little Whirlpool Ramshorn Snail.

However, the lack of hydrological controls has started to become a real issue in recent years. Reduced water levels across the site and compaction of ground have made some areas unsuitable habitat for wading birds. The lack of water flow has also caused the silting up of ditches and reduced water quality, affecting plants and insects, as well as the birds.

The new dams and sluices will maintain a steady water level and also ensure more "muddy edges" for wildlife.

The planning approval is the first milestone in the £2.4m Downs to the Sea project, which is supported by a £1.7m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Downs to the Sea will help carry out much-needed restoration work to a number of internationally-designated wildlife sites, including RSPB Pulborough Brooks and RSPB Pagham Harbour in West Sussex.

Natacha Bricks-Yonow, Project Manager for Downs to the Sea, said: "This is a wonderful first step towards improving wetlands across the region and encouraging more wildlife. There's still a lot of work ahead in terms of delivering the improvements, but gaining planning permission for this particular project is a big win for us."



Downs to the Sea is a partnership between the SDNPA, South Downs National Park Trust, RSPB, Brighton & Hove City Council, Western Sussex Rivers Trust, and Writing Our Legacy.

High Court action is taken



A prison sentence has been narrowly avoided after a woman was taken to the High Court for repeated planning breaches in the National Park.

Lara Kim Deroubaix was sentenced to four months in jail, suspended for four years, after ignoring a planning injunction to remove a caravan that had been illegally placed on agricultural fields at Long Road, Soberton, Hampshire.

The conviction comes after a long-running enforcement case – led by the South Downs National Park Authority and Winchester City Council – dating back to 2018.

The Authority initially secured a High Court injunction that forbade Ms Deroubaix from siting a caravan or mobile home for residential purposes at Long Road, Soberton. This was subsequently breached, leading to National Park Authority having to pursue the matter through the courts for a second time.

The High Court heard that she was given three written warnings and a verbal reminder for the second breach. During proceedings, Ms Deroubaix apologised to the court for her actions.

Sentencing Ms Deroubaix, Judge Dunne KC, sitting as a Deputy High Court Judge, said that she failed to heed numerous warnings by the officers and that she knew of the injunction. Judge Dunne awarded the South Downs National Park Authority its costs, to the sum of £14,945, in bringing the proceedings.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning, said: "Court action is not something we choose to do lightly and is often a last resort for us.

"The National Park is a very special landscape that has been designated for the benefit of the entire nation because of its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. Without a planning system that everyone adheres to, it could be harmed by any number of illegal developments and would cease to be a special place for people to live, work and enjoy. This enforcement case is an example of strong partnership working and we're very grateful to Winchester City Council for their support."

“Good planning has three pillars for balance”



Core and Balance. No, I'm not talking about pilates or yoga. Rather, these two words could be used to sum up sound planning, especially at a time of such change. Whether it's the global

geopolitics, our own economic challenges as we seek to deliver the Government's missions, or devolution, local government reorganisation and planning reforms, change is definitely all around us.

But, to avoid falling down amidst all these potential hurdles, it's useful to know what your **core** purpose is. So what might that be for planning in a National Park? To my mind, it's about delivering appropriate growth in a protected landscape, in a sustainable way that respects its evolving heritage. Running alongside this purpose and of equal value, we must ensure we recover as much nature as possible – and nature in its widest sense...flora, fauna, clean air, dark skies, and, perhaps most topically given all the recent headlines, healthy and plentiful rivers and streams. The latter are particularly important in the South Downs National Park as we're one of the few places on the planet with beautiful chalk streams with their own specialist ecosystems. And, last but by no means least, our purpose is to enable as many people as possible to visit and enjoy these wonderful places we are lucky enough to work or live in.

If you have a clear mandate deliver this, and can plan your work and resources appropriately, then despite change, you can plot a course. That is what we are seeking to do with our Local Plan Review and the revised Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note (TAN), as well as achieve the benefits we obtain via policy and negotiation on each application. National Park. Ultimately, it all comes down to 'place' and we strive to enhance and restore nature and create interesting environments for people, via good development befitting of its local area.

Others may have different views, but if we do have this as core, then our policies – and as important our logic and explanations– will be clearer. Focus on the planning system is arguably higher than ever, with planning in the news almost daily and rhetoric about

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whether we're a blocker or a builder. Therefore, being able to explain what we do, and why, is vital.

Now more than ever we need compelling stories, delivered in multiple ways, from 30 second soundbites, to videos, to publications such as this. For this reason, I'm really pleased that our **video** on the Local Plan Review has had over 2,500 hits on YouTube and our website stories have garnered over 6,000 views.

Is one a blocker or a builder, pro or anti, is where **balance** comes into play. Good planning is not about such basic, often polemic, viewpoints uninformed by the nuances and reality of the situation. I believe good planning has three pillars for balance – evidence base, community views whatever they may be and a degree of leadership. These are the fundamentals that sit behind decision-making. The recent debates about growth on the one hand and environmental conscience can be so harmful. I remain hopeful we can achieve the win-win of nature restoration and growth, but it's about balance.

While on this train of thought, I'm drawn to the recently published Government Land Use Framework. In a wonderful baseline chart, it shows the changes likely to be required across the country to meet environmental targets, food production and the growth agenda. Whilst so much focus goes on the 0.2% of predicted change on our land mass by development and built form, the big changes in agriculture, tree cover, floodland and land dedicated for nature, seem to get ignored. Again, it boils down to balance and proportion when considering land changing and for what purpose.

One other thought. Of course, people are passionate about 'their' area – quite rightly. It goes to the community view around policies and proposals. Yet as planners and environmentalists within a nationally-designated landscape we have to look at the wider picture too. That is in part what a "National Park", as opposed to any other type of park, is all about. I would be the first to admit that achieving that balance is not always easy when factoring in a national and local perspective. This contrast certainly keeps us on our toes and is one of things that makes planning in a National Park challenging, yet so rewarding.

I'm off now to a Pilates class to re-balance my mind and make sure I don't fall down! (we all need maintenance, especially after decades of squash and tennis!). As we all shape, as far as we can, and adapt to the forces of change, a final thought; Let's remember our core purposes and the need for balance – they are needed now more than ever before.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning

What's new in the Local Plan Review?



Claire Tester, Planning Policy Manager, gives a useful update.

The award-winning South Downs Local Plan is being reviewed to ensure it's up-to-date and addresses important issues such as

nature recovery, climate change, affordable housing and helping local communities thrive. The timetable for the Local Plan Review is available on the website [here](#).

The first public consultation on the Local Plan Review closed on 17 March 2025. Thank you to the over 2,000 individuals and organisations who responded! The feedback is currently under review, and all contributions will be carefully considered as we develop the next version of the plan.

Comments submitted on the consultation platform regarding policies and evidence are now live and available to view [here](#).

Comments made on site-specific issues are not yet live. We are checking these for personal information and other GDPR issues and all comments received will be published in due course, with all personal information redacted.

In drafting the Local Plan Review we have taken account of the 43 Parish Priorities Statements that were prepared by Parish Councils in consultation with their communities. These were particularly helpful in identifying infrastructure and facilities that should accompany any development, and where appropriate these have been incorporated into allocation policy requirements.

We would encourage all Parish Councils to consider preparing a Parish Priorities Statement, especially if they do not have an up-to-date neighbourhood plan or village design statement. Parish priority statements are a good way for local communities to say what is important to them and how they would like their places to adapt to change in the future. They are easier and quicker to prepare than neighbourhood plans, but it is important that parish councils involve their communities in their content. They can be prepared on an individual parish basis, or by a cluster of parishes.

Please see this [webpage](#) for advice and templates for parishes to follow, together with the statements already submitted.

Key updates from the Planning Policy Team

Partnership Management Plan: Planning Principles



Alongside the Local Plan Review we are also updating the

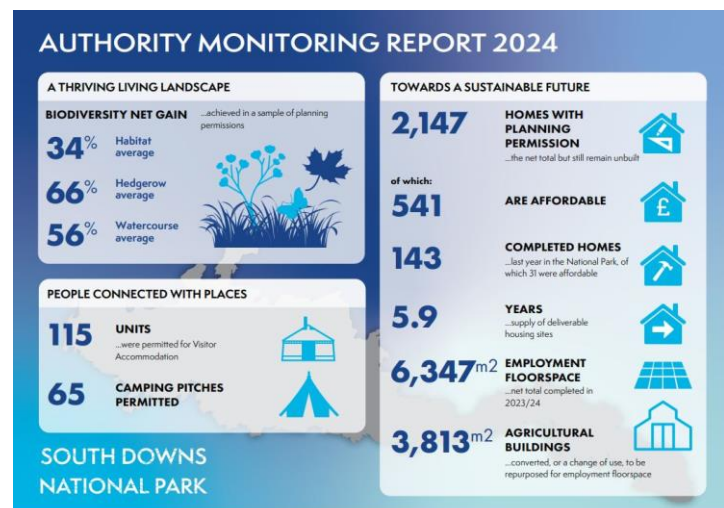
Partnership Management Plan, which sets out the wider priorities for the South Downs National Park for the next five years and how we will work together with partners to achieve this shared vision. This is being prepared in accordance with new Government guidance, which requires the inclusion of 'planning principles' within the Partnership Management Plan.

This is an opportunity for us to demonstrate the key role that the planning function plays in delivering the purposes and duty of the National Park. Its role in land use and land management is crucial to the look and feel of the place and its communities, and is one of the key means of delivering on the vision, aims and objectives of the Partnership Management Plan. The planning principles will guide the content of future planning policy documents and the determination of planning applications, and demonstrate how they link back to the Partnership Management Plan.

Consultation on this draft Partnership Management Plan, including the planning principles, will take place in summer 2025, see more details [here](#).

Authority Monitoring Report

This year's Authority Monitoring Report was published in April 2025, and reports on the financial year 2023-24. This report considers the performance of planning policies in the adopted South Downs Local Plan, and identifies trends against various indicators. It is available on our [website](#) and headline results here:



Partial Update of Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan

The Hampshire Authorities (Hampshire County Council, South Downs National Park Authority, New Forest National Park Authority, Southampton City Council and Portsmouth City Council) are working on a partial update to their Minerals & Waste Local Plan which will guide minerals and waste decision making in Hampshire up to 2040. This is currently at examination stage and hearings took place during February. The next stage is to publish modifications to the Plan to address issues raised by the Inspector. It is anticipated that this consultation will take place in summer 2025.

Community Planning

- The Peacehaven and Telscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan is currently at Examination.
- The East Dean and Friston Neighbourhood Development Plan has been formally submitted to the Authority and the Regulation 16 consultation will take place once a legal check has been undertaken by SDNPA officers.
- The Bramshott and Liphook Neighbourhood Development Plan was “made” part of the statutory development plan in December 2024.
- The Modified Boxgrove Neighbourhood Development Plan was subject to a Regulation 14 consultation between January and March 2025.
- The West Saltdean Neighbourhood Development Plan was subject to a Regulation 16 public consultation between January and March 2025.
- The proposed designations of the Ovingdean Neighbourhood Area and Ovingdean Neighbourhood Forum are out to public consultation until 14 May 2025
- The Upham Village Design Statement was adopted in March 2025.

Update on Bird Aware Solent Strategy

Background information

- The Solent Coast is designated a Special Protection Area for its bird species. Research has shown that increase in new homes and the subsequent increase of visitors to the coast will cause disturbance to birds. Around 147,500 new homes are anticipated around the Solent up to 2050.
- All new residential developments (with a net increase in homes) within this zone are required to



mitigate the potential negative impact of the development.

- The long-established Bird Aware Solent Strategy aims to mitigate the likely impact of bird disturbance arising from new homes in the area. It focuses on educating people about the birds and encouraging positive behaviour change. The measures and monitoring of their effectiveness are funded by developer contributions for new homes built within 5.6km of the Special Protection Area.
- A small part of the South Downs National Park lies within the 5.6km zone.

What's new?

- After a comprehensive, robust and positive review, Bird Aware is extending the scope of its work to include protected breeding birds who are on parts of our coast during the summer months. This is in response to the findings of **a review of the likelihood of increased recreation from new housing impacting breeding birds**. The Revised Strategy provides mitigation that allows house building to continue in the Solent area.
- Following a detailed financial review of the updated strategy, there will be no increase in developer contributions towards mitigation costs and annual inflationary increases will continue as usual. It remains an opt-in Strategy and developers are still able to provide their mitigation requirements through a bespoke scheme if they choose.
- It came into effect for planning permissions granted from 1 April 2025. More information **here**.

Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note

- Our Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) TAN was updated and published in March.
- This was a comprehensive review, taking account of legislative and policy changes and emerging best practice and professional understanding over the first year of mandatory BNG.
- The TAN provides guidance on how BNG is to be achieved in the South Downs National Park now in accordance with existing South Downs Local Plan Policy, and how BNG should meaningfully contribute to nature recovery.
- The update has focused on building on the overarching principles on how meaningful BNG will be delivered a protected landscape context, more information on how to support your planning applications, and expansion of guidance about securing BNG. The updated TAN can be found **here**.

Groundbreaking nature initiative off to flying start



Efforts to create a huge new wildlife haven in the National Park through private investment are well under way.

Over 50 hectares of the Iford Estate – or 80 football pitches – have now been formally dedicated to nature restoration, thanks to two groundbreaking legal agreements with the National Park Authority.

Iford has just signed a second Section 106 agreement with the Authority, bringing the East Sussex estate a step closer to its vision of devoting two thirds of the estate to nature. The 18.75 hectares of new space for nature comes on top of the 31.8 hectares dedicated to wildlife in 2023.

Among the key projects is transforming intensively-farmed fields into a new thriving deciduous woodland the size of 24 football pitches. It is hoped that threatened species such as the hazel dormouse and spotted flycatcher will be able to flourish and increase in numbers thanks to the new habitats being created.

Ultimately, it's hoped that the new wildlife haven, which will include woodlands and wildflower meadows, can provide a home for over 1,000 species – over half of them being protected species in the South Downs region.

The private investment works whereby businesses or individuals can invest in a parcel of land, or a ReNature Credit, each measuring 3m by 3m, that is then secured for nature for the next 30 years.

The ReNature Credits can be bought either for mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain associated with development inside or outside the National Park or, alternatively, as Voluntary Biodiversity Credits – an initiative that was launched last year with the South Downs being the first National Park to start such a scheme.

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The voluntary scheme at Iford is being run in partnership with **Earthly** to establish a new Nature Market that makes it easy for businesses to invest in biodiversity recovery. The Voluntary Biodiversity Credits can be purchased through Earthly's marketplace, alongside other high-integrity nature-based projects from around the world. Earthly has created a unique biodiversity ledger that represents all purchased credits to maximise transparency and ensure against double counting.

The voluntary scheme allows businesses of all sizes and sectors to invest in nature recovery and has gained significant interest since its launch last May. Under the voluntary scheme, 217 Credits – worth almost £40,000 – have so far been purchased to help create new habitat.

Among the investors have been King – the entertainment company behind the world-famous Candy Crush Franchise – and other businesses and members of the public.

The National Park Authority is currently in discussions with several landowners across the South Downs with a view to dedicating hundreds more hectares of land to nature recovery, securing the land for biodiversity through Section 106 legal agreements.

Nick Heasman, who heads the National Park's Consultancy Team that is leading the project, said: "Since launching just over six months ago, we've seen this initiative gather real momentum and it's very exciting to see.

"I think the amount of interest we've had underlines the fact that people see there is a biodiversity crisis and want to do something to help. In the UK, 41 per cent of species have declined in abundance over the past 40 years and many are severely threatened, so there's no time to wait and see what happens – we've got to start reversing that decline now.

"The project demonstrates that nature recovery can be funded in lots of different ways and there's tremendous appetite from the private sector, as well as members of the public and local communities, to make a difference."

People can now get in touch with the National Park Authority to purchase biodiversity credits and be a part of the journey to create a new nature haven at Iford. The cost of one Voluntary Biodiversity Credit is £170.50, which secures a 3x3 metre parcel of land for nature recovery. Each credit is mapped with its own unique reference and secured formally to ensure it remains in place for at least 30 years. Please visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/renature-credits/contact/ or email Sarah Westbrook, Nature-based Solutions Officer at the National Park, at Sarah.Westbrook@southdowns.gov.uk

Big boost for education and recreation facilities



Learning and play opportunities for children are being boosted by funding administered by the National Park Authority.

Droxford Junior School was awarded over £37,000 funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to provide new play and outdoor education facilities.

The funds have been spent on an outdoor classroom and amphitheatre, a new trim trail, low ropes and den building area, along with new plants for pollinators like bees and butterflies.

Droxford Junior School is also an ambassador school for the South Downs National Park and they are instrumental in helping other schools engage with outdoor education.

Meanwhile, Greatham Parish Council was awarded £90,000 in CIL funding for the creation of an inclusive, accessible playground at Greatham Village Hall.

The final playground design included accessible equipment and catered for ages from pre-school right up to 15 years plus.

The playground includes a wheelchair accessible roundabout, accessible swings and sensory panels. The surfacing and paths ensure the whole play area is accessible for wheelchair users or parents with prams and includes access directly off the tarmac car park.



Nikki Allen, CIL Planning Officer, added: "The playground has become a focal point for the village, which has enabled those with and without gardens to meet and socialise and allow play for two or three hours with picnics. Families are also visiting from the surrounding villages to make use of this wonderful facility."

Investing in the future of building conservation



The National Park Authority is helping to support the next generation of building conservationists.

Young people from across Sussex took part in a Heritage Skills Taster Day at Weald & Downland Living Museum, gaining hands-on experience in traditional building crafts vital to the future of conservation.

Funded by the South Downs National Park Authority, the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust and The Swire Charitable Trust, the day was designed to inspire the next generation of builders to explore exciting career opportunities in building conservation.

The 2025 event built on the success of last year's pilot project, where 27 students were introduced to heritage skills, with 11 awarded bursaries for further training. This year, the day grew to 39 students from Brighton Metropolitan College, Chichester College and Crawley College.

The students got the opportunity to 'taste' four different building crafts including timber repairs, brick making, hurdle making and wattle and daub.

Helen Reeve, CEO of the Sussex Heritage Trust, said: "The Authority's commitment to championing this pilot scheme has been instrumental in giving young people the chance to gain practical skills relevant to the historic environment of our National Park."

- **The 2025 Sussex Heritage Trust Awards** will be announced at a prestigious ceremony held at AMEX Stadium, Brighton, on Tuesday, 2 July 2025 where they will receive a hand-crafted slate plaque presented by the Trust's President, The Rt Hon Lord Egremont. Guests gathered for the launch of the awards at the iconic Saltdean Lido, the only Grade II listed lido in the country. Now in their 27th year, the Awards – sponsored by Thakeham – celebrate the best of conservation, restoration and good design of newly built projects across Sussex.

Appeals submitted to the Planning Inspectorate	99
Appeals started	111
Appeals determined	98
Appeals successfully defended	81
Statutory submissions received	3,952
Statutory submissions received via the Planning Portal	3,403
Statutory submissions determined	4,059
Neighbours notified	18,405
Representations received	5,705
Consultations issued	10,693
Conditions imposed	12,531
Enquiries for planning advice	1,108
Enforcement complaints received	571
Enforcement cases opened	445
Enforcement related site inspections	381
Enforcement notices served	25
Enforcement cases closed	517

(April 2024-April 2025)

Meet the team...

This edition we catch up with Alison Fordham, Executive Support Officer for Tim Slaney.

Three words that sum up your job?

Only three? Impossible!

What's your role?

I'm the Executive Support Officer for Tim Slaney, the Director of Planning. I form part of the Executive Support Team and together we assist the Senior Leadership Team, Chair & Deputy of the Authority.

What appealed to you about working for a National Park?

I spent 15 years in estate agency and was fascinated by the possibilities when it came to property and land development. I got to see the process from the point of permission through to the end result; now I get to see how our incredible planning team handle early ideas and concepts, and take those through to a decision.

Can you describe your typical day?

No two days are the same, which certainly keep things interesting. I never know what's going to come through my inbox or what tasks/challenges are heading my way. Calendar management plays a large part of my role, and it can often feel like playing Tetris trying to



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make calendars align! It's a good thing I was a big Game Boy fan back in the day and enjoy a challenge....

Best thing about working for a National Park?

Knowing that I get to play even a tiny part in helping to shape the Park and how it will look for future generations is a great feeling.

What do you love about the South Downs National Park?

The sense of 'home' – there are so many beautiful places in the UK, but there's something about the sight of the Downs when you're driving back towards them that feels so welcoming!

Have you got any hobbies?

I do a lot of cake making, which can be really enjoyable and almost relaxing – except in July when most of my family birthdays fall and I have a lot of cakes to make in the space of a few weeks. Buttercream in the summer is neither enjoyable nor relaxing.

Currently reading/watching?

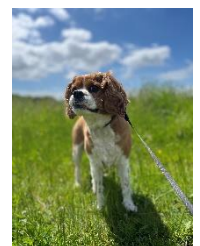
I've just finished reading 'Good Bad Girl' by Alice Feeney. If you like a good plot twist, you should absolutely give her books a try. 'Rock Paper Scissors' and 'I Know Who You Are' are equally brilliant, I couldn't put them down. As a contrast, we're watching 'Last One Laughing' – it's completely childish, but watching people trying not to laugh is so funny.

Dream holiday destination and why?

Bass fishing on Lake Okeechobee in Florida – my husband loves fishing and I love the sunshine, it's the perfect match.

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

I love Sundays. They usually start with my husband bringing me a cup of tea in bed at around 6am before he goes fishing, then it's a lazy breakfast followed by a long walk somewhere in the Park with our dog, Poppy. It's hard to tell, but I promise she enjoys those walks more than her face lets on! During the afternoon, I'll read whilst she sleeps on my feet. The day ends with a roast dinner before we crash on the sofa to watch something on Netflix. We've just welcomed, Charlie, a cocker spaniel puppy, into the family, so weekends might look a little different for a while, but I'm really looking forward to getting him out and about in the Park.



[Pic Credits](#)

P2 left RSPB/Graham Osborne; P5 Little Egret John Lauper; P5 Cormorants David Sawford; P6 Iford Sarah London; P7 Right Sam Stephenson.