

**FARMING AND LAND MANAGEMENT IN THE
SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK**

CASE STUDIES

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A Scene Setting Overview by the Dorset & E Devon National Park Team

South Downs National Park: its working relationship with farmers and land managers

Dorset is for the most part a farmed and managed landscape. Landowners and farmers are therefore at the heart of our county, and it is appropriate that their views are heard and any questions they may have about the proposed National Park are addressed. The main way we can do this is through learning from the experience of our best comparator: the South Downs National Park. The South Downs (unlike many other NPs) is also, like Dorset, a farmed landscape with major towns and settlements.

Hence in December 2016 we published a report **Land Management: The South Downs National Park Experience** by the recent Director of Operations in the South Downs. This noted how relevant areas of policy have been consulted on, developed and implemented to the benefit of South Downs' farmers and land managers, other businesses and communities, as well as the area's environment and economy, including tourism, heritage management and recreation.

It showed (amongst other things) how:

- The South Downs Land Management Group and CLA-supported working breakfasts, workshops and other engagement have helped farmers and land managers contribute to NP policies and plans, and benefitted action on the ground;
- The South Downs NP has helped its farmers secure 20% of Stewardship funding in the South East region, though the South Downs covers only 10% of the area under agreement;
- Additional funding has been secured for such schemes as improved water quality, chalk grassland and woodland management, heathland conservation, sustainable transport, as well as heritage tourism;
- Landowners and those with heritage tourism assets value the NP and how the NP brand presents a range of opportunities.

The paper also discussed the South Downs National Park's (SDNP) approach to planning as this relates to the land-management sector, including "*taking a positive and pro-active approach to sustainable development, balancing the protection of the landscape with the social and economic wellbeing of the area,*"

In August 2018, we published a report on **Farming and Land Management in the South Downs** which highlighted that under the South Downs NP Local Plan, policies support farmers through for example enabling diversification to increase their long-term viability, the construction of new agricultural and forestry buildings, and through facilitating the re-use of redundant farm buildings.

It noted that the South Downs NP has proposed a pilot scheme to trial new approaches to agri-environment funding delivery designed to provide a range of benefits. These include agri-environment solutions which take full account of farmers' expertise and ideas to improve productivity and resilience, enhance income and reduce costs for participating farm businesses. The proposed scheme has the support of both the CLA and NFU.

The following paper by Alison Tingley, Liaison Officer to the South Downs Land Managers Group, offers a range of practical **Case Studies** that illustrate how farmers and landowners have been helped for example to diversify and adapt farm buildings. It notes the important roles played by the Land Managers Group whose membership is some 490 and encompasses those who are members of the CLA and NFU. It notes where more progress is needed and offers lessons for the future.

FARMING AND LAND MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

CASE STUDIES

For the Dorset & E Devon National Park Team

Contents

		Page
Introduction		4
Case Study	Area of interest	
1. Housedean Farm, Lewes	Planning & Recreation	5
2. Perching Manor and Paythorne Farm	Conservation & Planning	10
3. Western Downs Farm Cluster	Conservation	12
4. Holden Farm, Beauworth	Planning/ Tourism	15
5. Conclusions		17
6. Appendix 1 Map	Farm Clusters	21
7. Appendix 2	Farm Liaison Officer	22
8. Appendix 3	Scheduled Monuments	24

Introduction

The following case studies have been prepared by Alison Tingley, Liaison Officer to the South Downs Land Managers Group and previously Rural Economy Strategy Lead to the South Downs National Park Authority. They are intended to complement the report prepared by Phil Belden on Farming and Land Management in the South Downs National Park. Although there is some overlap, the case studies have been chosen to illustrate the opportunities and benefits of farming within a National Park and document the contribution that the National Park Authority (NPA) have made in three areas of its work: planning, conservation and recreation. It also suggests areas where the NPA could do more to assist or where lessons can be learnt to help inform the development of the Dorset National Park.

South Downs Land Managers Group

The South Downs Land Managers (SDLM) is an independent group of people involved with the land in the South Downs National Park: local farmers, foresters and landowners, and the employees, agents and professionals who work with them. National Farmers Union (NFU) and Country Land and Business Association (CLA) are the principal partner organisations. The SDLM was created in response to the decision to designate the South Downs as a National Park. The inaugural meeting of the SDLM was held in June 2009 during the SDNP's shadow-running period and prior to the SDNP coming fully into operation. The group is managed by an Executive Committee which meets three to four times per year and administered by the Liaison Officer who arranges meetings, circulates information, distributes newsletters (two per year). The group has a signed Memorandum of Agreement with the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), which recognises the need to work together in a constructive and professional manner. The NPA pays an annual grant of £2500 to the SDLM to cover administrative costs. Initially a subscription organisation, in June 2016 it was agreed that all landowners and farmers within the South Downs National Park that are members of either the CLA or NFU would automatically become members of the SDLM and that subscriptions would no longer be charged. Other land-based businesses that are not NFU or CLA members can still be involved. This took effect from 1st January 2017. Membership now stands at 490.

Liaison meetings are held between the SDNPA and SDLM three to four times per year. The SDLM have been involved in both the development of the partnership Management Plan and Local Plan as well as developing the Whole Estate Plan Guidelines for landowners. Individual Members have been involved in consultation workshops, written comments on the Management Plan and Local Plan have been submitted on behalf of the Members and discussions on proposed policies and wording have been discussed at meetings.

SDLM responses to NPA consultations can be found at <http://www.southdownsland.com/Currentissues>. Many of the comments and proposed changes to the Local Plan made by the SDLM were taken on board by the NPA.

Planning

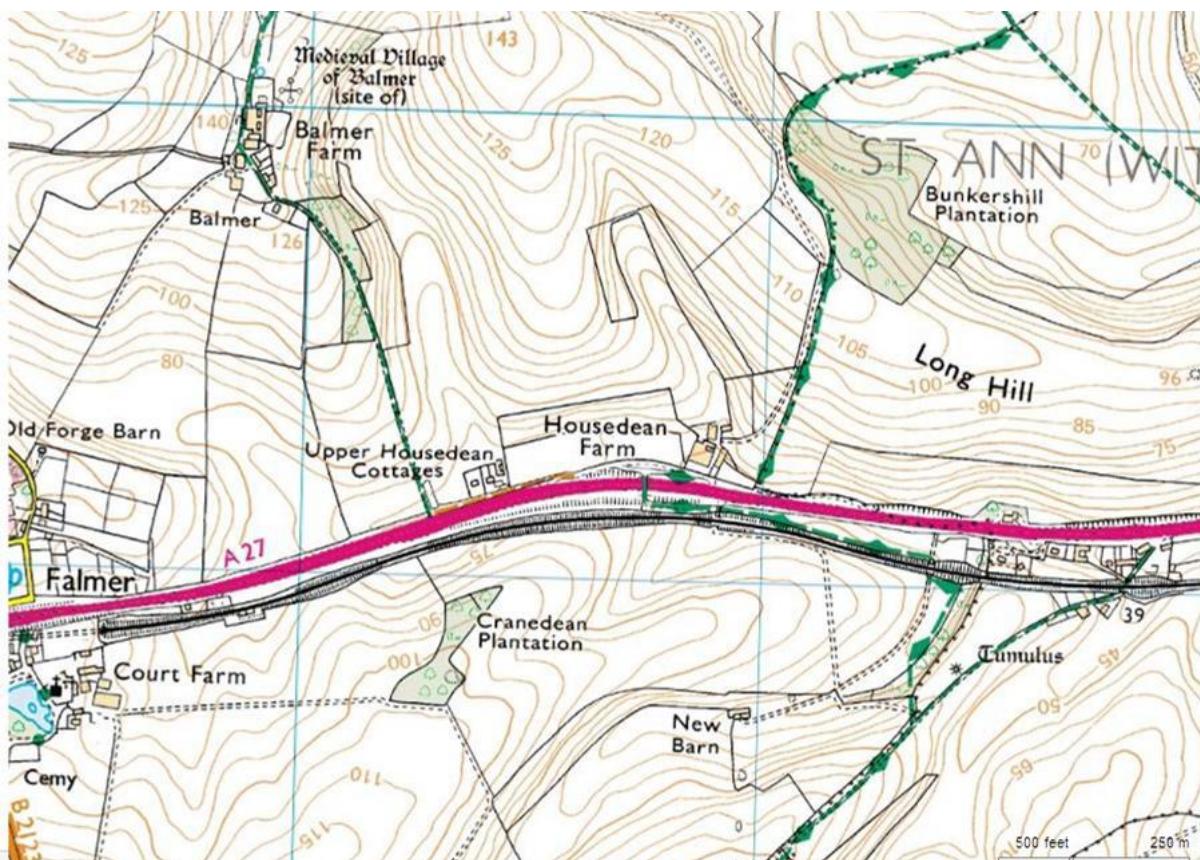
One of the main areas which landowners in the National Park perceive as most significant for their business development is planning. The SDNPA is the statutory planning authority for the National Park area. The SDNPA is the eighth largest planning authority in terms of the number of applications received each year and also one of the largest in terms of area covered. In order to deal with the quantity of applications more effectively, in five of the districts, the local authorities deal with planning applications on behalf of the NPA under a partnership agreement. Under the agreements, the NPA reserves the right to determine such applications and does so in the most significant cases - about 10% of the total applications received.

Case study 1

Housedean Farm, Lewes

Introduction

Housedean Farm is situated between Brighton and Lewes to the West of the A27 in the Eastern Downs area of the SDNP. The farm is 512 ha of which 205 ha is owned and 80 ha are rented from a private landlord and the balance rented from Brighton and Hove City Council. The farm is mixed arable and beef with 350 ha arable and 150 ha permanent pasture of which 30 ha is improved pasture and the remaining 120ha is unimproved pasture. Cropping of arable land is on a four-year rotation with winter wheat, spring barley, winter barley and oil seed rape. There is a 50 strong herd of Simmental cross suckler cows.



There are no formal conservation or archaeological designations on the farm. The whole farm is covered by Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Scheme. The options taken up, only apply to parts of the farm, primarily unimproved pasture, over-wintering stubble and field corners and margins. Two fields (7 ha) are under the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) having been reverted from arable to grass to help protect the tumuli within the fields from ploughing.

Since 2004, the farm has diversified with redundant buildings being let out to local businesses for storage, DIY horse liveries, workshops and office space, and in 2011, the year that the SDNPA became operational, the campsite.

Planning

In October 2011 a planning application¹ was made for a 1.4 ha campsite adjacent to the farm yard. The field had previously been used for camping for up to 28 days per year under permitted development. The initial application formalized the use and included the provision

of 25 pitches and portable WC block. Both the Lewes District Council Camping and Caravanning Study 2011 and SDNPA Visitor Survey 2012 identified a lack of camping facilities within the National Park and particularly adjacent to the South Downs Way (SDW) National Trail, which is used by some 20,000 long-distance walkers and cyclists each year.

Planning in Lewes District Council (LDC) area is carried out by the district council on behalf of the SDNPA. Pre-application advice was obtained from LDC planning officers for the initial campsite planning application. A site visit was made by the planning officer at which suggestions were made on the siting of the mobile WC and shower facilities and the landscape impact of the campsite. The proposed siting of the WC and shower facilities in the corner of the field close to the existing farm buildings meant that they were not visible from any publicly accessible areas. Although tents on the western part of the field would be visible from the SDW it was considered that the impact would be temporary and therefore of negligible significance and would not detract from the landscape. The application was approved in December 2011. The campsite is open from the end of March to beginning of October catering for walkers and tourists during the busy summer weekends.



The application for a 0.25 ha extension to the campsite with an additional 8-10 pitches was made in November 2012 and approved in Jan 2013, along with additional shower and toilet facilities².

In April 2018 an application was made for the conversion of a redundant farm building into two bedoomed holiday accommodation³, and to extend an existing access track to provide independent access to the new holiday let and existing campsite. The existing building is a single storey flint barn supporting a pitch roof. The application included a design and access statement and an ecological report as well as location plans and existing and proposed elevations and ground floor plans. No decision had been made by the determination date, in

fact the planning application advertisement notice had not even been received by this date. Staff shortages at the local authority were evidently the main reason for the delays. The landowner, David Taylor, contacted the Director of Planning at SDNPA who in turn contacted the Planning Liaison Officer for the area to resolve the issue. A decision was eventually made by LDC approving the application on 30th July. The delay in making a decision on the application has jeopardised the land owner's application for Leader funding. Without the help of the SDNPA, the decision would have been even further delayed.

‘The campsite has proved to be very successful and now makes a very useful contribution to the overall viability of the farm. It has also provided a means by which another generation can be involved in the farm which is important for succession planning for the future.’ David Taylor

Access

The farm is located directly on the SDW National Trail, which follows the boundary of the farm from Bunkers Plantation down to the A27, before passing the entrance to the farm and continuing to the south of the A27 another bridleway passes to the west of the farm and a footpath to the east.

Prior to the SDNP being set up, the South Downs Joint Committee (SDJC) carried out the maintenance and signage of public footpaths and bridleways on behalf of East and West Sussex County Councils. When the NPA was set up this reverted to the Highways Authorities, in this case, East Sussex County Council. The SDW is a National Trail 160 kilometres long running from Beachy Head near Eastbourne in East Sussex to Winchester in Hampshire. It is used by more than half a million walkers, cyclists and riders every year, some for pleasure, others for the challenge and many to raise money for charity.

Technically the landowner is responsible for the upkeep of furniture on the public rights of way and for the clearance of side vegetation. East Sussex County Council is responsible for the clearance of surface vegetation. However, because the SDW is a National Trail, and therefore usage is higher than on normal rights of way and higher standards need to be maintained, the NPA is carrying out more and more vegetation clearance along the route, as the County Councils are struggling to get around the path network and they have found that the landowners may not carry out clearance work when it is most needed. Maintenance of the Trail is co-ordinated by the National Trail Officer and South Downs Way Ranger, who carry out site visits and arrange with the landowner, when and what work will be carried out by volunteers.

Over the past five years the SDNPA staff and volunteers have installed four oak bridglegates on the SDW at Housedean Farm. On average this has involved two members of staff plus five volunteers. The cost of materials is around £500 plus staff and volunteer time per gate. In addition, the SDNPA usually arrange two volunteer tasks per year to carry out path clearance on Housedean Farm and sometimes an additional day with two members of staff.

Approximately 10% of people using the campsite are walkers using the SDW, the rest are tourists wanting to stay in the local area and explore the National Park and adjacent towns. The NPA have been keen to promote walking and cycling within the Downs, as a means of sustainable tourism. Although there are no recent statistics on the number of visits, the landowners' perception is, that both the number of events and people attending these and those using the SDW appear to have increased since the NP designation. ‘The Economic

profile of the South Downs National Park⁴ - March 2018 identified a 14% rise in the number of businesses in the visitor economy sector since 2013⁶.

Whilst the perceived increase in visitor numbers has a positive effect in terms of potential customers using the campsite, the down side is the potential impact this can have on farming operations particularly when large events are organised which result in road closures. Event organisers and the Highways Authorities, responsible for road closures, seldom consult with local communities. Whilst some organisers pay a fee to the landowner to set up a 'station' in the farm yard, others, however, make no contribution at all and often the first that the landowner will know about it is when people start appearing with tables and other paraphernalia.

The SDNPA is working to help manage tourism pressures and has developed a Cycling and Walking Strategy⁵ and a Sustainable Tourism Strategy⁶. Guidance notes⁷ are available on the SDNPA website for organisers of large festivals and events in the South Downs. The SDNP's ranger service is always available to assist both land managers and event organisers to resolve issues.

The SDW website has a facility for event organisers to register their event giving details of where and when it is to take place. This, however, is voluntary and by no means all event organisers do so. Such events increase the use of the trail causing increased wear and tear. Whilst some organisers provide a voluntary contribution towards the up keep of the SDW, they are in the minority. The SDNPA could do more to encourage event organisers and the County Councils to consult with local communities and to ensure that they are not financially disadvantaged or better still are able to gain some monetary compensation from the events. In December 2015 a donation scheme was set up enabling people who have enjoyed using the trail to make a donation towards its upkeep. Since its launch nearly 3 years ago £92k has been generated by this scheme towards the upkeep of the SDW. Examples of work carried out can be found on the South Downs Trust website⁸.

Environment

In and around Brighton and Hove the public water supply is pumped from groundwater held in the chalk beneath the Downs, one of the worst failing chalk block catchments, which supplies drinking water to hundreds of thousands of people in the coastal conurbation. ChaMP⁹ is a collaborative project, of which SDNPA is a partner with Southern Water, local farmers and others set up to find ways of reducing the rising trend of nitrates in the groundwater, for example by planting green cover crops to absorb nitrates. To do this ChaMP provides practical advice and improvements to land management in the urban and rural areas; it raises public and land manager awareness of ground water protection and informs the evidence base by undertaking success monitoring.

The ChaMP Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer gives advice to farms and can access specialist assistance, grants and incentives to support changes in agricultural management. Housedean Farm is one of two farms in the Brighton chalk block where cover crop trials have been carried out over the past year, to see which cover crops are most successful at reducing nitrogen leaching. The cover crops being trialled are radish, black oats, Phacelia, clover and vetch. The ChaMP project is working with a local crop sampling company and a volunteer from the University of Brighton to monitor the success of this approach. The landowner is paid £20 /ha to plant and manage 25 ha of cover crops. Assistance was also provided to part fund (50%) the cost of an air seeder to be mounted on an existing cultivator.

Due to report in 2019, the early signs look promising and the farmers involved have welcomed the practical help and advice in these farm trials. The results could influence the new post-EU agri-environment measures, and the involvement of the water company could open the door to payments for ecosystem services, in this case “paying farmers to farm water” as well as producing food.

Links:

¹ Original campsite planning application: LW/11/1276/NP

<http://planningpa.lewes.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=externalDocuments&keyVal=LT7AAPJD1W000>

² Campsite extension SDNP/12/02866/FUL

<https://planningpublicaccess.southdowns.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=MDHOZ0TU1V000&activeTab=summary>

³ Conversion of redundant barn to holiday let: SDNP/18/02051/FUL

<https://planningpublicaccess.southdowns.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=P7C4YKTU0IX00>

⁴ Economic Profile of the South Downs National Park – March 2018

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Economic-Profile-of-the-South-Downs-National-Park.pdf>

⁵ Cycling and Walking Strategy 2017 – 2024 <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/SDNPA-Cycling-and-Walking-Strategy-2017-2024.pdf>

⁶ Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2015 -2020 <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Sustainable-Tourism-Strategy-2015-20.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/SDNPA-Events-Guidance-Note.pdf>

⁸ <https://southdowns.charitycheckout.co.uk/cf/MendOurWay>

⁹<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Brighton-ChaMP-for-Water.pdf>

Case study 2

Perching Manor and Paythorne Farm

Conservation

Perching Manor and Paythorne Farm is a 610 ha farm situated to the North of Shoreham. The majority is owned, with 80 ha tenanted under two separate Farm Business Tenancy Agreements and all managed in hand by the B D Harris Farm Trust. The farm covers part of the open dip slope, and weald landscape types. It is situated on the South Downs Way at Truleigh Hill just north of Shoreham. A rotation of winter wheat, oil seed rape, spring barley and beans are grown on the 270ha of arable land, whilst a herd of Aberdeen Angus x Limousin suckler herd extensively graze the 330 ha of permanent pasture. Sheep are grazed all year round, numbers vary according to grazing requirements. In addition, a resident herd of 25 Bagot goats are used to keep the scrub down on the steep slopes of the Beeding Hill SSSI, designated for its unimproved chalk downland sward. The remaining 10 ha are woodland.

In the 1970s and 80s all of the arable land on the farm was put down to grassland under the original Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme and let to neighbouring farmers. The grassland was of little environmental interest and when the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) superseded the ESA 115 ha of land on the top was ploughed back up. Nectar flower margins, grass margins, beetle banks and fallow plots were introduced onto the arable land. Surveys showed that after the first year there was a huge increase in the number and diversity of birds present on the farm, including corn buntings. The survey was organised by NE who arranged a lot of monitoring in the first year, but since funding for monitoring has reduced, the Trust is looking to find other ways to achieve this, potentially through their farm cluster group. All the farmed land is now in a 10 year Higher Level Stewardship agreement with NE, providing a mosaic of arable and pasture alongside wildlife habitat provision.



The B D Harris Farm Trust has an excellent relationship with the local SDNPA ranger, Phillipa Morrison-Price, who has been instrumental in developing a scrub management plan for approval by NE. Since 2011 she has worked with the landowner and NE staff. The HLS Agreement was already in place and a substantial capital grant (£20k over three years) was being spent on fencing and clearing areas of dense scrub and woodland that had encroached on the site. Following the scrub clearance, large areas of regrowth of rosebay willow herb, hemp agrimony and bramble appeared. It is these areas that the SDNPA ranger has been concentrating on over the past eight years. Practical input has also been forthcoming from the SDNPA in the form of volunteers carrying out scrub clearance work, involving 152 volunteer days. The Trust spokes-person, Annie Brown, said that 'this is an excellent way of engaging people and helping them to understand the difficulties of land management'.

Since 2013, Phillipa has helped source a further £11,760, in addition to the HLS funding, for contractors via the Nature Improvement Area Project (The South Downs Way Ahead¹⁰), Grassroots area budget and Veolia Brighton Blues Project¹¹. In March 2017 600 meters of electric fencing were purchased at a cost of £1000 by the SDNPA and erected on Beeding Down SSSI to facilitate the grazing of Bagot goats, purchased by the Trust specifically to help keep the regrowth at bay.

The Trust has tried to tackle the difficulties faced in farming such a large unit, by subdividing it. The NPA ranger was concerned about the potential impact the fencing might have on the landscape and brought to the attention of the Trust the existence of an Article 4 directive at Truleigh Hill, which has been in place since 1964, (long before the SDNP was designated). The Trust, with support of NE and advice from the SDNPA Planning Link Officer, were able to install a one metre high fence in the area they desired, without having to seek planning approval.

¹⁰ South Downs Way Ahead Nature Improvement Area <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Case-Study-South-Downs-Way-Ahead-NIA.pdf>

¹¹ Veolia Brighton Blues Project <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/rare-butterfly-is-surprise-success-for-south-downs-project>

Case Study 3

Winchester Downs Farm Cluster

Introduction

There are currently six farm clusters across the national park (Appendix 1), five of which are funded through the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund, the sixth (South Downs Farmers Group) is privately funded. This allows groups of farmers, foresters and other land managers to develop a shared ambition, informed by evidence-based priorities, increasing their skill and knowledge to farm for the benefit of people and wildlife. As well as funding a facilitator who provides support and training, it also incentivises uptake of Countryside Stewardship agreements that fund agreed priority improvements on group members' land. SDNPA have recently appointed a Farm Liaison Officer (Appendix 2) to provide a joint voice to Defra for the clusters across the Downs, to facilitate farmer communication with the general public and to encourage consistency across cluster groups and the formation of new clusters where coverage does not currently exist.

The Winchester Downs Farm Cluster, set up in April 2016, comprises 37 landowners in the Winchester South Downs area, west of the A32 to Winchester, covering an area of 10,087ha of open downland and water meadows. The Cluster enables landowners to work together for landscape, habitat and biodiversity benefits on a scale that could not be achieved by working alone. Although the group is facilitated by Rob Nichols, Area Ranger for the SDNPA, it is led by the farmers. There is a steering group that meets twice a year comprising four people, made up of three farmers and the facilitator. The Fund also employs two industry experts for three meetings per year, one of whom is a land agent.

The Cluster has developed an Operational Management Plan¹² so that farmers and landowners can identify priorities within the cluster and support required from the SDNPA. The plan provides support for the following areas of work:

Key species identified for the Winchester Cluster are Lapwing, Grey Partridge & Barn Owl. For instance, on Barn Owls, the SDNPA rangers have put up barn owl boxes on farms, advising where they should be placed and monitoring them, and ensuring that habitats on the farm are there to support their prey. The Hawk Conservancy were brought in to count, measure and ring new chicks. Habitats priorities are arable, grassland, and woodland landscapes, communities and related special projects.



Measuring and ringing barn owl chicks at Holden Farm



Farmers and landowners have developed their own management and environmental plans with the assistance of SDNPA. An important element is gathering the evidence base and monitoring success. To this end Rob has been instrumental in organising and carrying out various surveys on land within the cluster. University of Sussex were brought in to carry out a Bee survey at Holden Farm. On the River Itchen, experts have been brought in to carry out river invertebrate surveys. Financial assistance has been given to carry out additional landscape conservation projects on farms.

At Holden Farm, one of the Winchester Cluster farms, a £1500 grant was provided by the SDNPA to the land owner to lay 400 m of hedge along the A272 and South Downs Way.

Fourteen seminars and training events have been organised by Rob, for cluster members, since November 2017. Topics have included grassland reversion, grey partridge conservation, game cover crops, farmland bird identification and Countryside Stewardship, bringing in experts such as Peter Thompson from Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and NE, where necessary. These training days share examples of best practice. Roughly half of the cluster members have attended one or more of the events, with an average of five farmers per event. Other training events have been held to support the recording of survey results using the 'Land App'¹³ (a new farmer friendly online mapping platform) and also one on social media, to assist cluster members in promoting the good work carried out on their farms.

SDNPA do not help directly with individual Countryside Stewardship applications but can advise on the sorts of things that will be of benefit and being part of the cluster is an automatic boost to points available. An important element is providing evidence that the farm meets HLS criteria. Rob has been able to provide the cluster members with contact details of people who can help out with farmland bird or arable weed surveys. One particular farm organised a 'Bioblitz', where as many species as possible are recorded in a 24 hour period (one of the first to be carried out on a farm rather than a nature reserve). Although the farm did not have the target species required by NE for entry into HLS, the survey results found a high concentration of bats, which Rob was able to persuade NE were worthy of inclusion in HLS. Rob encourages the results of the various surveys to be recorded on Living Record, an online tool that links directly to Hampshire Biological Records Centre. Farmers are also encouraged to feed in their HLS information onto the Land App so that Rob is able to see the whole picture.

SDNPA have applied to Defra for a South Downs Pilot Scheme¹² designed to test how payments for public goods could work in a populated lowland landscape post Brexit. This focusses on two linked elements: Incentivising farm clusters, and Streamlining the process of applying for, managing and monitoring schemes via the innovative 'Land App'. The first element would build on the farm clusters approach and would fund projects over and above existing agri-environment and woodland grant schemes and would be flexible, allowing farmers to try new approaches to deliver added value. Public funding would be integrated with private funding, specifically by working with, for example, water companies and forestry supply chains to deliver more public goods.

Gaining increased community support for farming in the area and encouraging community involvement in projects is another key aim. Several of the farms in the Winchester Cluster are involved in school visits. These visits are organised by the Countryside Trust with support from the SDNPA Ranger who runs one of the workshops on the day, bringing different elements to the educational offer, for instance, providing a jigsaw map of the SDNP area for the children to complete or a range of different animal skulls for the children to identify. Twitter is used to keep in touch with the farmers and to let them know what is going on and promote the environmental gains that have been achieved. In the Arun to Adur Cluster group farmers in conjunction with the SDNPA have developed 'listening posts' where unobtrusive plaques that are placed on rights of way furniture allow rights of way users to 'meet the farmer'¹⁵ in a short video. In this way farmers, in partnership with the NPA, can promote the work that they do, the value of farming and get across key messages such as the need to keep dogs on leads around livestock.

¹² Winchester Downs Cluster Operational Management Plan

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/WDC-Operational-Plan.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.thelandapp.com/>

¹⁴ Farming the Future: South Downs National Park Pilot Scheme Expression of Interest for Defra. February 2018 https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NPA_2018March22-Agenda-Item-18c-Appendices-1-5.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/watch-meet-farmers-care-national-park/>

Case Study 4

Holden Farm, Beauworth

Introduction

Holden Farm is a 280 ha predominantly arable farm on the open downland to the east of Winchester. Crops grown are wheat, barley, oil seed rape linseed and grass which is turned into silage. A herd of 150 Lleyn sheep are kept to assist with grassland management. The farm is situated on the SDW approximately 7km from the start/finish in Winchester.

Planning /Tourism

In 2010, prior to NP designation, the landowner applied to convert an existing agricultural barn to holiday accommodation. However, as a result of a pre-application visit it was suggested by the planning officer from Winchester City Council (WCC) that the application was unlikely to meet policy requirements due to its construction - an open-ended barn and therefore not suitable for conversion. The application was withdrawn.

In November 2016 a further application was made for a 20 pitch campsite with toilet and shower facilities. Although planning in the National Park area of Winchester City Council district is carried out by the local authority on behalf of the SDNPA, the NPA decided to call in the application in order that a decision could be made directly by the NPA Planning Committee. The reasons quoted in the letter of Direction were that: 'The proposed new visitor accommodation and facilities are within a sensitive rural location and therefore may be significant in terms of potential impact on natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and on opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the South Downs National Park.'

Pre-application advice was received from the then SDNPA Planning Link Officer, Natalie Fellows, who provided advice on siting and design. The original application to WCC also included letters of support from the SDNPA Tourism Officer and South Downs Way Officer, though these had to be withdrawn because of the application being called in by the NPA.

A decision by the SDNPA was made in March 2017 permitting the 20 pitches, with a maximum of 8 people per pitch, and the timber building housing the toilet and shower facilities. The building also houses information on what to do and where to go in the local area. The building was completed in May 2017 and the campsite opened for business in summer 2017. It operates from the Early May Bank Holiday to the end of September, although the planning permission does permit activity between 1st April and 30th October. During its first full year of operation it has been fully booked each weekend and most of the summer holidays. Most visitors come from London.



One of the positive things that is promoted to campers on the website www.holdenfarm.co.uk/camping/ is the International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) Status of the South Downs. This is something that the NPA had campaigned for, for a number of years.

In 2018, the NPA has provided a large map of the National Park to enhance information provision at the main building. Becca Corbett, who manages the campsite, believes that it is a bonus being associated with the NPA. For example, when setting out rules of the campsite, such as not collecting deadwood, she feels that the message has more weight when it appears to be associated with the NPA.

In terms of promotion, the SDNPA do not yet have a comprehensive directory of accommodation businesses in the national park. They do however have a link to the Responsible Travel website which has a range of holiday accommodation from camping and self-catering to B&Bs and hotels. They are also keen to encourage tourism businesses to sign up to the Cyclists and Walkers Welcome Scheme and include a directory¹⁸ on their website of businesses that have signed up. In the past the NPA have promoted the Green Tourism Scheme to businesses through a Rural Development Programme England project called Our Land, although funding for this has now ceased.

¹⁶ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/directory/>

6. Conclusions

Planning

Pre-application advice from NPA link officers seems to be well received and well used. Partly as a result, in the year to June 2018, 94 agricultural planning application were approved and only 13 refused. One such example is at Blakehurst and Maggot Farm, Warningcamp, where permission has recently been approved for three new agricultural buildings and the conversion of existing buildings to five residential dwellings. The latter was reduced from seven on pre-application advice from the Planning Officer. A detailed report outlining the application and recommending approval was presented to the August Planning Committee. https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/PC_2018Sep13-Agenda-Item-8.pdf.

The advent of voluntary Whole Estate Plans by the NPA is assisting planning applications to be progressed more speedily and positively. Whilst these do not give a green light to all planning applications, endorsed WEPs are a material consideration and provide the contextual background to any planning proposals. Guidance for their preparation¹⁷ and examples of endorsed plans¹⁸ are available on the SDNPA website. The SDNPA have also recently produced a '*Farmers Guide on Agricultural Permitted Development Rights in the South Downs National Park*' which is available on the NPA website. <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/A-Farmer's-Guide-to-Agricultural-Permitted-Development-Rights.pdf>. This provides clarity and assists landowners in their decision-making process.

In some districts where the local authorities carry out planning decision-making on behalf of the NPA, landowners have experienced some problems and delays. In such cases, the NPA have on occasions been able to assist moving applications on through the process. Delays in processing applications due to staff shortages at local authorities or call in procedures have in some cases jeopardised capital funding applications for Leader. The proposed approach of a Dorset National Park to share with the Dorset Council an appropriately-resourced planning team aims to avoid such delays and also the double-handling involved in the small percentage of cases in the SDNP where a case started by a district council is then called in by the SDNPA.

Recreation and access

The South Downs have a high number of visits which can cause problems in some areas, especially where the national park borders urban areas around Brighton and Hove. Evidence from surveys suggests that NP designation has resulted in an increase in visitor spend more than visitor numbers. The increase in spend and length of stays has helped underpin an increase in business investment.

In fulfilling its remit to help manage tourism pressures, the NPA has developed a sustainable tourism strategy whose aims include:

- To diversify the tourism offer of the National Park, providing sustainable income for tourism service providers (TSPs), diversifying services and extending the tourism season.
- To share the social and economic benefits of tourism across the entire National Park, ensuring that the scale of tourism to be serviced at sites reflects the sensitivities of the landscape
- To encourage change in travel behaviour of visitors accessing the National Park e.g. through less reliance on car travel.
- To raise visitor spend to levels that contribute more widely to the economy of the National Park.

NPA staff have assisted in putting landowners in contact with the Police Wildlife Liaison Officer who has helped in reducing anti-social behaviour. On the South Downs Way, signage to deter motor bikes and cars using the trail and physical barriers have been installed by the SDW team. Where local Highway Authorities have been unable to maintain the SDW to national standards, the NPA volunteers have stepped in to carry out vegetation clearance whilst staff have organised and carried out improvements to surfaces using either contractors or volunteers. With continuing government cuts to local authority budgets, ROW management is potentially an area that could be more effectively carried out by the SDNPA.

Farmers have in the past been critical of the NPA where it has been perceived as encouraging greater use of the downs by walkers and cyclists. In line with the NPA's walking and cycling strategy,⁴ walkers and cyclists are now encouraged to use promoted routes which are accessible via public transport or built up areas. The SDNPA has worked closely with Local Authority partners to deliver a range of sustainable transport projects on the ground including new/ improved infrastructure schemes for cycling and walking. For instance, under the Linking Communities/ Cycling Ambition Programme 45 km of new and improved non-motorised paths were created, including new sections of the Centurion Way which links Chichester and Singleton, The Egrets Way, Lewes – Newhaven and improvements to the Meon Valley Trail between Wickham and the South Downs Way near Old Winchester Hill.

Equally, the NPA has had some success with the Take the Lead Campaign which promotes responsible dog walking. Incidents of livestock worrying and people not staying on rights of way still occur, as they do in all areas of the country. The Ranger service performs an important role and their numbers have been safeguarded and increased. Rangers visit key honey pot sites on certain days in an attempt to educate those visiting the area to use it responsibly - though there are not enough rangers for this to be done at each location every weekend. Farmers have generally welcomed this collaborative approach, on what is a very tricky issue. Whilst it is far from resolved it is at least a step in the right direction. Initial feedback from the 'Meet the farmer videos' has been positive in getting their messages across.

Conservation

As would be expected this is potentially the area where the NPA can have the biggest benefit for landowners and farmers through the NPA being able to provide evidence to support agri-environmental applications, facilitating and encouraging farm clusters, advice to individual landowners, training, promotion and research. In some farm clusters, conservation work has led to economic benefits through for example increased pollination – especially important where farms have diversified into other crops such as viticulture. Appendix 3 shows a SDNPA case study on the Restoration and Management of the cross-dykes at Heyshott Down.

Rural economy

There is no "South Downs" brand as such, but the SDNPA have developed a shared identity and resources to link the story of the landscape to local businesses. "This is not an accreditation – rather it says we are proud to be part of the amazing place that is the South Downs National Park. It allows our businesses, partners and communities to benefit from being associated with the National Park. The identity includes graphics, fonts, photography and support with telling the story of the National Park. The identity is free to use for businesses, partners, communities within the National Park who want to use it in support of the National Park's purposes and duty."

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/supporting-communities-business/south-downs-national-park-shared-identity/>

Some work has been carried out by the SDNPA to promote food and drink from the South Downs Area through the Food and Drink Portal. This includes a Local Food Finder, information on forthcoming events, projects, courses on making and promoting local food & drink, promotions and special offers. www.southdownsfood.org/.

The SDNPA is encouraging visitors to leave their cars behind and try cycling as a great way to explore the scenery, heritage and hidden gems of the South Downs. Local visitor attractions, parish councils and small businesses (e.g. country pubs, cafés, accommodation providers) can apply for up to six free cycle stands worth over £500.

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/supporting-communities-business/free-cycle-parking-in-the-south-downs-scheme/>

More could be done to help identify tourism accommodation within the park and, despite the initiatives so far taken, to encourage more sustainable practices through e.g. training and better promotion to supplement the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Downs.

Farmer Liaison

The support of the SDNPA for the SD Land Managers Group has been particularly useful in providing landowners with the opportunity of raising concerns to the NPA. Its early establishment, prior to the NPA being set up, enabled input to the process. One of the issues raised by SDLM with the establishment team was the need to work closely with farmers and therefore ensure that adequate resources were available to put more rangers on the ground. This has been acted upon by the NPA who now have 25 Rangers across the downs plus a dedicated Farming Officer and various other project officers for heathlands, cycling, woodlands, SDW National Trail etc. The SDLM has also provided an additional voice during formal consultations, adding weight to representations made by the National Farmers Union and Country Land & Business Association. There is often a balance to be found between the needs of farming and the priorities of the National Park Authority. The SDLM has always maintained that, without profitable farms the landscape and wildlife for which the South Downs has been designated, would suffer, a message that the SDNPA also embraces and reflects in its work with the farming and land manager community.

Summary

The National Park Authority can add value in a number of different ways, particularly at a time when local authorities are cutting back on non-essential services. The NPA has developed partnerships to bring extra resources and funding to the area. It has listened to the concerns of land managers and where possible accommodated these. It is in essence an additional resource available to farmers and businesses but does not interfere with farming operations.

Planning is sometimes seen as a drawback of national park designation, but the SDNPA aims where possible to support farm diversification and the adaptation of farm buildings. Some support for farm diversification projects has been available via Leader.

The NP can provide opportunities especially through promoting farm produce and higher value tourism. There are considerable opportunities to further support the rural economy and in particular in the areas of sustainable tourism and local food and drink.

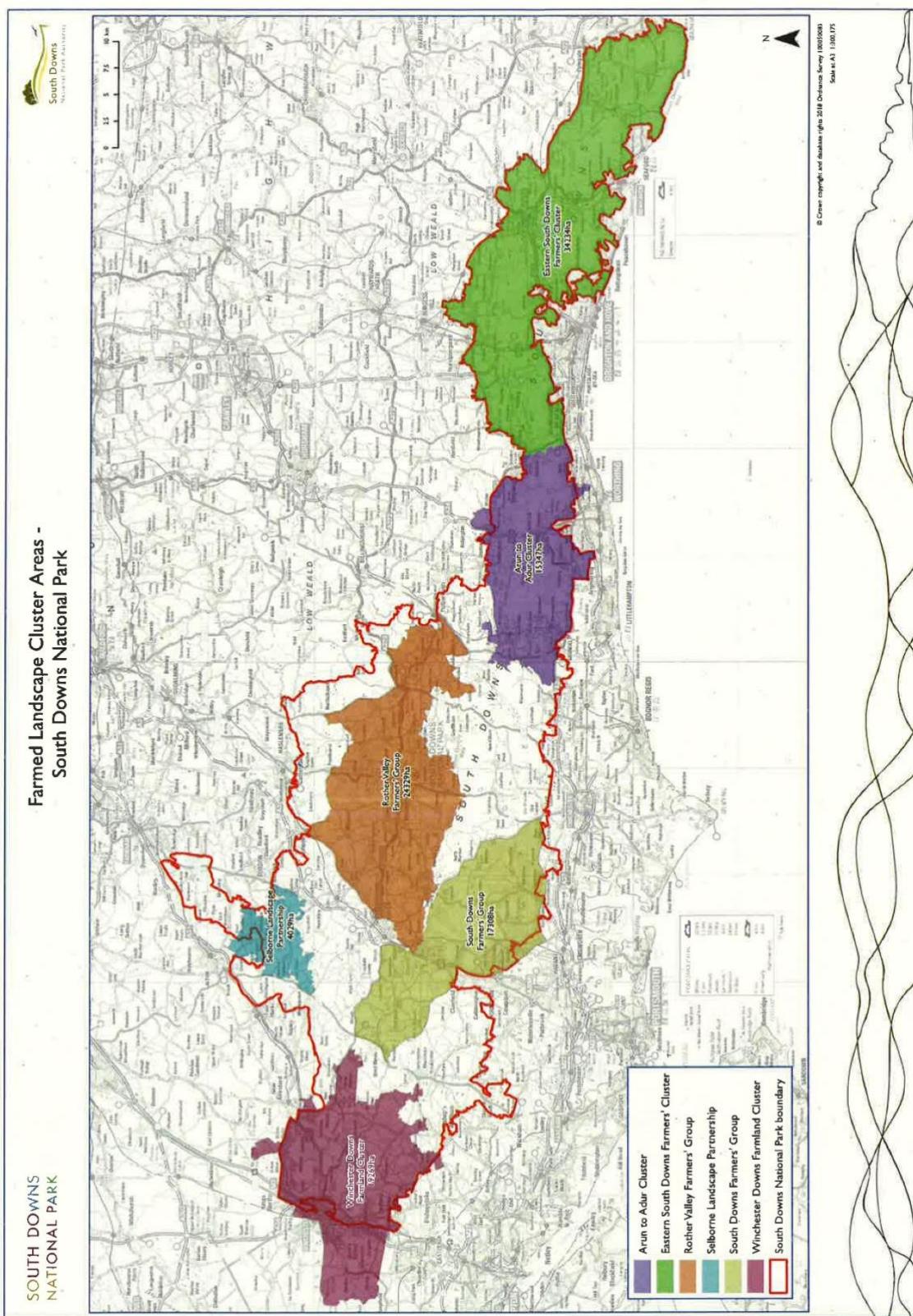
The NPA has, however, experienced problems in getting recognition for the rural economy by the Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs), although they were successful in getting funding towards the Centurion Way feasibility and design from the Coast to Capital LEP. Other areas

in which they have sought to engage with the LEPs are broadband and the economic potential of woodfuel.

¹⁷ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/WHOLE-EST-PLANS-PREPARED-GUIDELINES-Rev-B.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/supporting-communities-business/whole-estate-plans/endorsed-whole-estate-plans/>

Appendix 1 Map of Farm Clusters



Appendix 2

From SDPNA e-news October 2018 – Q&A with SDNPA Farming Officer

https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/asked-bruce-fowkes-farming-officer-south-downs/?utm_source=South+Downs+National+Park+Newsletter&utm_campaign=070226233e-EMAIL%20CAMPAIGN%202018%2010%2005%2003%2014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9343411c82-070226233e-125989185

October 4, 2018

Answers to questions about a particular area of work in the National Park – some sent in to our newsletter and others that we get asked all the time.



Answering this month is: Bruce Fowkes, Farming Officer for the South Downs National Park.

Why does the National Park need a farming officer?

The South Downs landscape is inextricably linked with farming and those people that manage the land. With 85% of the Park managed as farmland by 950 registered holdings, it is the only lowland mixed farmland National Park in the UK. Farming within the National Park presents both opportunities and challenges, and as we prepare to leave the EU, Farmers are facing a time of significant change. As Farming Officer, I am here to offer support with the

environmental aspects of their job that are hugely important for the National Park – such as how to get the most out of environmental land management schemes, sharing ideas and best practice, and working collaboratively across the landscape. I work with farmers right across the South Downs to help them develop their environmental delivery, identify new and innovative opportunities during this time of change, and ensure their voices and ideas are heard as a new UK Farming Policy is developed.

Can farmers really produce food and care for the environment at the same time?

In short, I truly believe that they can, and there are many examples across the South Downs showing just that. Farmers' core business is to produce food and their office is the countryside (although increasing paperwork requirements mean that more time is being spent in an actual office than some would like!). They spend most days out in the landscape and I've yet to meet a farmer who doesn't want the National Park to be an attractive environment, and to be passed on to the next generation in a healthy condition. Part of my role is to help farmers find ways to produce quality food whilst also building in good environmental management. A key part of this is to maximise the delivery of Agri-environment and other similar schemes, which enable farmers to make caring for and managing the environment part of their farm business. It helps them look after resources that they need to produce food – healthy soil and clean water – and we all benefit as a result.

The new Agriculture Bill talks about Public Goods but what does that actually mean?

This is an interesting question and a hot topic of debate at the moment. Public goods are generally the things we take for granted, but the market does not currently pay for. This can include protecting iconic landscapes, creating wildlife habitats, providing clean air and water, reducing flood risk and improving access. Early indications are that the new Agriculture Bill will shift emphasis to a policy that rewards farmers for sustainable management and the range of public benefits it provides.

Are farmers pleased that the National Park exists?

As with any big change I think it's fair to say that there were some farmers for, and some against the creation of the South Downs National Park. Much of this relates to the unknowns and what impacts change may bring. Eight years down the line, I think there is a good working relationship between the National Park Authority and Farmers on the South Downs. For example, we work closely with the six farm cluster groups, helping them to deliver a range of projects from species and habitat improvements to community engagement events and promotion of farming on the South Downs to the wider public. There are lots of stereotypes around farming, most of which are wrong, and the majority of farmers on the Downs really want to welcome responsible visitors and show them all of the good work that they are doing.

What is the future for farming in the South Downs National Park?

I believe farming will continue to be an integral part of the South Downs landscape. The emerging Agriculture Bill signals a time of significant change, which is likely to bring both opportunities and threats to farm businesses on the Downs. It is vital that farmers are able to continue growing and producing quality food, whilst also being rewarded for the wide range of public benefits that they provide. In fact, a change in emphasis in this area may lead to further opportunities for diversification and development of the wider farm business. I see the farm cluster project as being a key part of this, allowing famers to work even better together, sharing ideas and resources and driving forward the great work they are already doing to care for our landscapes.

Appendix 3

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Case Study

Scheduled Monuments:

Restoration & Management of Heyshott Down cross-dykes

Background

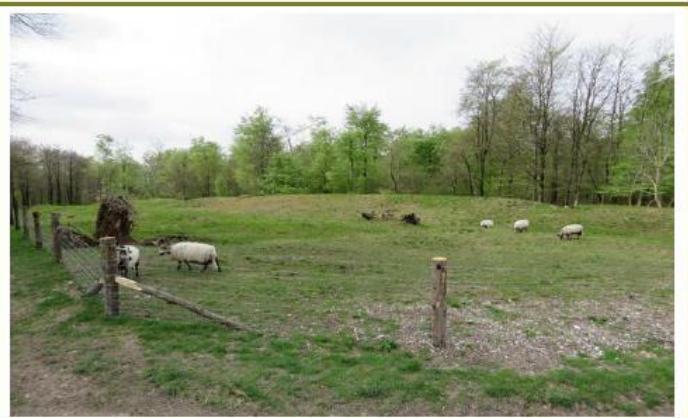
Scheduling is the selection of nationally important archaeological sites. Only deliberately created structures, features and remains can be scheduled, the decision being made by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Scheduled monuments are not always ancient or visible above ground. Currently, there are almost 20,000 Scheduled Monuments on the list ranging from prehistoric standing stones and burial mounds, through to the many types of medieval site - castles, monasteries, abandoned farmsteads and villages - to the more recent results of human activity, such as collieries.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

Cross-dykes are substantial linear earthworks comprising one or more ditches arranged beside and parallel to one or more banks. Current information favours the view that they were used as territorial boundary markers, probably demarcating land allotment within communities, although they may also have been used as trackways, cattle droveways or defensive earthworks.

Cross-dykes are one of the few monument types which illustrate how land was divided up in the Prehistoric period.



The project

The Heyshott Down cross-dykes were officially scheduled in 1963 and are located on the South Downs Way, 1 mile south of the village of Heyshott in West Sussex. When assessing the site, Rangers from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) recognized that the earth works were vulnerable to tree damage (root growth and the risk of wind throw). This project sought to remove that risk, establish long term sustainable management of the site and increase its visibility to users of the South Downs Way which bisects the monument.

The Cowdray Estate initiated this project by clearing trees from the southern section of the site in 2006, funded by the commercial value of the timber removed. Yearly management was carried out by the SDNPA Central Area Ranger team and Volunteer Ranger Service. This involved the clearance and removal of vegetation from the banks and ditches of the monument in summer.

In 2017, a funding opportunity from Natural England enabled fencing to be installed, which would allow Richard Marks, a tenant farmer, to graze the site with sheep. Consent for fencing was sought from Historic England and was then installed using locally sourced chestnut posts; driven, rather than dug into the ground, in-keeping with the rural character of the site. A grazing management plan was agreed detailing the timing, stock type and duration of grazing on the site.

The financial cost of fence installation was £4,450. This was funded by a grant from Natural England for £3,000; £950 from SDNPA, and £500 in staff and machinery time from the Cowdray Estate.

“This project has been a great example of partnership working to protect the special qualities of the National Park.”

Matthew Dowse, SDNPA Ranger (Central area team)

The outcome

The various works undertaken on this site have gone a long way towards achieving and securing the favourable condition of the scheduled monument.

- Felling the trees that were situated on the southern section of the Heyshott Down cross-dykes have prevented damage to the earthworks from tree roots and burrowing animals. The removal of trees also results in the site being more visible to users of the South Downs Way.
- Installing a fence line around the section has enabled the grazing of sheep, thus minimizing the risk to the site for the short term. Inspections of the site following the introduction of livestock indicate the formation of a greater expanse of grass than was previously present.

This project aligns with the South Downs National Park Authority's first purpose: To conserve and enhance the cultural heritage of the area. The project was born out of research and field surveys assessing the status of scheduled monuments throughout the South Downs.

The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP) 2014–19 sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 11 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

This project successfully achieved the following PMP outcomes:

Outcome 1 - The landscape character of the South Downs, its special qualities and local distinctiveness have been conserved and enhanced by effectively managing the land and the negative impacts of development and cumulative change.

Outcome 4 - The condition and status of cultural heritage assets and their settings (including monuments, buildings, towns and buried remains) is significantly enhanced, many more have been discovered and they contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place.

www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SDNP-Partnership-Management-Plan-2014-19.pdf

The future

The SDNPA will continue its programme of assessing all scheduled monuments throughout the National Park and submitting resulting data to Historic England.

The SDNPA strongly values and encourages partnership working as more can be achieved. However, working in partnership requires additional time allocated for consultation and reaching consensus on methodologies and desired outcomes. Consequently, applying for scheduled monument consent can be a lengthy process.

The long term success of the Heyshott Down project will depend on the continuation of grazing management of the site. It has therefore been imperative to have a grazing management plan, agreed and signed by all involved parties.

For further information on this project, please contact Matthew Dowse, Ranger (Central Area):
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