

SOUTH DOWNS PLANNING NEWS

UPDATES FROM YOUR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Big boost for biodiversity after green light given

Much-needed habitat for birds will be created and restored after the go-ahead was given to a major biodiversity project.

The Planning Committee of the National Park Authority voted to approve the restoration of 42 hectares of intertidal habitat at Chyngton Brooks, as well as the construction of a new public footpath at the site.

Saltmarsh, saline lagoon and mudflats habitats are in decline across the UK and the project will create much-needed havens for a huge number of bird species, many of which are of conservation concern.

The approval strongly aligns with the National Park's first purpose to protect and enhance biodiversity.



Tim Slaney, Director of Placemaking, said: "This application has been very carefully considered and the creation of a new inland path with views across the restored habitat will mitigate the loss of the embankment path, which is increasingly prone to flooding amid a changing climate.

"This, along with the creation of dedicated wildlife watching spots, new seating and education boards, will create new and important opportunities for people to enjoy this precious part of the National Park."

A spokesperson for Sussex Wildlife Trust said: "We welcome this well-evidenced and proactive approach to re-establish natural processes to positively address the issues of climate change and our changing coastline."



Chyngton Brooks are within the Seaford to Beachy Head Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and also part of the Seaford Head Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The site is also within the boundary of the Sussex Heritage Coast and the Seven Sisters National Nature Reserve

The approval is subject to the completion of a legal agreement alongside an extensive number of conditions, including a phased delivery, a 25-year monitoring strategy for the new footpath, and some widening of existing footpaths.

As the site straddles the National Park boundary, a duplicate application is also being considered by East Sussex County Council.



New affordable homes get the go-ahead



New development on a Local Plan allocation, with affordable housing, is on its way to a South Downs village.

Members of the Authority's Planning Committee voted to give the go-ahead to plans for 13 new homes on brownfield land at Downvale Nurseries, Park Lane, Droxford, in Hampshire.

The one-hectare site is currently a vacant horticultural nursery, comprising derelict sheds, glasshouse, and open areas is an allocated site in the Local Plan. The site is overgrown and has an unkempt appearance due to being disused, with problematic Japanese Knotweed to be removed.

Seven affordable homes will be built as discount market sales properties as part of the development. Across the site there will be a mixture of houses, from two-bedroom up to five-bedroom properties.

Care has been taken to ensure the traditionally-designed development integrates with the character of the village and its National Park setting, with traditional architectural features and mixed species native hedging, wildflower open space, and native tree planting to enhance the site. There is also a sustainable drainage scheme.

To enhance biodiversity, in addition to the landscaping scheme, new bird and bat boxes will be included in all homes, along with reptile refuges and hedgehog holes in garden fences. Green roofs are also incorporated into the garages, car barns and two of the houses. The applicants will also need to secure off-site Biodiversity Net Gain as part of the future permission once the Legal Agreement has been completed.



Richard Ferguson, Development Management Lead, said: "This is a long-standing allocated site for development in the South Downs Local Plan and I'm pleased to see a high-quality and well-considered scheme receive support from our Members. The new affordable homes will also help to meet the demand seen right across the National Park."

Members vote on the expansion of vineyard



New accommodation to expand the visitor offer of a thriving wine business has been given the green light in the National Park.

Members of the National Park Authority's Planning Committee voted to grant permission to plans for 10 additional units of overnight guest accommodation at Rathfinny Wine Estate, near Alfriston, East Sussex.

The approval is subject to the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement.

The plans include internal and external alterations to an existing flint barn, provide four overnight accommodation units within a new stable building, as well as six additional overnight accommodation cabins in the former chalk quarry of the Estate.

The entire complex is to be served by a new biomass boiler, housed in a new building.

A rectangular stretch of land to the northwest of the complex will be dedicated to nature restoration as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The application site forms part of the Rathfinny Wine Estate, which has evolved from a predominantly arable agricultural enterprise to a grower-producer of sparkling wine underpinned by a leisure and tourism offering. The estate totals 243 hectares, almost entirely on south-facing gentle slopes, and 93 hectares of the estate are currently planted with grape vines.

Through positive and early engagement with the National Park Authority, the proposals have been developed to ensure they are landscape-led and closely linked to the existing tourism offer and wider enterprise.

Tim Slaney, Director of Placemaking, said: "We're pleased to give the go-ahead to these plans, which support the growth of the rural economy, provide further local employment and provide opportunities to connect with the wider landscape. Farm diversification is a very important pillar of the South Downs economy and we're pleased to support high-quality projects."

Enforcement snippets

- On 16 June 2026 an Enforcement Notice was served at Land to the West of Long Furlong (Roots), Patching Meadows for various operational development (a copy of the notice can be viewed on the public Enforcement Register). This is primarily due to the cumulative landscape impact caused. Removal of the development is required by 17 October 2026. However, please note that we are not preventing an allotment use here.
- On 22 June 2026 an Enforcement Notice was served at Grange Road, Lewes for the erection of a shed, causing harm to the Conservation Area. The shed has now been removed and the notice complied with.
- On 9 July 2026 the appeal against the planning decision to refuse a 5G Mast at Land Opposite Highdown Road, Nevill Road, Lewes (appeal ref. 6005994) was allowed. Therefore there will be no further enforcement action.
- On 21 July 2026 a Tree Replacement Notice was served at Land at The Stables with Dairy, Mill Lane Farm, The Street, Offham. A sycamore or beech (3-4m high) is required to be planted between October 2026 and March 2027 and maintained for the first five years of being planted.
- On 23 July 2026 an Enforcement Notice was served at Novington Manor, Plumpton Lane, for the material change of use of the land to commercial holiday lets. This follows planning retrospective planning refusals (SDNP/23/00155/FUL and SDNP/23/02932/FUL) and a Planning Inspectorate dismissal (APP/Y9507/W/23/3330237). Removal of the glamping pods was initially required by 20 November 2026, now varied to 20 May 2027 to allow a bat survey to be carried out.
- On 3 August 2026 an Enforcement Notice was issued following the refusal of planning application SDNP/26/00511/FUL. At land north of the Crescent, Newhaven. The breach relates to the material change of use of the land as a site for gypsy and travellers by the stationing of caravans for residential purposes and associated development. Habitation and clearance of the land needs to cease by 3 February 2027.
- On 7 August 2026 the Planning Inspector dismissed an appeal against an Enforcement Notice served on 16 May 2024 at A23 Diner, London Road, Pyecombe, Brighton for the alleged storage of vehicles. The site must cease this use within four months of the Inspector's decision.

Robust action is taken



Major enforcement action has been taken to remove unauthorised structures and caravans after repeated warnings and formal notices were ignored.

A specialist team took action at a large field in Long Road, Soberton, Hampshire, as part of a three-day operation led by the South Downs National Park Authority and Winchester City Council, who work jointly in partnership on planning matters.

The enforcement action has involved the removal of caravans, mobile homes, sheds, non-agricultural vehicles, fencing, domestic animals and gas bottles – all of which were unlawfully on the site without any planning permission.

It follows a long-running enforcement history dating back more than a decade. A number of enforcement notices, as well as a High Court injunction, have been served to cease residential and recreational use of the land, most of which have been ignored.

The only lawful use of the land, which is divided into plots, is agriculture. The structures that were put up on the land would require planning permission.

The work over the three-day operation has left much of the soil surface cleared of debris, allowing the land to naturally regenerate. This is part of further



ongoing enforcement work planned for this site (*pictures show before and after of the land*).

Tim Slaney, Director of Placemaking, said: "This has been a lengthy and difficult enforcement case that ultimately left us with no option than to take robust action. We seek to negotiate where possible on enforcement matters, but our warnings and notices were consistently ignored. These unlawful activities were significantly harming the landscape and people's enjoyment of it."

New Local Plan takes another step forward



More than 2,700 representations on the South Downs National Park's new Local Plan are currently being analysed in preparation for the next important stages of the planning process.

The latest consultation on the new South Downs Local Plan closed on 23 June, with 2,700 comments submitted from around 1,300 people and organisations.

All representations received during the consultation, together with supporting evidence and submission documents, have been registered and are now being reviewed by officers at the National Park Authority.

In November and December this year, the National Park's Planning Committee and the Full Authority will consider the outcomes of the consultation, including any proposed modifications to address the representations and any other changes since the Local Plan was agreed last March.

Subject to this consideration, the new Local Plan, together with any proposed modifications and the latest consultation representations, will then be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination and published on the National Park Authority's website.

By January next year, the National Park Authority expects to receive confirmation of the appointed Inspector(s) and dates for examination hearings. These may be delayed due to the high volume of Local Plans being submitted for examination this December.

All those who told us that they wanted to be heard at the examination hearings will be contacted in advance of these hearing dates and given further guidance on how to participate.

Should the Inspector be minded to recommend modifications to the Local Plan, there will be a further six-week consultation on these modifications during the examination in 2027. Learn more [here](#).

What new NPPF means for National Parks



Claire Tester, Head of Strategic Planning, breaks down the new National Planning Policy Framework and what it means for the South Downs National Park.

A new National Planning Policy Framework was published by Government on 17 August. A report on its implications for planning decisions is available as part of the papers for Planning Committee on 10 September.

Overall – The NPPF is deliberately loosening planning rules and encouraging growth. However, it retains its strong protection for National Parks and National Landscapes.

Headlines – Policies have been clearly divided into those for plan-making and those for decision-making. From 17 August, decisions on planning applications and appeals must have regard to the decision-making policies in the NPPF, and Local and Neighbourhood Plan policies that are 'materially inconsistent' with them will carry very limited weight.

There is a 'presumption in favour' (default yes) for development within settlements and certain categories of development outside settlements. The latter includes development around certain 'well-connected' railway stations and to address unmet needs, including housing. A greater density of development is supported as well as improvements for telecoms and retention of community facilities especially pubs.



National Parks and National Landscapes (AONBs) –

One of our key asks as a protected landscapes family was to reinstate the wording for the test for major development in protected landscapes, which was proposed to be weakened in the consultation draft. This has happened (Policy N4). This is important as 'presumption to refuse' (default no) policies are very rare in the NPPF. This is good news, as is the reference now to natural rather than scenic beauty in policy N4.

Duty to 'seek to further' purposes and mitigation – There is reference to the duty to seek to further the

Application expected this autumn for Midhurst site



Works are continuing on the site of the former Tuck Shop/Olive and Vine to ensure that all repairs to the neighbouring building are finalised

before work starts on the remainder of the site, which includes the former Angel Inn.

The current work started at the end of June and follows the South Downs National Park Authority granting listed building consent for the partial dismantling of the former Tuck Shop/Olive and Vine, next to the former Angel Inn, following an application by the site's owners.

Further progress is now being made on a planning application for both sites. It comes after a project group – which is made up of the site owners, their specialist advisors Manorwood, Cllr Yvonne Graveley from West Sussex County Council and the National Park Authority – have been reviewing all available options to bring the site back into use.

All reports, surveys and assessments have been commissioned and a number of specialists are working together to provide all the information needed for a full planning and Listed Building application.

The applications will also contain clear details on the phasing of the proposed development – so all can see at what stage the hoarding will be reduced, the pavement reopened, and when changes can be expected to the buildings.

Some of the specialist surveys and documents have taken longer than expected to produce, however, the application is actively being prepared and is expected to be submitted to the National Park Authority this autumn.

Why has it taken three years to get to this stage?

This is the first time in three years that a bona fide planning application with firm plans for the site is on the table.

The site is privately-owned and therefore, as the Local Planning Authority, the SDNPA is open to considering any planning application that comes forward for the site, but until now there has not been one.

A number of factors, outside of the control of the SDNPA, have meant that getting to this stage has taken considerable time, most notably the insurers being able to agree to a settlement with the owners.

purposes of National Parks and National Landscapes early on in the NPPF (footnote 2). In addition, in relation to major development (Policy N4), there is mention of mitigating adverse impacts on special qualities and statutory purposes, and potentially seeking compensation for harm. Government has confirmed that this is in response to the duty to further the purposes of protected landscapes.

Plan-making – Policy S1 on positive plan making continues to acknowledge the special status of National Parks through footnote 24 and our ability to look differently at housing requirements. This is similar to the previous NPPF's approach. This is important in relation to Spatial Development Strategies, where housing numbers will be worked out and apportioned in future. It is now explicitly stated development plans should have regard to protected landscape management plans (Policy N1), which is helpful as are the multiple references to LNRs's, enabling them to have spatial dimension in plans (e.g. allocations).

Affordable homes – We can continue to set affordable housing requirements for smaller developments (i.e. less than the national 10 dwelling threshold) (Policy HO5). This is welcomed as the provision of affordable housing is highlighted in the 2010 Circular as a priority for National Parks.

Other Planning Policy Updates

Updated Minerals and Waste Plan

The updated Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan was adopted by Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council, the New Forest National Park Authority, and the South Downs National Park Authority in July.

This Plan supersedes the 2013 Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan and sets out a clear decision-making framework for mineral extraction, waste management, and related infrastructure in Hampshire up to 2040. It is now part of the Development Plan for Hampshire, including the Hampshire Area of the South Downs National Park, and will be used to determine planning applications for minerals and waste development in that area. Further information can be found [here](#).

Neighbourhood Plans

The Peacehaven & Telscombe NDP was made part of the Development Plan for the National Park area of these parishes on 27 May following its successful examination and referendum. The West Chiltington NDP was made part of the Development Plan for the National Park area of the parish on 16 July following its successful examination and referendum. The Coldean NDP will proceed to referendum on Thursday 24 September following its successful examination.

Update on planning around Boomtown



Rob Ainslie, Head of Development Management, gives an update on Boomtown Festival, which is held at the Matterley Estate near Winchester.

Temporary permission was recently granted to allow the Boomtown Festival to take place for the next five years until the end of 2030.

Officers were able to secure a number of environmental benefits on the site, which is a working farm, as part of the approval including:

- A Management Plan securing Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecology Mitigation benefits
- The provision of a wildflower meadow on-site alongside the South Downs Way for no-site Biodiversity Net Gain provision together with the purchase of off-site credits from a habitat bank elsewhere on the Matterley Estate
- Measures to ensure impacts to groundwater does not occur as a result of the festival
- Protection of the SSSI within the site
- Grassland Management to reduce nutrient levels in the soil
- Management of all hedgerows, treelines and woodlands, safeguarding of woodland habitats, creation of new habitat on site by way of bat boxes and bird boxes
- Retention of linear habitats to maintain habitat connectivity
- A sustainability policy being in place at the Festival, together with sustainable travel initiatives, use of materials.
- Resource efficiency management plan
- Reduction in levels of pollution at the festival
- Water conservation
- The purchase of Biodiversity Gain Units/Statutory credits
- Retention of all improvements and obligations secured as part of the previous temporary approval

Officers attended the festival as part of their monitoring of the permission and were encouraged by the signage reminding festival goers of the sensitive landscape they were in and the reasons for fenced-off areas such as the SSSI. They were struck by the message at the outset of the festival and in signage for festival goers to “leave no trace” when the festival closed. In addition, the organisers continue to trial new sustainable initiatives with the festival, most notably the creation this year of the first hydrogen-powered stage. Officers will continue to monitor the festival over the coming years and ensure compliance with the various elements secured as part of the temporary permission.

Green haven is created



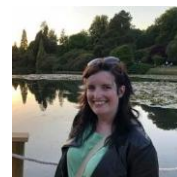
Midhurst is benefitting from a funding boost to spruce up public areas thanks to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Midhurst Vision Partnership CIC was awarded £20,000 in CIL funding to revitalise the Northern Gateway by North Street car park.

The project has improved the arrival point and first impressions for visitors to the historic market town with a variety of trees, shrubs and perennials. There are also new corten steel Welcome Signs and interpretation panels.

Meanwhile, Midhurst Vision Partnership CIC was also awarded £25,000 in CIL funding to create an attractive link between The Grange Leisure Centre and the Old Town part of Midhurst.

The project has removed some hardstanding and landscaped the area with more trees, wildflower meadow and native hedges, as well as creating a proper path through, linking the car park with the old town. Welcome, interpretation and wayfinding signs have also been added to create a sense of arrival and information for visitors.



Nikki Allen, CIL Planning Officer, said: “The project has transformed the area into a green haven for visitors, residents and local workers to enjoy. A large contemporary curved bench provides a wonderful sculptural feature and a place for people to relax and enjoy the garden. Footfall in this area has increased since the project’s completion.”

Midhurst Town Council was also awarded £15,000 in CIL funding for the refurbishment of Lilac Cottage, (part of the Old Library) into a community hub.

CIL funding is administered by the National Park Authority and is paid for by developers to support new community facilities, with scores of projects across the South Downs benefitting every year from the funding boost. Learn more [here](#).

New lead for Estate plans



A new appointment has been made at the National Park Authority to lead Whole Estate Plans (WEPs).

Kat Beer will be working with a range of landowners and farmers across the National Park to lead the portfolio.

WEPs are a document prepared by individual landowning organisations.

They set out the assets of the organisation and the opportunities and threats which the organisation may encounter, and describes their plans for the future.

The concept is to encourage open dialogue between land-owning organisations and the National Park, to look at land holdings in their entirety in order to be as holistic as possible.

WEPs help to identify mutually acceptable and proactive solutions, which serve the wider purposes of the National Park.

There are now 13 endorsed Whole Estate Plans, with Westerlands, Firle, Foley and Lancing College all approved in 2025.

At the National Park Authority, WEPs now sit within the farming and land management team and Kat is looking forward to meeting all 13 estates over the next few months.

The Authority has launched a review of WEPs, exploring improvements to existing Whole Estate Plans, and the potential for whole farm plans, helping to support smaller land holdings and farmers.

Kat said: "I look forward to working closely with farmers, landowners and local communities across the South Downs to develop and deliver whole estate plans that benefit the rural economy, nature, and the people who call this landscape home. We will also be exploring ways to broaden the scope of whole estate plans, and I'm excited to be working in this area."

More information will be on the website at or contact Kat Beer for further details at kat.beer@southdowns.gov.uk

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Planning stats at a glance

(figures from April 2026 to present)

Appeals submitted to the Planning Inspectorate	28
Appeals started	26
Appeals determined	33
Appeals successfully defended	23
Statutory submissions received	1,602
Statutory submissions received via the Planning Portal	1,368
Statutory submissions determined	1,714
Neighbours notified	6,695
Representations received	1,860
Consultations issued	4,022
Conditions imposed	5,570
Enquiries for planning advice	459
Enforcement complaints received	309
Enforcement cases opened	260
Enforcement related site inspections	211
Enforcement notices served	16
Enforcement cases closed	215

Planning Committee Meetings

The next Planning Committee meetings will be held on 8 October, 12 November and 10 December.

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

Watch the meetings live online [here](#).

Meet the Planner



For this edition we meet Kathryn Andrews.

Three words that sum up your job?

Interesting, varied, busy!

What's your role in the planning team?

I'm a Development Management Officer, mainly dealing with applications in the Lewes area and around it. I assess a lot of householder and listed building applications, especially since Lewes alone has over 500 listed buildings!

What appealed to you about working for a National Park?

I like feeling as though my work has real benefit – working in planning in a National Park means that every application I determine benefits both the Park itself and the people who live in it. I've also grown up in and around the South Downs, so it feels great to be able to be a part of the Authority responsible for protecting and enhancing it.

Can you describe your typical day?

The first thing I do is check my emails – especially on a Monday morning! Once I've checked if anything urgent needs to be dealt with, I'll review my current caseload and decide what to work on that day. This might be doing an initial assessment of an application, writing

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one up so the decision can be issued, or chatting to applicants and agents about any amendments to their application – usually all three!

Best thing about working for a National Park?

The variety – whilst you get a lot of variety in planning anyway, being in a National Park really increases that. One day I might be working on an application for a farm building, the next I might be visiting a building from the 1700s being modernised for today's living standards, and another I might be looking at an application for information boards on a countryside path.

What do you love about the National Park?

If I said the landscape, it would sound cliché, but it's true! I've lived here my whole life, growing up with the South Downs as a backdrop and spending weekends walking around it with my family. What we have here in the South Downs is something really special in every way – visually, ecologically, and historically. And for me, all of that is encapsulated best in the landscape itself.

Have you got any hobbies?

I like cross-stitch – I'm currently working on a big project where the pattern is designed to look like images in the mirrors of the James Webb Space Telescope. I also enjoy weightlifting and writing (not at the same time!) I have too many other hobbies to count, but another one worth mentioning is my allotment – it's really good to get up there after work and pick up some 'home'-grown veg!

Currently reading/watching?

I'm currently rereading Robert Macfarlane's *Underland*. I find the idea of deep time fascinating and also love Macfarlane's prose in general. There's also something really interesting about the idea of the world below us – similar to the deep sea, it's a place most people never even think of, let alone see.

Dream holiday destination and why?

I would really love to visit Iceland, partly for the scenery and partly to try and see the Northern Lights. I'd really like to see how volcanism has shaped the landscape there, and how much it differs from the handful of other places I've visited with either active or recently dormant volcanoes.

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

On a perfect day, I'd spend some time at the allotment or out walking with my family. Then in the afternoon I'd work on some of my hobbies – maybe writing or catching up on the ever-growing-to-be-read pile, or continuing one of my cross-stitch projects.

Pic Credits: P1 Tim Squire; P4 left Chris Gorman