

SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK TRUST

Annual Report 2023–24





Welcome from the Chair

I am pleased to report on another fantastic year for the South Downs National Park Trust. Over the past 12 months we have successfully consolidated the significant growth achieved last year while implementing the necessary changes due to our new status as a “large charity.”

In line with this, we made several key appointments to our Trustee board, including the appointment of Dan Montagnani as Vice Chair and four new Trustees. These new members bring valuable expertise in audit, digital marketing, charity governance, and sustainability, further strengthening our leadership team.

Our fundraising efforts continue to yield positive results. A new substantive lottery application is nearing completion, and we have seen a significant increase in unrestricted income. This increase allows us to consider strategic investments in our future development. These efforts have enabled substantial investments in our priorities, with over £1.5 million raised to support landowners, partners, and the South Downs National Park Authority in achieving our conservation and community goals.

We successfully completed our first large project, Hampshire Hedgerows, initiated in 2021, surpassing our targets by supporting over 20km hedgerow restoration within the Winchester and Selborne Farm Clusters. Our significant Ouse Valley Climate Action (OVCA) project is also off to a fantastic start, facilitating and supporting a wealth of community work within the Ouse.

As we move into the new financial year, our focus shifts to building on the successes of the past year by investing in future growth in our fundraising efforts and enhancing our impact in the coming year.

Thank you once again to everyone who has contributed to our success. Together, we look forward to another year of growth, impact, and conservation.

**Dean Orgill,
Chair of South Downs
National Park Trust**



© Charlie Hellewell

Our Priorities

CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

We want to improve and increase our habitats in grassland, heaths, woods, rivers and on the coast. They are home to millions of plants, bees, butterflies including many rare and threatened species. We also want to conserve and enhance the cultural heritage of the National Park.



Hare in wildflower margin © SDNPA/Adam Huttly

INCREASE LEARNING TIME OUTSIDE IN THE NATIONAL PARK

Children today spend half as much time playing outside as their parents did. We want to change that, increasing the time spent learning outdoors in the National Park.



Young people on a holiday club day at Seven Sisters Country Park © Make (Good) Trouble

IMPROVING WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES

We want to increase the network of family-friendly walking and cycling routes and encourage more disadvantaged people to visit, who live near the Park but rarely experience the many benefits it has to offer.



© SDNPA

HELP FOR COMMUNITIES VOLUNTEERING TO SUPPORT THEIR NATIONAL PARK

We support the grassroots groups already working to care for the National Park. We work with a number of supportive partners and donors to fund their work.

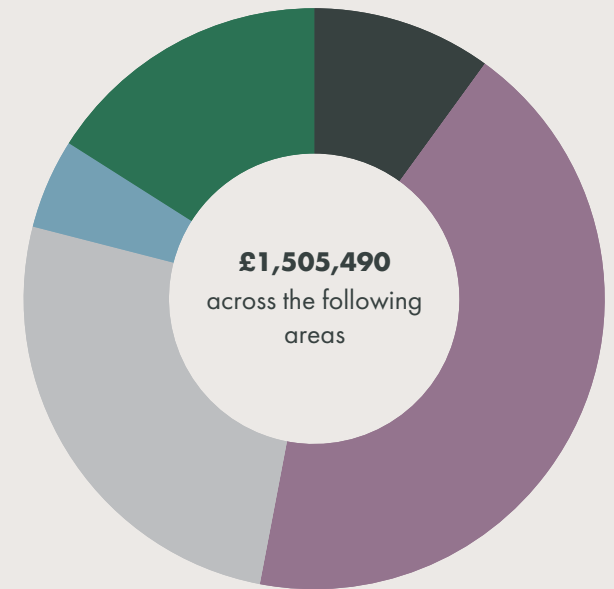


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FUNDING ALLOCATION

We are very grateful to the South Downs National Park Authority who have committed to cover our core operating costs (salaries and overheads) until 2026. This commitment allows us to focus on maximising funds to deliver projects within the South Downs National Park.

This year, the Trust has increased investment in the South Downs National Park for the fifth year running, raising £1,505,490 across the following areas:



- Access – 10%
- Communities – 43%
- Conservation – 26%
- Education – 5%
- Unrestricted – 16%

Key Achievements

SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK TRUST



495^{ha}

ReNature habitat improved



7

new community-led projects supported (allocating just under £15,000)



£500^k

now in Sustainable Communities Fund endowment



116

Young people supported by the Youth Action Fund

20^{ha}

of pollinator habitat restoration supported



3,984

children accessed outdoor learning

5

Community projects worth >£20K supported by Ouse Valley Climate Action



20^{km}

of hedgerow planted in Hampshire Hedgerows project



187 people trained, 42,709 trees planted over 74 sites



13

Ponds restored

11^k trees planted
(including 300 disease-resistant elms)



Staff and Trustees

TRUSTEES

Our work is bolstered by a strong experienced staff and board of trustees



Dean Orgill, Chair of Trustees

– Horsham, West Sussex. Dean Orgill is Chief Executive Partner of Mayo Wynne Baxter and an Executive Board Member of Ampa Legal and Professional Services Group.



Dan Montagnani, Vice Chair of Trustees

– Lyminster, West Sussex. Dan is a Fellow of the Royal Geological Society and Managing Director of Groundsure, an environmental land use data due diligence business.



Josephine Carr, Trustee

– Jevington, East Sussex. Jo farms 160 acres at her family farm in Jevington.



Chris Knell, Treasurer

– Brighton & Hove – Chris serves as Finance Director for the Plumpton College Group, and the Managing Director of the award winning One Garden Brighton.



Vance Russell, Trustee

– Lymington, Hampshire. Vance Russell is a conservation consultant and owner of VR Conservation Collective. He is the former chair of the nonprofit Groundswell International.



Paul Coffey, Trustee

– Paul Coffey is a Senior Director at Google, with over 25 yrs of experience in the advertising and marketing sector and is also a Trustee of National Numeracy.



Janet Duncton, Trustee – Petworth, West Sussex. Janet is a West Sussex County Councillor, a Member of the National Park Authority, and her family are farmers of the Leconfield Estate.



Robert Robson, Trustee – Robert is a former Naval officer living in the South Downs, with a banking background. He was CEO of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has held Trusteeships in several services related charities.



Anna Mundim, Trustee – A Brazilian living in SW London, Ana has over 20 yrs of global experience working on business strategy, operations and organisational consulting across multiple industries.



Richard Sandiford, Company Secretary – Midhurst, West Sussex. Richard is the Head of Governance at the National Park Authority. Before that, he worked in the higher education sector.





STAFF



James Winkworth, Head of Charity – starting out in commercial sponsorship, James has worked in the charitable sector for over 10 years, at charities including Amnesty International and Samaritans. James has lived in Hampshire for over 30 years.



Victoria Crespi, Funding & Impact Officer – Victoria has always lived in and around the South Downs. She previously worked for the Sussex Heritage Trust, managing their bursary programme for West Dean College and the Weald & Downland Living Museum.








Sophie Ritson, Fundraising Development Manager – Sophie who lives in Emsworth has over 20 years fundraising experience with national charities such as the PDSA, Campaign for National Parks and regional causes such as St Wilfrid's.



Miriam Swan, Grants Manager – Having lived in the Lewes district and Winchester, Miriam is now settled in West Sussex. She has previous experience of managing grants for historic building repairs and non-profit heritage organisations.

Impact

CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

	£394k	raised for improving habitats
	11,000	trees planted across the National Park
	20ha	of pollinator habitat restored
	13	historic dew ponds restored
	>20km	hedgerow planted (including nearly 43K hedgerow trees planted)

▼ **Beelines** – This year, we supported nearly 20 hectares of habitat restoration, including a major 15-hectare project at Pen Hill in West Sussex.

▼ **Pen Hill Case Study** – Pen Hill near Harting Down is a 15Ha former chalk grassland site which has been farmed as arable for generations. The landowner wanted to restore it back to downland, and after careful planning and advice gained from National Park rangers and officers the transformation is starting to take place. Funding

came via the South Downs Trust, including a substantial donation from the Gerald Micklem Charitable Trust. After preparation on the ground, grass and wildflower sowing took place during 2023, and the results have been astonishing, turning what was once a large, ploughed field into a colourful scene of pollinator friendly plants. The site is now well on its way to being restored to a valuable habitat of species-rich chalk grassland in the National Park but will need careful ongoing management for this nature restoration to continue.





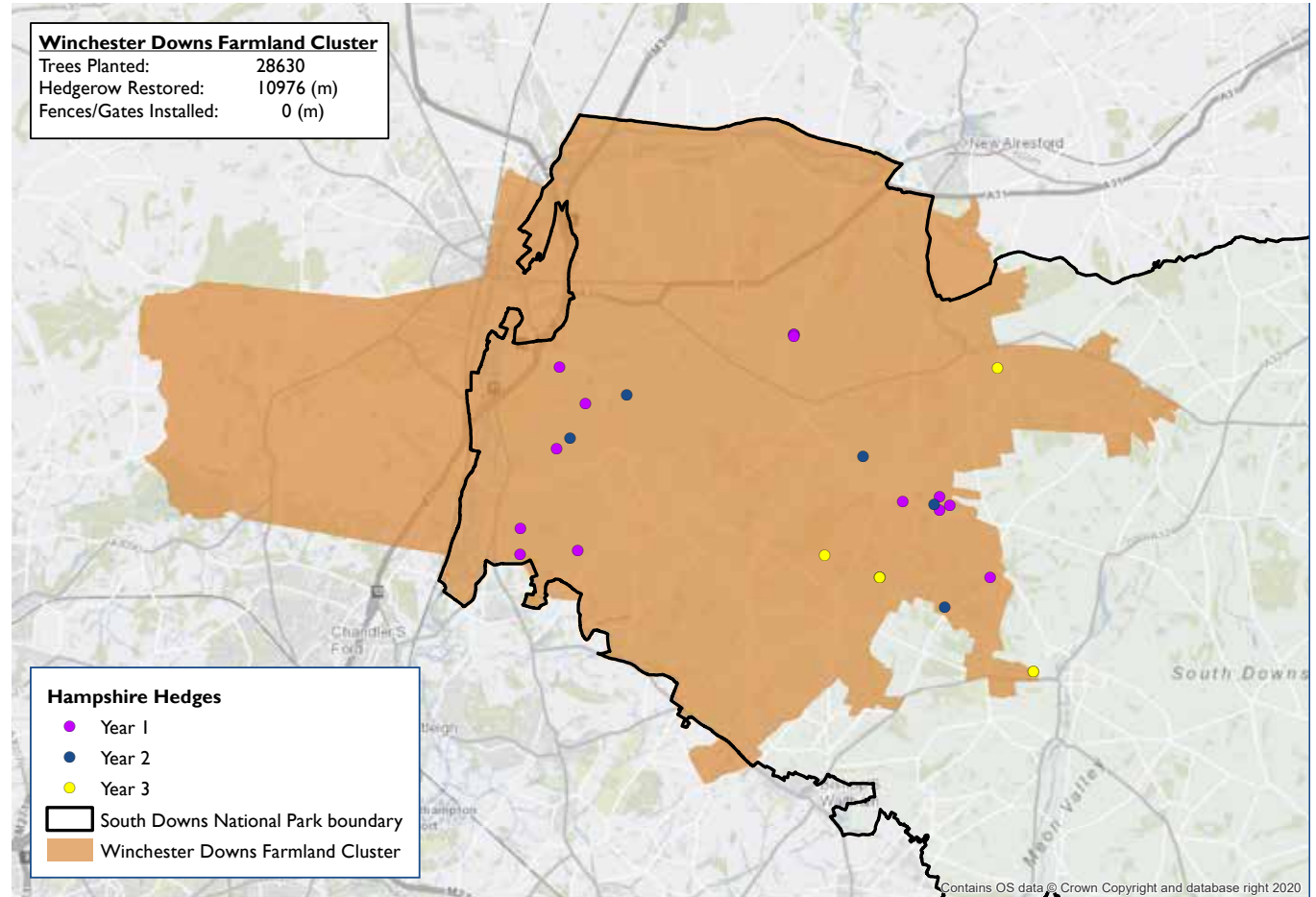
© Sam Moore



beelines
 SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK
 PROTECT OUR POLLINATORS

▼ **Hampshire Hedgerows** In 2024, we completed the Hampshire Hedgerows project with the third and final year of planting to enhance wildlife corridors in the farmed

landscape. This resulted in 23,898 metres of hedgerow planted, 187 people trained in hedgelaying, and 42,709 trees planted over 74 project sites.



▼ **Pounds for Ponds** – Of the 10 projects supported last year, eight have been completed, with two currently in development. Reports indicate the arrival of dragonflies, swallows, and butterflies in these new habitats. Additionally, three more ponds were restored this year with support from Portsmouth Water, at sites including Goodwood and Staple Ash Farm.

► **Chantry Hill case study** – The dew pond at Chantry Hill, south of Storrington in West Sussex, was last restored some 30 years ago but had become dried out and overgrown. Restoration of the dew pond took place in 2023 and included clearance of choking vegetation, relining the pond, installing new appropriate pond plants and protective fencing.

It will now offer significant opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and offer good public engagement benefit via users of the South Downs Way.



Chantry Hill dew pond progress
© SDNPA



▼ **ReNature Campaign** – An additional £136k was allocated to improve 495 hectares of habitat, such as creating havens for butterflies and barn owls, establishing new wetlands, and protecting the threatened junipers.

▼ **Saving the juniper tree at Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Hampshire** – One of Britain’s three native conifer species, the juniper has struggled over recent decades due to disease and poor quality seed, but is important as it supports a host of unique fungi and insects such as the juniper carpet moth. As well as saving the country park’s last two juniper trees, an area of the commercial plantation will be cleared, returned to chalk downland and planted with more than 100 juniper trees.

HELP US TO #RENATURE
SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

▼ **Community Cut and Collect machine** – Providing a cut and collect machine for local landowners and communities to access will help manage grassland, encouraging the growth of wildflowers to help bees and butterflies.



Cut and collect machine in action – Greatham
© SDNPA

▼ **River Work** – In response to the growing need to help the clean-up of our rivers, the Trust supported a survey of the River Lavant this year. This comprehensive assessment aims to identify potential and priority projects to improve the river’s biodiversity.

Additionally, alongside other partners, the Trust co-funded a Project Coordinator to lead initiatives stemming from the River Rother summit held at the South Downs Centre in Nov 2023, who with stakeholders, seeks to develop a multi-faceted conservation approach to this important river catchment.

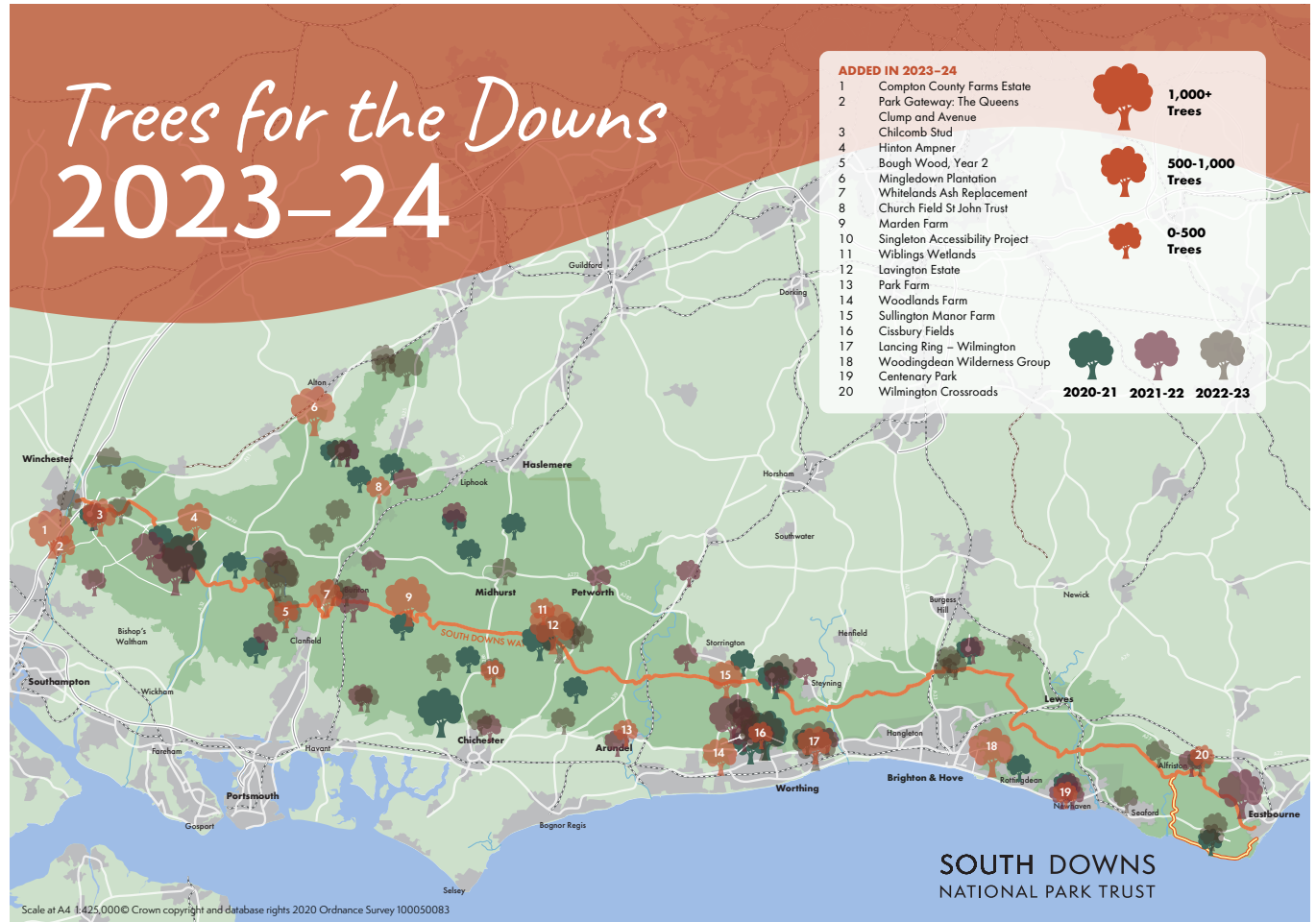


River Rother
© Nick Heasman

▼ **Trees for the Downs** – In 2023, we planted 11,000 trees, bringing us two-thirds of the way towards our target of 100,000 trees planted across the South Downs. This effort included the distribution of over 300 disease-resistant elms to willing landowners for planting across the National Park.



Tree planting Woodingdean
© Woodingdean Wilderness Group



▼ **Downs to the Sea** – During the development phase, we conducted various environmental and community engagement initiatives, including RSPB surveys, water level gauge installations, pond restoration planning, and ecological assessments. We also delivered health and wellbeing sessions, mapped priority areas for educational engagement, and collaborated with diverse stakeholders to develop an Evaluation Framework and Theory of Change. Following this phase a full delivery bid was submitted in spring 2024. Watch this space for further progress.



INTENDED OUTPUTS



IMPROVED MANAGEMENT OF 307^{ha} OF WET GRASSLAND

Across various sites for key species through water control, enhanced grazing, and ditch improvements.

RESTORATION AND CREATION OF 10-15 PONDS

Benefitting both community and wildlife, including the historic village pond at Falmer.



100 VOLUNTEERS

To clear invasive Himalayan balsam in rivers and ponds.

2 WATER CHAMPIONS

To be recruited to engage with parish councils, schools, and colleges about local water challenges.



OVER 70 HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACTIVITIES

In collaboration with health and social organisations.

ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

At Pulborough Brooks for better wetland views and a mindfulness area.



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR > 100

(staff, landowners, and volunteers).



▼ **Ouse Valley Climate Action (OVCA)** – Our Lottery-funded project has had a great start, with efforts including transforming abandoned wasteland into community gardens, tree planting, biodiversity restoration and promoting sustainable practices.

Key initiatives involve extensive community engagement, infrastructure development and collaboration with local groups, farmers and businesses to reduce carbon emissions and support nature.

The National Lottery Community Funding has also enabled organisations from the Lewes, Seaford, Peacehaven and Newhaven areas to put on events showcasing the wide variety of community action that can be taken on climate change.

OVCA has continued our “Community Pitch” initiative which supported five projects, sharing over £20,000 to help communities kick-start ideas and proposals aimed at mitigating climate change.

Some of these projects include scores of children learning to ride bikes, new community vegetable gardens, climate hubs, river tours, volunteer training, energy saving workshops and repair cafes.



OVCA team celebrate success of project
© Sam Moore/SDNPA



The Peverals Community Garden, which is part of OVCA project
© Sam Moore/SDNPA



Ouse valley
© Sam Moore/SDNPA



© Sam Moore/SDNPA

EDUCATION



£79k

raised for projects this year



3,984

children supported for outdoor education in the National Park



116

youth volunteers supported

▼ **Apprentices** – Our Woodland Apprentice Programme continues to thrive, with Holly completing her second placement year. Her activities have included planting, wildlife surveys, and habitat management.



© Holly Whitehouse

▼ **Outdoor Travel Grant** – This year, 3,984 children benefited from a grant to help them access outdoor learning in the South Downs National Park. We also developed a partnership with National Express Transport Solutions to provide school transport at a significantly reduced rate during school hours, which should allow our grants to reach even more children next year.



School trip to Seven Sisters Country Park thanks to the Outdoor Travel Grant © SDNPA

▼ **Youth Volunteering** – Through the Youth Action Fund, we supported 116 young people aged 12-25 in various volunteer activities.



Youth Action day at Seven Sisters.
© Action For Conservation

► **Butterfly Conservation** – Youth Rangers Take Flight Project – Youth Action Funding of £2,000 enabled the charity Butterfly Conservation (BC) to trial three youth volunteering and engagement sessions in the summer of 2023. In an attempt to motivate and engage the hard-to-reach 13-17 age group, the sessions included a diverse range of conservation and biodiversity activities – such as surveying and monitoring different species, installing public engagement trails and practical tasks such as invasive species clearance and footpath maintenance. Twelve young people took part in the successful trial at the BC reserve at Magdalen Hill Down, Winchester and all gained valuable skills and insights into the work of a ranger.

▼ **Health and Wellbeing Travel Grant** – We successfully launched our new Health and Wellbeing Travel Grant which, alongside support from our Community Transport partners, will help people in extreme isolation access the South Downs National Park.



Youth Rangers engagement trial
© Butterfly Conservation



WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES



£142k

raised for projects

▼ **Centurion Way** – This year, the Trust secured funding for the development of a new ramp at West Dean. This ramp complements the existing steps, making the area accessible to all and improving usability for cyclists.

Additionally, Trust funding enabled the further development of the route through Singleton Station to West Dean Tunnel. This expansion means the route will now be open all the way from Chichester to Littlewood Farm.



Centurion Way, Dean ramp
© SDNPA

▼ **South Downs Way** – Funding was provided to support the general maintenance of the route, including the replacement of gates, fingerposts, and minor resurfacing.



© SDNPA

▼ **Chanctonbury Ring** – We secured a significant gift from the British Mountaineering Council (BMC), which will fund the refurbishment of the South Downs Way approach at Washington. This heavily rutted section will be reprofiled to ensure continued enjoyment by walkers, cyclists, and horse riders.



Chanctonbury Ring, planned improvements - Before
© SDNPA

HELP FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS WHICH CARE FOR THEIR NATIONAL PARK



£500k

endowment continues to grow



£19.5k

funds allocated to 7 new community projects

▼ **Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF)** – In 2023/24, we supported four new community-led projects across the National Park and its surrounding areas, allocating just under £15,000. In addition, we continue to grow the SCF endowment which now stands at around £500,000. We will continue to invest in this over future years until it reaches a self-sustaining level.

▼ **Bringing Back the Birds, Arundel** – A grant was awarded to the Arundel Community Orchard Group to support Green Arundel in the installation of a house martin tower at the orchard to provide a home for house martins and also bats. This initiative also supported the installation of nesting cups and nestboxes at other conducive sites in Arundel to provide homes for visiting swallows, swifts and house martins.



Erecting the tower - Bringing Back the Birds Arundel
© Arundel Community Orchard

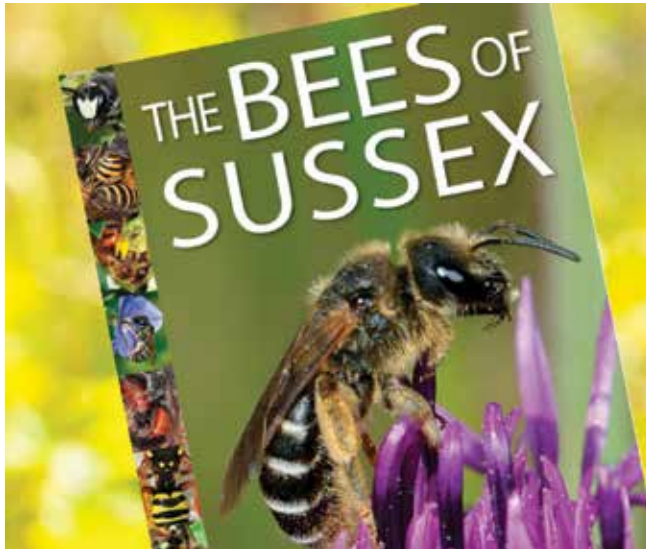
▼ **The Lost Railway - Steyning and Bramber** – The SCF supported the creation and installation of four interpretation boards at the site of the stations at Steyning and Bramber on the former railway line. Jointly funded with the Community Rail Network, the new boards now recount the fascinating history of the stations and the story of a bygone age of railway along the Steyning line.



The Lost Railway at Steyning and Bramber
© Shoreham-Herald

▼ **The Bees of Sussex – book by James Power**

– The SCF supported this publication by James Power documenting the numerous species of bees found in Sussex, one of the richest and most diverse counties for bees in the country. The Bees of Sussex is a fascinating record, documenting the shift in populations, the arrival of new species and the adaptation of behaviours seen in the county.



The Bees of Sussex – by James Power
© James Power

Volunteer Conservation Fund – In 2023-24 we supported three community volunteer groups with a total of almost £5,000 to projects that enhance the National Park in line with the Partnership Management Plan.

▼ **Midhurst Green Volunteers** – Over three sessions in June 2023, the volunteers spent 105 hours clearing 700m of path on the River Rother walk, a popular riverside footpath in Midhurst. The group, funded by the Volunteer Conservation Fund, worked together to clear invasive species and cut back encroaching undergrowth.



Midhurst Green Volunteers
© SDNPA

▼ **Midhurst Big Town Tidy** – The Boltini Litter Fund, administered on behalf of the Boltini Trust, supports litter-picking activity in the National Park. During 2023-24 four volunteer litter picking groups were given funding.



© Midhurst Town Council

Thank you

PRESIDENTS AND PATRONS



The Duke of Richmond and Gordon

Chairman of the Development Board



Lady Emma Barnard,

Lord-Lieutenant of West Sussex
President of the South Downs National Park Trust



Mr Tom Floyd,

Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire
Vice President of South Downs National Park Trust



Mr Michael Rudman,

Deputy Lieutenant of East Sussex
Patron of South Downs National Park Trust



Mr Hugh Bonneville

Ambassador for South Downs National Park Trust

CORE FUNDER



A BIG thank you to the South Downs National Park Authority. Their core support means that we can focus our funding towards vital projects in the South Downs.

FOUNDING PATRONS

We are sincerely grateful to our founding patrons who have provided us with necessary and long term support, which has helped to establish the Trust and our programmes.

- Oliver Haarmann
- Badr Jafar and Razan Al Mubarak
- Glen and Asta Manchester
- Simon and Harriett Patterson
- Franck R Petitgas
- James and Bianca Pitt
- Charles and Jans Rolls
- Gordon and Jennifer Singer
- James Tuttiett Charitable Trust

DONORS

- The American Express Foundation
- Aspinal of London
- Aviva Community Fund
- Banister Charitable Trust
- The Big Give
- The Boltini Trust
- Chalk Cliff Trust
- The Fonthill Foundation
- Gareth Neame QBE
- F Glenister Woodger Trust
- Golden Bottle Trust
- Groundwork
- Henocq Law Trust
- Hydro Flask Parks For All
- Jo Camp Trust
- Joan Cullen Charitable Trust
- Jo Holden Charitable Trust
- Lawson Trust
- Gerald Micklem Charitable Trust
- National Lottery Communities Fund
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Nineveh Charitable Trust

DONORS (cont.)

- Nyetimber
- Ouse Valley Climate Action
- Penfolds Woodland Management
- The Pig
- Players of the South Downs Lottery
- Portsmouth Water
- Powell Forestry
- Renegade Foundation
- Robert and Lucinda Langmead
- Spencer Wills Trust
- Verina Black Charitable Trust
- William Wates Memorial Fund
- Wilmott Dixon

VISITOR GIVING PARTNERS

- Best of Britain Travel Guides
- Foot of the Downs – Glamping in West Sussex
- Hydro Hotel, Eastbourne, East Sussex
- Simple Getaway – Sussex holiday lets
- Woodfire Camping – Gastro camping in the South Downs

SOUTH DOWNS PROTECTOR PARTNERS

- Groundsure
- Clarity Environmental

PARTNERS

Thanks to all our delivery Partners in the South Downs who make our work possible.

**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK**

Help Nature to ReNature



SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK



At the moment 25%
of the South Downs
National Park is
managed for nature.
Our goal is to increase
that to 33% by 2030.

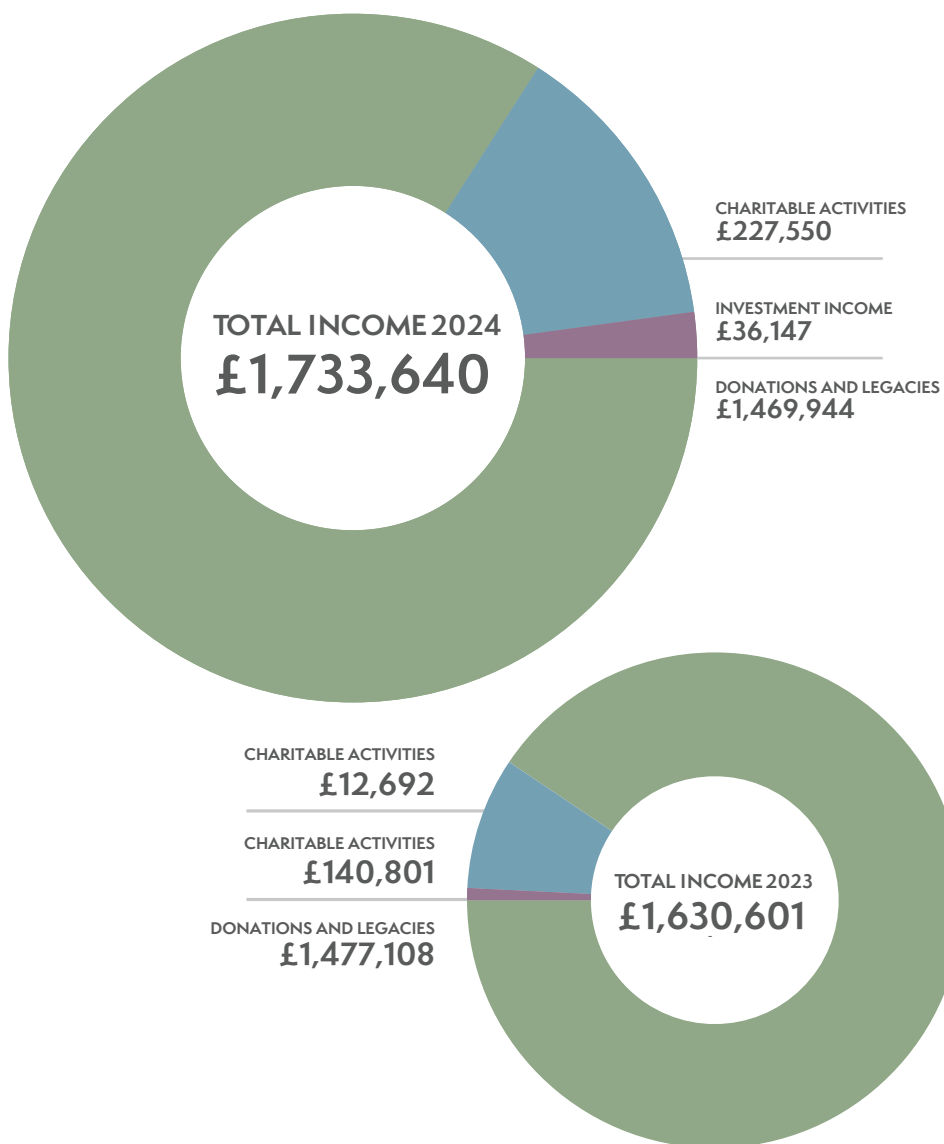
Join us to help nature

#ReNature

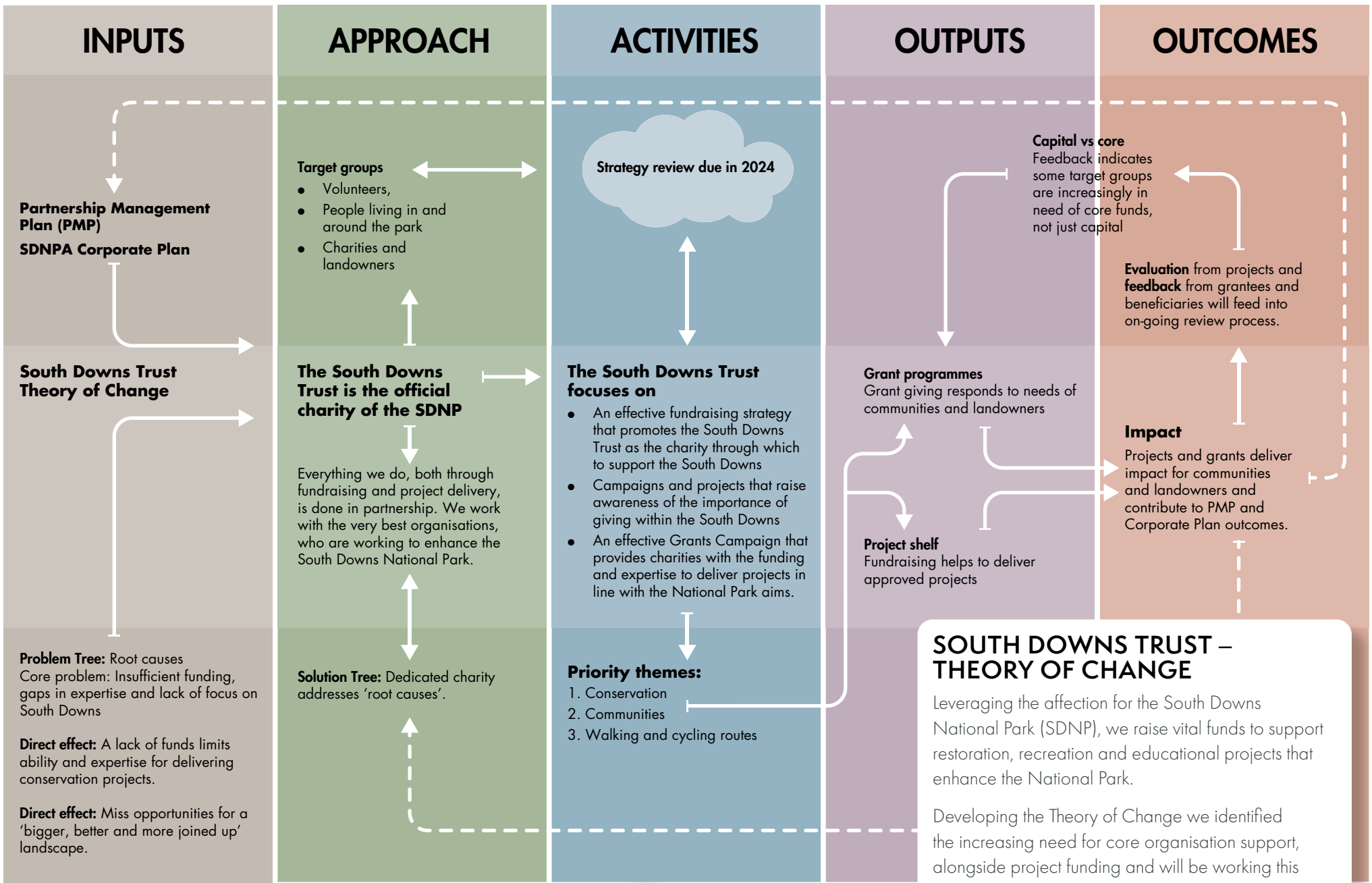
southdowns.gov.uk/renature



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024



	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2024	Total Funds 2023
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	150,572	1,319,371	1,469,944	1,477,108
Charitable activities	227,550	0	227,550	140,801
	28,214	7,933	36,147	12,692
Total income	406,336	1,327,304	1,733,640	1,630,601
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	177,151	3,551	144,111	93,716
Charitable activities	124,959	1,068,921	1,242,230	922,912
Total expenditure	302,110	1,072,472	1,386,341	1,016,628
Net income/(expenditure)	153,579	193,720	347,298	613,973
Other recognised gains/losses:				
Gains/(losses) on investment assets	14,351	21,022	35,372	(34,644)
Net movement in funds	167,929	214,742	382,671	579,329
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	368,297	1,326,247	1,694,544	1,115,215
Transfers between funds	(1,750)	1,750	0	0
Total funds carried forward	534,476	1,542,739	2,077,215	1,694,544





SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK TRUST

Registered Charity 1174975

CONTACT US

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Cover image: Pen Hill © Sam Moore

