SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK TRUST

Annual Report 2024–25

© SDNPA

SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK TRUST

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."

This has been a year of both delivery and consolidation. We have increased our income significantly, expanded the scale and ambition of our work, and strengthened the foundations that will support our impact for years to come. None of this progress would have been possible without the dedication of our staff, Trustees, volunteers, partners and supporters, whose shared commitment continues to turn generosity into lasting change for this remarkable landscape.

Financially, the Trust achieved a 35% increase in income, raising £2.35 million in total. This growth was driven by the success of major partnership projects, most notably the £1.7 million National Lottery Heritage Fund award for Downs to the Sea – a transformational investment in wetland restoration and community engagement across the South Downs and its coastal landscapes. Alongside this, we took important steps towards long-term sustainability by establishing a Development Fund to support future growth and beginning the transition to a new finance system to strengthen transparency and Trustee oversight.

Crucially, this progress is being felt on the ground. During the year, made great gains on our targets for tree planting and hedgerow restoration, continued to build a connected network of ponds and pollinator habitats, and helped unlock innovative approaches to nature recovery through green finance and biodiversity credits. At the same time, we enabled thousands of people – particularly children and young people – to experience, learn from and feel a sense of belonging in the National Park, often for the very first time.

Looking ahead, our focus is clear: to deepen partnerships, grow philanthropic support, and maximise the impact of every pound entrusted to us. With strong governance, a committed and talented team, and the inspiration of the South Downs at the heart of all we do, the Trust is well placed to continue making a meaningful and lasting difference for nature, communities and future generations.

Josephine Carr,
Chair of South Downs National Park Trust

© Nigel Picknell

Our Priorities

CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

We are committed to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the South Downs National Park for the benefit of both current and future generations. During 2024–25, the Trust continued to support projects that restore priority habitats across chalk grassland, heathland, woodland, rivers and the coast, helping to reverse biodiversity loss and strengthen ecological resilience. Our work also celebrates and protects the Park's rich cultural heritage, ensuring that historic landscapes, traditions and skills remain accessible and valued.

© SDNPA

INCREASE LEARNING TIME OUTSIDE IN THE NATIONAL PARK

We believe that time spent outdoors plays an important role in supporting children and young people's physical health, mental wellbeing and lifelong connection to nature. In 2024–25, the Trust prioritised initiatives that enabled more children and young people to learn, play and explore in the National Park—particularly those who face barriers to access.

© SDNPA

IMPROVING WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES

The Trust supports the development of safe, inclusive and well-connected walking and cycling routes that allow more people to enjoy the South Downs National Park. By strengthening the network of routes and removing barriers to access, we aim to ensure that the benefits of the National Park are shared as widely as possible.

© SDNPA

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

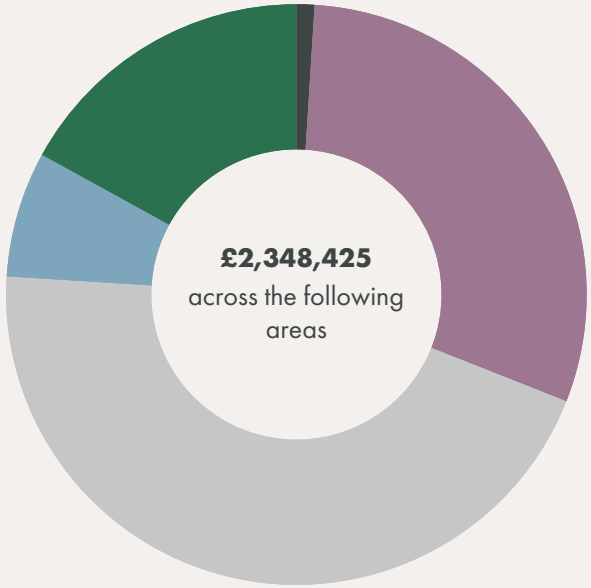
Through the Sustainable Communities and Volunteer Conservation Fund, the Trust supports grassroots groups in the community already working to care for the National Park. During 2024-25 the Ouse Valley Climate Action project continued to support a number of partners.

© SDNPA

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 £2,348,425 across the following areas:



- Access – 1%
- Communities – 30%
- Conservation – 45%
- Education – 7%
- Unrestricted – 17%

Key Achievements 2024-25

SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK TRUST

£56k
of grants through the Sustainable Communities Fund and the Community Pitch

24
community groups supported

£47.7k
given to 7 vineyards / wineries for sustainability and energy efficiency

4.24ha
of pollinator habitat restoration supported

6,816
School trips funded

800m
of path restored at Chanctonbury Ring (funded 2023/24)

700m
of hedge laid

1
Apprentice Ranger funded

4
Ponds restored

27.5ha
ReNature habitat improved

2km
Supported 2km of new path on Centurion Way

more than **20k** trees planted

335
Young People engaged in nature and the outdoors

230
Health and Wellbeing visits

Staff and Trustees

TRUSTEES

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

Josephine Carr, Chair –
Jo has been closely connected to and lived on the South Downs all her life. Her family has farmed the Downs in East Sussex for over four generations and she now farms 160 acres at 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.

Mark Potter, Trustee –
Mark's professional background is within communications, he has held senior positions within regulators, charities, social enterprises, and the civil service for the last 20+ years and is currently a trustee for Wessex Rivers Trust. He now lives adjacent to the River Meon with his family.

Jayasri Prasad, Trustee –
Jayasri has over 30 years' experience in governance, law and sustainability, working across the UK, Europe, India and Africa. A qualified lawyer and Chartered Governance professional, she has spent much of her career strengthening organisational stewardship, ethical culture and long-term decision-making.

Nick Pink, Trustee –
Nick is hugely passionate about the outdoors and the benefits that it brings to all having spent the last 25 years working in sport and sport leadership roles. Nick was born in Brighton and currently lives in Eastbourne with his wife and two children.

Stephen McAuliffe, Trustee –
A retired British Army Air Corps soldier and a retired ecology, arborist and environmental management consultant. He is also a SDNPA Member appointed by Arun District Council where he represents the Arundel and Walberton Ward.

Eric Lhomond, Trustee – With a background in the finance industry, Eric is now the Head of ISGI following a number of years as the Global head of Alternative Credit at AXA Investment Managers.

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.

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.

Julia Marshall, Trustee – Julia has over 20 yrs experience at Director level across fundraising, communications, and grant management for a range of UK and international charities. She also serves on the Board of Trustees for Ipas Europe championing reproductive justice.

Richard Sandiford, Company Secretary – Midhurst, West Sussex. Richard is the Head of Govern ance 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

£1,156,817	raised
20k	trees planted
4.24ha	of pollinator habitat restoration supported
4	ponds restored
>700m	of hedge laid

beelines
SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK
PROTECT OUR POLLINATORS

▼ **Beelines** – We supported over four hectares of new habitat this year, bringing the total restored to almost 93 hectares. This included a strategically important area between the A27 and West Hove Golf Course, improving ecological connectivity between existing wildlife sites.

▶ **Downs to the Sea** – Downs to the Sea reached a major milestone with the successful delivery-phase award from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. With total project investment now standing at £2.48 million, this ambitious partnership will restore ponds and wetlands across the South Downs, Arun Valley and Pagham Harbour, while also promoting access, wellbeing and engagement with underrepresented communities.

▼ **Pounds for Ponds** – Through the Pounds for Ponds initiative, we supported four additional pond restorations this year, contributing to a growing network of 22 ponds across the National Park. Our work has also helped influence discussions around planning approaches that could remove barriers to future pond creation.

▶ **Bignor Dew Pond case study** – The old dew pond at Bignor, on the National Trust's Slindon Estate was just a dried-out bowl when restoration work began in 2024. After clearing the area, relining, vegetation planting and fencing, the pond was finished in February 2025, thanks to over 100 hours of volunteer time.

Although the pond was slow to fill due to the dry spring and summer, wildlife quickly returned to this important water source, even at low levels. Yellow flag iris has grown well. Toad spawn was seen in the spring and broad bodied chaser dragonflies were seen scoping the pond. It is also an important fresh water source for birds, with red listed species yellowhammers seen drinking and bathing.

As well as the wildlife, the pond has attracted the interest of passing walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The new interpretation sign helping to inform them of its importance.

Bignor Dew Pond before restoration – © National Trust

Bignor Dew Pond after restoration – © National Trust

▶ **ReNature Campaign** – Investment through the ReNature campaign supported the restoration of 27.5 hectares of habitat and a range of targeted species projects, from chalk grassland management to the development of a lapwing recovery initiative and a beaver reintroduction project on the River Meon.

▼ **Meonside Beaver Project case study** – Nearly £15K of ReNature funding was used in 2024-25 to help with a project to reintroduce beavers on to a tributary of the River Meon. The beavers were released into a carefully selected site with suitable habitat conditions, as assessed by the Beaver Trust. The aim was to utilise their ability as 'ecosystem engineers' to help restore water meadow habitat, improve biodiversity, help manage water levels and reduce the risk of flooding.

In the first six months following reintroduction, the Meonside Beaver Project showed promising results with the beavers creating a large lodge. It will take time for the full impact of biodiversity improvements to be seen. Regular monitoring is taking place in the form of water quality surveys, fixed point photography and drone footage, giving us a strong baseline for data in the years to come.

One of the beavers being released at Meonside Beaver Project – © Jake Barnes

Trail camera footage of a beaver settling in – SDNPA

▶ **New Remote Flail machine case study** – This fantastic bit of kit has allowed the ranger teams in the east to carry out work on a scale that could only be dreamed of with hand tools. Rides and scallops have been created providing features for heat loving species such as reptiles and butterflies. Areas have been recovered from under scrub, beginning the process of restoring chalk grassland, making scrapes to encourage heather regeneration and cleared lines for electric fencing to facilitate grazing. Even areas previously deemed inaccessible for safe working have been managed successfully.

Flail machine in action clearing scrub– © SDNPA

Flail machine making short work of scrub clearance on hard-to-reach land– © SDNPA

▼ **Trees for the Downs**– In 2024/25, 20,294 trees were planted, bringing us within touching distance of our landmark target of 100,000 trees. Planting across the Matterley Estate and continued support for CPRE Hampshire's hedgerow work – the Hampshire Hedge– strengthened ecological networks, while the distribution of 445 disease-resistant elm trees supported long-term landscape resilience.

▼ **Windmill Farm, Hampshire Hangars case study** – 1,100 mixed broadleaf trees were planted over a 1ha area at Windmill Farm. Trees for the Downs trees have supplemented funding from the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Scheme which aims to enhance and restore areas of Hampshire's ancient hangar woodlands through diversification of species and age structure.

Windmill Farm Trees for the Downs planting – © Dawn Kirby

ENABLING ACCESS, LEARNING AND WELLBEING

£187,874	raised for projects this year
230	Health and Wellbeing visits
4	Youth Action organisations funded
7,151	Young People engaged
119	School Visits funded
14	School Grounds Restored
1	Apprentice Ranger funded

▼ **The Health and Wellbeing Travel Grant** – enabled more than 230 people experiencing loneliness, isolation or health challenges to visit and enjoy the National Park, with Seven Sisters and Queen Elizabeth Country Park among the most popular destinations. Our support helped sustain the Grow programme in Brighton & Hove during a challenging funding period, ensuring that nearly 2,500 people continue to benefit from nature-based health and wellbeing activities.

A group from Arts on Prescription enjoying the Cuckmere Valley– © SDNPA

▶ **The Outdoor Learning Grant** remained a major focus. It supported 119 school visits, enabling 6,816 pupils – many from disadvantaged backgrounds – to experience the National Park. For many, this was their first opportunity to learn outdoors in a protected landscape, with teachers consistently highlighting the grant as the deciding factor in making visits possible.

Georgian Gardens Primary School children learning traditional crafts at Butser Ancient Farm

"For our most disadvantaged children, this trip was invaluable. Some of them rarely leave their local area and the grant enabled them to experience further afield with no cost attached– thank you."

School Teacher from a participating school

▶ **Residential experiences** also returned, with some of England's most urban pupils staying at the newly refurbished Foxhole Camping Barn at Seven Sisters Country Park. These visits offered transformative experiences for children, many of whom had never visited the countryside or coast before, leaving a lasting impression on their confidence, curiosity and connection to nature.

Cherry Tree School residential stay at Seven Sisters Country Park – Cherry Tree School

"The children learnt valuable life skills while they were away, primarily building on their resilience and independence while being away from home and their familiar surroundings. They were able to bond with each other while away from familiar surroundings and with their teachers too."

Samra Malhotra, Cherry Tree School, Watford

We launched the 75th Anniversary School Grants – grants of up to £1,000 for state-funded schools to support nature in their grounds, celebrating 75 years of UK National Parks.

▼ **Case Study– Camelsdale Primary School in Haslemere** were awarded £800 for bug hotels, bird houses and materials to create an area of wildflowers.

Building bird boxes– © Camelsdale Primary

Building bird boxes– © Camelsdale Primary

SUPPORTING ACTIVE TRAVEL AND ACCESS

800	metres of path restored at Chanctonbury Ring (funded 2023/24)
2km	Supported 2km of new path on Centurion Way

▼ **Centurion Way** – Work began on the southern section of the Centurion Way, bringing this long-anticipated route closer to completion.

Centurion Way works at the former Singleton Station – © Colin Carre

Along the South Downs Way, we supported essential maintenance, including new gates, signage and surface repairs.

▶ **At Chanctonbury Ring**, the restoration of 800 metres of eroded path transformed a heavily used and waterlogged section into a durable, accessible route, improving safety and enjoyment for all users.

Refurbished path at Chanctonbury Ring – © Tim Kahane / BMC

Sue Waton, Secretary of Highdown Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club, said:

"The transformation has been amazing – this path is so much better than the rutted, slippery surface we had before.

"It makes you confident you can walk it in all weathers and allows access to all levels of mobility to come out and enjoy this incredible scenery."

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

24	community groups supported
£56k	of grants through the SCF and the Community Pitch
£45.7k	given to 7 vineyards / wineries for sustainability and energy efficiency
6	Funded 6 litter picking groups in and around the National Park
49	training courses delivered (OVCA)
64	Active Travel activities delivered, with 36 learn to ride sessions reaching 179 people (OVCA)

▼ **Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF)** – Through the Sustainable Communities and Volunteer Conservation Fund, we supported 20 community groups with over £56,000 of funding. Projects ranged from wildlife corridor creation and river conservation training to heritage skills workshops and litter-picking initiatives.

Sustainable Community Fund case study – Investment from the SCF has allowed Heritage skills workshops to take place during summer 2024 at the Weald and Downland Living Museum. Young people from Chichester College and Crawley College, and young people at the start of their careers with local construction businesses had the opportunity to 'taste' four different building crafts: practical timber repairs, brickmaking, hurdle making and wattle and daub.

The Volunteer Conservation Fund invested around £5k in four volunteer-led projects across Hampshire and East Sussex, supporting tools for managing Bentley Station Meadow nature reserve, restoration of chalk grassland at Butser Hill to benefit the Duke of Burgundy butterfly, equipment and training to monitor and improve the River Meon habitat, and improved access through new gates, stiles and signage linking the South Downs Way to Bramber Beeches woodland.

▶ **Volunteer Conservation Fund (VCF)case study** – River Meon Conservation Volunteers (RMCV) Working closely with SDNPA and HIIWT rangers the RMCV have used VCF funds to purchase equipment for surveying water voles and otter on camera, river fly monitoring and Himalayan Balsam pulling on the River Meon.

River fly monitoring– © RMCV

▼ Ouse Valley Climate Action Projects – The Ouse Valley Climate Action programme, supported by The National Lottery Community Fund, continued to demonstrate the power of local leadership, engaging communities in climate action and nature recovery. A nationally visible rewilding trial, led by partner The Railway Land Wildlife Trust, saw pet dogs recruited to "rewild like wolves", spreading wildflower seeds via adapted backpacks. The project captured public imagination, with news stories reaching 2 million people, and helped secure a further £202,000 from The National Lottery Community Fund to extend the programme and embed its legacy.

© Railway Land Wildlife Trust

▼ Half-term bike skills event – Half-term bike skills event, Peacehaven, June 2024, delivered by OVCA in collaboration with Sustrans. 12 children learned how to ride on this day.

OVCA bike skills events © Jamie Lloyd

▶ OVCA led bike ride for young – teens from an Alternative Provision unit in Newhaven. The unit, funded by the Russell Martin Foundation, supports young people with additional needs and at risk of exclusion. Jamie worked with the group and their teacher to plan a trip along the Egrets Way cycle path along the River Ouse, going on to lead further trips into the National Park later in the year.

© Jamie Lloyd

▼ Case Study – Sustainable Vineyards Fund Seven vineyards in and around the South Downs are now benefitting from climate action grants administered by the South Downs Trust. The funding mainly came from West Sussex local authorities but has enabled solar panel fitting, to energy-efficient equipment, rainwater harvesting and less fertilisers.

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 Harriet Patterson
- Lord Franck R Petitgas
- James and Bianca Pitt
- Charles and Jans Rolls
- Gordon and Jennifer Singer
- James Tuttiett Charitable Trust

DONORS

- American Express
- The Ian Askew Charitable Trust
- Aspinals
- The Big Give
- BMW Partridge Group
- M J Camp Charitable Foundation
- Chalk Cliff Trust
- The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
- Dragon School
- The Fonthill Foundation
- The Foyle Foundation
- Gareth Neame QBE
- Hanover Displays
- The Hobson Charity
- The Homity Trust
- Henocq Law Trust
- Interhome
- Joan Cullen Charitable Trust
- Jo Holden Charitable Trust
- The Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust
- Lawson Trust
- The Lynn Foundation

DONORS (cont.)

- Gerald Micklem Charitable Trust
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Nineveh Charitable Trust
- Nyetimber
- OSB Group
- THE PIG
- Players of the South Downs Lottery
- Portsmouth Water
- John & Hilary Pritchard Trust
- Robert and Lucinda Langmead
- The Shanly Foundation
- Southern Water
- South East Water
- Spencer Wills Trust
- Sussex Community Foundation
- Sussex University
- The Swire Charitable Trusts
- The Syder Foundation
- Travel Chapter

VISITOR GIVING PARTNERS

- The Hydro Hotel
- THE PIG-in the South Downs
- Woodfire Camping
- Upper Parsonage Farm
- Foot of the Downs
- Spirit of the Downs

SOUTH DOWNS PROTECTOR PARTNERS

- Clarity Environmental

SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

Help Nature to ReNature

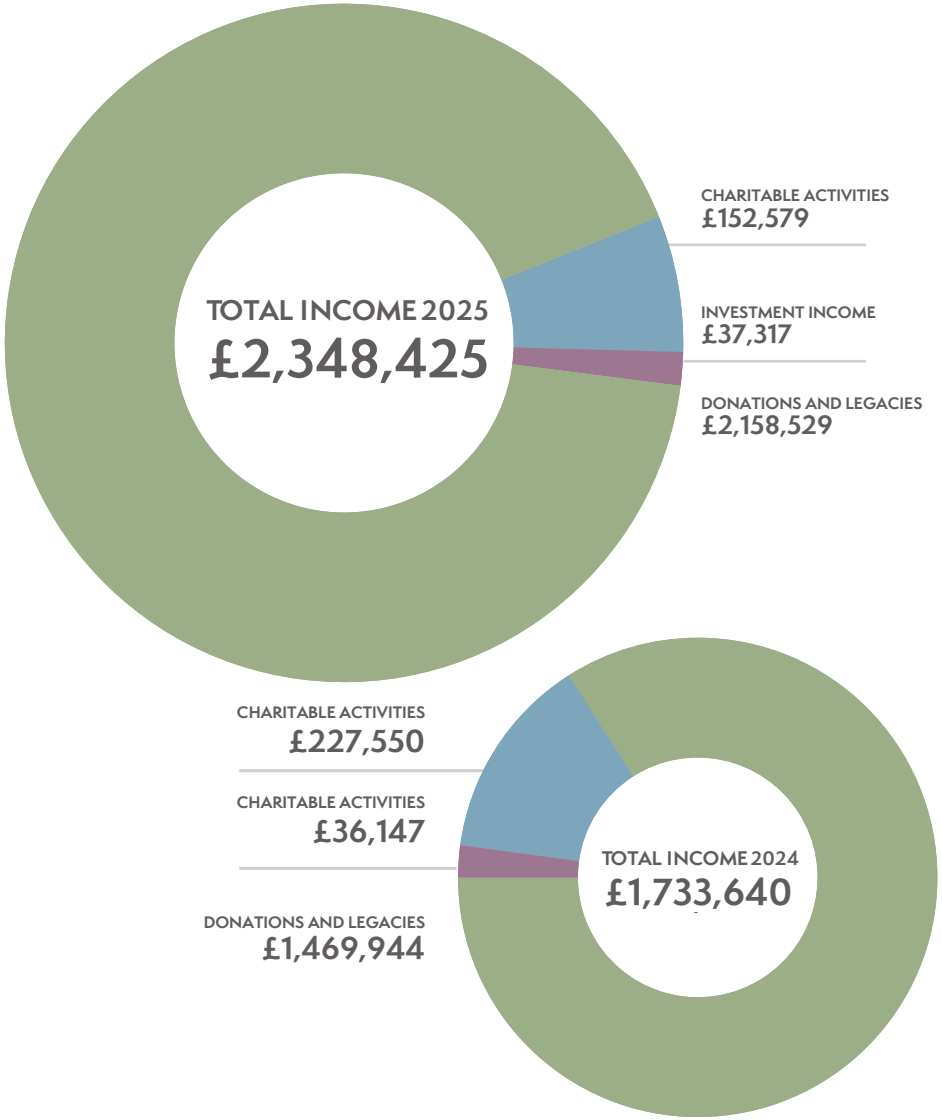
At the moment 25% of the South Downs National Park is managed for nature. Our goal is to increase that to 33% by 2030.

Join us to help nature
#ReNature

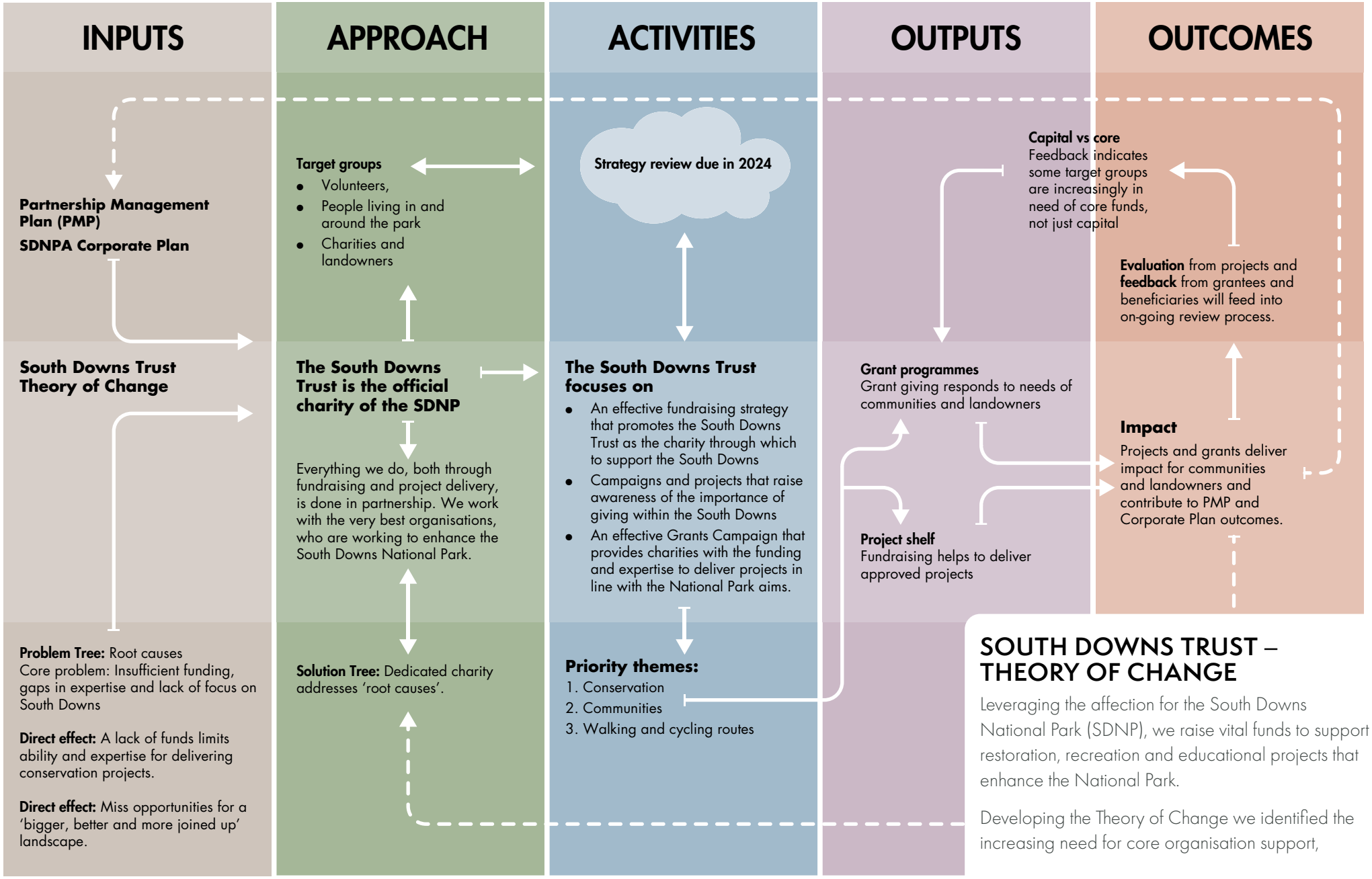
southdowns.gov.uk/renature

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025



	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2025	Total Funds 2024
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	232,773	1,925,756	2,158,529	1,469,943
Earned from charitable activities	152,579	0	152,579	227,550
Investment income	28,911	8,406	37,317	36,147
Total income and endowments	**414,263**	1,934,162	2,348,425	1,733,640
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	106,815	2,235	109,050	144,111
Charitable activities	159,317	1,355,999	1,515,316	1,242,230
Total expenditure	266,133	1,358,234	1,624,366	1,386,341
Net income	**148,130**	**575,928**	**724,059**	**347,299**
Other recognised gains / (losses):				
Gains / (losses) on investment assets	315	461	776	35,372
Net movement in funds	**148,445**	**576,389**	**724,834**	**382,671**
Reconciliation of funds:				
Total funds brought forward	534,476	1,542,738	2,077,214	1,694,544
Transfers between funds	-17,127	17,127	0	0
Total funds carried forward	**665,794**	**2,136,254**	**2,802,049**	**2,077,214**



SOUTH DOWNS TRUST – THEORY OF CHANGE

Leveraging the affection for the South Downs National Park (SDNP), we raise vital funds to support restoration, recreation and educational projects that enhance the National Park.

Developing the Theory of Change we identified the increasing need for core organisation support,

SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK TRUST

Registered Charity 1174975

CONTACT US

We are based at the South Downs Centre, Midhurst

South Downs Centre
North Street
Midhurst
West Sussex
GU29 9DH

01730 814810

info@southdownstrust.org.uk

Cover image: The Cuckmere at Seven Sisters Country Park © Sam Moore