

An aerial photograph of the Eastbourne Downland Estate. The foreground shows a grassy hillside with a wooden bench and a wire fence. The middle ground features rolling green hills and a large residential area. The background is a hazy, distant view of the sea and coastline.

EASTBOURNE DOWNLAND ESTATE

WHOLE ESTATE PLAN 2020-2045

EASTBOURNE
Borough Council



The Vision for the Eastbourne Downland Estate over the next 25 years

Conserve the iconic downland landscape and cultural heritage of the Estate, so that these special qualities can be enjoyed, understood and valued by the public, with access for all, contributing to Eastbourne's sense of community, wellbeing and belonging and instil a strong sense of public stewardship that encourages visitors and people from all backgrounds to actively care for the Estate and invest in it.

Maintain and enhance the 'natural capital' of the Estate, so that high-quality, well-managed habitats are resilient and adaptable to climate change, pests or disease; support wildlife networks throughout the landscape; and continue to deliver the widest range of ecosystem services into the future.

Ensure that these ecosystem services are enjoyed, valued and understood by the public, with all Eastbourne residents feeling they are beneficiaries of the Estate – not just those who are able to visit regularly.

Ensure that our farmers are supported and valued as stewards of our land, its soils and its wildlife, with sustainable and profitable businesses that can continue to flourish and innovate.

Protect the Estate for future generations, ensuring that it is self-sustaining and financially resilient, built on diversified income streams, promoting innovation, craftsmanship, rural creative industries, and high-quality visitor experiences, supporting tourism and local communities.

Introduction

Background

The Eastbourne Downland Estate extends to approximately 4,174 acres, of which 2,963 acres is mainly farmed (the Council leases four farms and a smallholding) and 1,211 acres is open access land; it lies at the easternmost end of the South Downs National Park. The Estate was bought by the local authority with compulsory purchase powers under The Eastbourne Corporation Act of 1926 and it is currently owned and managed, on behalf of the public, by Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC).

The Council is committed to the conservation and enhancement of the Downland Estate to preserve it for future generations and it has developed a Whole Estate Plan (WEP) to help guide the longer-term management of the Estate. The Council's priority is the preservation of the Estate's special qualities and the ecosystem services it provides. The WEP is not intended to be a detailed management plan, and does not supersede the Eastbourne Downland Management Plan 2015-2022; instead, it is envisaged as a 'live' document that will help provide a long-term strategy within an informed context and as such will be subject to review and refresh to ensure it continues to reflect policies and priorities.

WEPs are an initiative from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) in order to enable "...collaboration between individual estates and the National Park Authority to achieve the ambitions of the organisation and the purposes of the National Park". The SDNPA Local Plan is landscape-led, with the concept of ecosystem services (the many and varied well-being benefits that humans freely gain from the natural environment) and natural capital (the earth's natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things) the core focus of the approach. It recognises the significant influence of the estates and farms across the National Park, and the impact the management activities of these estates has in the short, medium and long term. It also recognises the challenges faced by those who own and operate these estates to manage the land profitably while maintaining some of the most significant cultural/heritage assets within the National Park. By providing a degree of flexibility when considering development proposals on estates which have

prepared an endorsed WEP (Strategic Policy SD22: Development Strategy) it is hoped that balance can be achieved. However, this can only be done within an informed context which clearly sets out the longer-term role of a development proposal within the overall ambition of the organisation and its contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park, its special qualities and the ecosystem services it provides.

The WEP itself follows the format set out in the *Whole Estate Plans Preparation Guidelines*, issued by the SDNPA (Revision B, published 22.05.2017). The simple form of the content is: **Vision** (Section 2); **Asset Audit** (Section 3); **Ecosystem Services Analysis** (Section 4); and **Action Plan** (Section 5). In line with the SDNPA Local Plan, the concept of ecosystem services and natural capital is the core focus of the approach.

Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

The Natural Capital Committee (NCC) is an independent advisory committee to the Government and defines natural capital as "*the elements of nature that produce value or benefits to people (directly and indirectly), such as the stock of forests, rivers, land, minerals and oceans, as well as the natural processes and functions that underpin their operation*"¹. More simply, natural capital is the stock of assets provided by nature with the



Source: Natural Capital Committee

¹ Natural Capital Committee (2013) The State of Natural Capital: Towards a framework for measurement and valuation. A report from the Natural Capital Committee [online] available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/516707/ncc-state-natural-capital-first-report.pdf (last accessed 06 July 2019)

capacity to generate goods and services, often called 'ecosystem services', over time.

These services, often in combination with other forms of capital (human, manufactured, social and financial) contribute to the economy and human wellbeing directly and indirectly in many different ways. They provide products that:

- are sold directly, such as timber or agricultural crops;
- supply inputs to the production of goods, such as water; support landscapes and wildlife that promote tourism and recreation; and
- deliver the wider conditions that underpin a well-functioning economy, such as a healthy environment that supports a productive workforce, and natural infrastructure that reduces exposure to climate-related impacts such as floods, landslides, or fires.

The Government has aspirations to improve the environment within a generation and have launched 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan To Improve The Environment'², which is based on a natural capital approach. The NCC has recommended that *"Local authorities and major infrastructure providers should ensure that natural capital is protected and improved, consistent with the overall objective of the 25 Year Environment Plan"*³. The Plan emphasises the natural capital approach as an important tool in decision making and a means of addressing past failures to *"understand the full value of the benefits offered by the environment and cultural heritage"*. By using a natural capital approach, *"we give the environment its due regards as a natural asset – indeed a key contributor – to the overall economy, [and] we will be more likely to give it the value it deserves to protect and enhance it"*. Understanding the natural capital of the Estate is therefore a key objective of this Whole Estate Plan.



² HM Government (2018) A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment [online] available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf (last accessed 21 Jan 2020)

³ Natural Capital Committee (2018) Annual Report 2018. Fifth Report to the Economic Affairs Committee [online] available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/677873/ncc-annual-report-2018.pdf (last accessed 06 July 2019)

Developing the Vision

Visitor Data Analysis

A desktop analysis of visitor numbers was undertaken using the Outdoor Recreation Valuation Tool (ORVal), which was developed by the University of Exeter for Defra. ORVal is an online tool that allows users to explore the recreational use and welfare value of accessible open spaces, trails, and beaches in England and Wales. It has recently been incorporated into the UK Treasury's Green Book – the government's guidance for project appraisal and evaluation (H.M. Treasury 2018)⁴ – and features in the Government's 25-Year Environment Plan (H.M. Government 2018). ORVal estimates that 940,911 visits are made to the Eastbourne Downland Estate each year, and that these visits are associated with recreational values of £2.3 million per year. Analysis of visitors' walking routes across the Estate suggests a very strong link with the National Trust owned Birling Gap and the Seven Sisters, via the South Downs Way. This testifies the place the Estate has as a gateway for recreational walkers in the South Downs National Park. Far fewer visitors explore the rest of the Estate, and those that do tend to be local Eastbourne residents.

Consultation with the National Park

The following key priorities were identified for the Estate through discussions with SDNPA officers:

Improving connections between Eastbourne residents and the Estate – particularly those in the town who are not currently engaged with the Downland. The Estate should be seen as a place that everyone can enjoy, helping to build a sense of place and develop relationships with their community and the land. The contribution the Estate can make to residents' health and wellbeing should be emphasised.

⁴ HM Treasury (2018) The Green Book: Central Government Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation [online] available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685903/The_Green_Book.pdf (last accessed 09 Dec 2019)

Promoting the Estate as an educational resource, encouraging young people to enjoy it, care for it, value it, and understand how its special qualities and habitats should be managed.

Investing in natural capital and ensuring that ecosystem services are embedded in decision-making and management principles.

Identifying opportunities for strategic investment in habitat creation and restoration, to help extend, buffer, and join up ecological networks across the South Downs.

Looking for added-value opportunities from the significant visitor footfall. Eastbourne and the Estate are an important gateway to the National Park, and there is also enormous potential offered by the south coast Heritage Trail and the South Downs Way.

Encouraging and incentivising good environmental land management. The UK's departure from the Common Agricultural Policy, and the formulation of a new subsidy regime based on public payments for public goods, can help to deliver the step-change required to mainstream the environment into the way the Estate is managed and farmed.

Exploring 'payments for ecosystem services' schemes. There are potentially opportunities to deliver revenue returns and reduce costs by crystallising the value of ecosystem services delivered by the Estate – from soil carbon sequestration (the long-term storage of carbon in plants, soils, geologic formations, and the ocean) and air pollution mitigation, to water filtration and flood attenuation.

Managing woodland and chalk grassland on the Estate, and restoring and re-creating priority habitat that has been lost to scrub encroachment.

Consultation with EBC Councillors

Internal stakeholder workshops with EBC Councillors identified the following key priorities:

Maximising the social value of the Estate. Maximising the social and cultural value of the Estate, specifically:

- The Estate's contribution to Eastbourne's sense of community and belonging;
- The Estate's role in building connections among people that helps to ensure community cohesion and mental and physical wellbeing;
- The importance of instilling a sense of community ownership and involvement in decision-making;
- The Estate's role providing opportunities for communities to take part in a full range of cultural, sport, leisure, creative activities and events;
- Promoting health and wellbeing through the environment;
- The Estate's role in providing high quality recreational and open space;
- The Estate's role as an important educational resource.

Enhancing the natural value of the Estate. The importance of investing in the 'natural capital' of the Estate – its habitats and natural features – to maintain and enhance its special qualities, its iconic landscape, its wildlife, and the ecosystem services that flow from it.

Improving the visitor experience and capturing the benefits of tourism. The potential the Estate offers as a 'gateway' to the South Downs National Park, its iconic downland landscape and historical significance, and the significant number of UK and foreign visitors. Promoting and improving the visitor experience, with added-value tourism ventures, and capturing more of the visitor spend on the Estate.

Seeking opportunities to realise revenue returns. Exploring income opportunities beyond agricultural rental income, and working with the farm tenants to capitalise on other potential opportunities – including different farming systems (such as viticulture – the cultivation and harvesting of grapes), renewables, leisure and tourism enterprises, 'habitat banking', and emerging 'payments for ecosystem services' schemes. Reducing

ongoing costs associated with maintenance of the water infrastructure on the Estate is a priority.



Consultation with public stakeholders

Consultation with public stakeholders identified the following key priorities:

Maintaining and enhancing the heritage assets on the Estate. All of the downland should be treated as archaeologically sensitive, and it should be recognised that the Estate forms an integral part of the wider downland landscape. The Estate should be conserved "as it is".

Using phone apps and digital media to educate visitors about the special characteristics of the Estate, such as historical field systems, to direct them away from the tourist 'honeypots', improve the historical interpretation of the land, and expand their knowledge and appreciation of the Estate.

Preserving dew ponds and historical buildings that tell the story of historical farm practices, and the potential to build a visitor experience around traditional farming skills and crafts.

Ensuring all Estate buildings are maintained and preserved, not just those that are scheduled / registered / listed.

Emphasising the war-time heritage of the Estate, and the connection to famous authors such as Kipling and Orwell.

Improving transport links and accessibility. Address inadequate public transport links between Eastbourne and the Estate which particularly penalises the young, the disadvantaged and the isolated who do not have the use of a private vehicle; improve car parking space; prioritise investment in public rights of way and access land, with the aim of greater accessibility for all to the downland for walking and quiet enjoyment.

Nature conservation. Chalk grassland habitat should be a priority for protection and enhancement, along with the potential for arable reversion (reverting cultivated land to natural habitat) to increase the extent of chalk grassland on the Estate – with the aim of increasing biodiversity, particularly for rare, iconic chalk-downland species. The role that habitats play in the provision of ecosystem services, particularly public amenity and water filtration should be recognised. The chalk aquifer underneath the Downland Estate should be recognised as particularly important, along with the links between artificial chemicals applications, diffuse pollution, and water quality, and the role that natural systems play in filtering and protecting water sources.

Educational resource. The potential of the Estate as a learning resource should be enhanced, and links with schools and colleges improved.

Encouraging visitors to act responsibly. Encouraging dog owners to keep their animals under close control, and to pick up after them. Discouraging walkers from straying beyond the rights of way and open access land by raising awareness of the Countryside Code. The very large number of day visitors, particularly from overseas, puts pressure on the ecology of the honeypot locations. Information boards or mobile phone apps could be used as means of educating visitors and encouraging them to care for the Estate, potentially including the opportunity to make voluntary financial contributions.

Consultation with tenant farmers

The tenant farmers are key stakeholders in the delivery and supply of many of the ecosystem services on the Estate. Ideas from them included:

More opportunities for New Entrants. Issues around business succession / routes into farming / opportunities for new entrants should be recognised as important. New entrants to the agricultural sector face significant hurdles; the price of land has increased over the last fifteen years so that it is almost impossible for conventional new entrants to start out in farming by purchasing their own land. An alternative route to enter farming is by taking a tenancy; tenancies effectively separate the farming business from the land as an underlying asset, making it cheaper to become established as a farming business. Tenancies on council farms have historically provided many new entrants with a route into the industry, most recently at Black Robin Farm in 2019. Established farmers have an advantage over new entrants in securing whatever land does come onto the rental market, as they are more likely to be able to offer higher rents. New entrants can also often struggle to show sufficient track record, skills and financial security.

The conservation / stewardship ethic. Recognising the role the farm tenants play as stewards of the iconic downland landscape and its special qualities. The farmers highlighted their motivation by a strong conservation and stewardship ethic.

Importance of the farmed environment. - Farmers take pride in their role as food producers as well as good stewards of the land. There are

concerns to the extent to which managing land primarily for environmental outputs might mean more than just a shift in the use of the land to favour certain ecosystem services over agriculture, and potentially an absolute move away from agriculture towards 're-wilding' of the land. It needs to be recognised that the same farm and same farmer can produce both food and ecosystem services, and that many of the Estate's most valued habitats are a function of historic farming practices, with farming still integral to their maintenance in many cases. Cattle grazing is generally considered to be more beneficial for the restoration and maintenance of downland habitats than sheep grazing; sheep have a reputation for over-grazing, and are much more selective grazers than cattle, targeting flowering plants which can have a negative impact on species diversity; they also find it harder to graze longer, coarser vegetation. Grazing by cattle in the early spring and late summer can reduce the cover of coarser, more unpalatable grasses or scrub encroachment, as cattle are less discriminating in their grazing than sheep.

Encouraging visitors to act responsibly. Helping to reduce irresponsible dog walkers who often stray beyond the public rights of way or open access land, dog fouling, sheep worrying, and leaving gates open. Educating the public of the work of the farmers and encouraging them to actively care for the Estate and its farmed landscape.

Formal consultation

A draft WEP was put out to formal consultation in February 2020 for an 8-week period. The consultation was widely publicised in the local press, on the Council website, and at stalls in the Beacon Shopping Centre.

Alongside public responses, further stakeholder feedback was provided by the SDNPA, County Archaeology, Wealden Council, Public Health, CPRE, Sussex Wildlife Trust, and the Downland Forum Group. A meeting of Council officers was also held. The final WEP incorporates this feedback, and in particular it gives greater consideration to the cultural heritage of the Estate and its archaeological resource; the visitor profile; the Heritage Coast Strategy; access and transport; the educational resource; volunteering opportunities; chalk grassland restoration and the lessons of

the Changing Chalk project; public health; and the sustainability of buildings and operations.

Policy Context

Council Corporate Plan. The Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 sets out the priority aims in order to help make Eastbourne the best place to live, work and visit. Underlying all the work in the Plan is the climate emergency which the Council declared in 2019 and the aspirations to achieve a zero carbon town by 2030. As well as a Customer Charter, the Plan is divided into five priority themes:

- *Growth and Prosperity* - "We will have a prosperous, thriving and sustainable economy which provides opportunities for businesses to grow and invest, supports employment and skills, invests in housing and regeneration along with the infrastructure to support economic growth. Eastbourne will continue to be an outstanding destination for tourism, arts, leisure, heritage and culture." Priority aims include an exciting arts and events programme, protecting and enhancing the heritage environment, continuing to improve the public realm, continuing to deliver a pipeline of projects through partnerships and exploring the development of a micro-brewery.
- *Housing and Development* - "We will work alongside residents to deliver decent, safe and well managed housing, meeting the needs of residents by: investing in our homes, creating communities that work, helping our tenants with their energy bills as we take steps to make council homes more environmentally sustainable, and responding to homelessness and housing needs through maximizing the provision of new affordable housing." Priorities include addressing homelessness, promoting homes that sustain health and wellbeing, additional housing and regeneration. This is a general vision for Eastbourne as part of the Corporate Plan priorities, and there are no aspirations for any new-build housing as part of the WEP.
- *Quality Environment* - "We will have a clean and attractive zero carbon town, producing less waste with better air quality than before. The town will have a high quality built environment, excellent parks,

open spaces and be served by a number of good transport options.” Priorities include enhancing the biodiversity of public and open spaces, planting more trees, implementing an air quality strategy which is ambitious but achievable, improved transport infrastructure, a comprehensive Downland strategy, and measures to promote Eastbourne as the eastern gateway to the South Downs National Park.

- *Thriving Communities* - “Our vision is for strong communities where individual residents and their different organisations and support networks have the resources they need to be healthy, feel safe, and thrive. Key to this is our work with partners through the Eastbourne Youth Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership, and with partners in the police, health services and East Sussex County Council. We will also promote equality and foster positive relationships.” Priorities include promoting inclusion and addressing deprivation, promoting physical health and mental well-being, actively engaged communities and safe communities and residents.
- *Best use of resources* - “EBC will ensure the best possible use of its limited resources to deliver high quality customer services. Whilst doing so, we will embed sustainability into our procurement practices and make considered purchasing decisions such as finding alternatives to single-use plastics. We will also become more efficient in our use of energy at our sites, making targeted improvements where cost effective to do so.” Priorities include commercialisation and increasing revenue, delivering high quality customer services and generating social value.

Corporate Asset Management Plan. While the key corporate objectives and priorities for Eastbourne are outlined in the Corporate Plan, supported through the Medium Term Financial Strategy, the Asset Management Plan is the primary tool to deliver the property elements of the corporate objectives. It sets out how the Council plans and manages its corporate property portfolio.

The Asset Management Plan provides the strategy framework for the Council to manage and maximise the potential of its property portfolio and ensure that it is managed and operated in accordance with the Council's

Corporate plan and priorities and Medium Term Financial Strategy. It focuses on improving yield (income), reducing the Council's maintenance costs and liabilities, delivering efficiencies through smarter procurement, and increasing the capital value of the Council's assets. The Downland Farms are recognised by the Council as being an under-performing asset, producing an income yield of less than 2% per annum.

Reducing on-going maintenance costs is therefore critically important if the Downland Estate is to provide a positive revenue return, as well as generating alternative income streams. Income opportunities extend beyond food production and include:

- Energy
- Forestry
- Diversification and non-farming opportunities, including leisure and tourism enterprises
- 'Natural capital' assets and the developing market for payments for ecosystem services from both public and private buyers
- Property rental from residential and commercial assets

There may also be opportunities to generate capital returns through change-of-use or small scale development of redundant agricultural buildings, and this WEP helps to provide an informed context which clearly sets out the longer term role of any development proposal within the overall ambition of the Council and its contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park, its special qualities, and the ecosystem services it provides.



Climate Emergency. The Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to making Eastbourne a carbon neutral town by 2030. The WEP sits alongside this commitment in recognising the important role that the Estate has to play in meeting this commitment.

National Policy Context. The Corporate Asset Management Plan notes that, against a backdrop of the UK's decision to leave the European Union, the Council's property assets need to work harder than ever before to sustain not only the Council, but support other services. The Agriculture Bill, which brings forward proposals for a new Environmental Land Management system, heralds a new era in the rural economy, challenging everything from tenancy arrangements to supply contracts.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan recognises the enormous contribution that nature makes to wellbeing and the economy. The Government's overriding ambition expressed in the 25 Year Environment Plan is to "leave our environment in a better state than we found it". The Plan sets out a number of priorities that will need to be reflected in the WEP. Those of most relevance to the Downland Estate are:

Using and managing land sustainably

- Embedding an 'environmental net gain' principle for development, including housing and infrastructure

- Improving how we manage and incentivise land management
 - i. Designing and delivering a new environmental land management system
 - ii. Introducing new farming rules for water
 - iii. Working with farmers to use fertilisers efficiently
 - iv. Protecting crops while reducing the environmental impact of pesticides
- Improving soil health
- Focusing on woodland to maximise its many benefits
 - i. Supporting larger scale woodland creation
- Reducing risks from flooding and coastal erosion
 - i. Expanding the use of natural flood management solutions
 - ii. Putting in place more sustainable drainage systems
 - iii. Making 'at-risk' properties more resilient to flooding

Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes

- Protecting and recovering nature
 - i. Publishing a strategy for nature
 - ii. Developing a Nature Recovery Network
 - iii. Providing opportunities for the reintroduction of native species
 - iv. Exploring how to give individuals the chance to deliver lasting conservation
 - v. Improving biosecurity to protect and conserve nature
- Conserving and enhancing natural beauty
 - i. Reviewing National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Respecting nature in how we use water
 - i. Reforming our approach to water abstraction
 - ii. Increasing water supply and incentivising greater water efficiency and less personal use

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing

- Helping people improve their health and wellbeing by using green spaces
 - i. Considering how environmental therapies could be delivered through mental health services
 - ii. Promoting health and wellbeing through the natural environment
- Encouraging children to be close to nature, in and out of school
 - i. Helping primary schools create nature-friendly grounds
 - ii. Supporting more pupil contact with local natural spaces
 - iii. Helping children and young people from all backgrounds to engage with nature and improve the environment.
- Greening our towns and cities
 - i. Creating more green infrastructure
 - ii. Planting more trees in and around our towns and cities

The **Agriculture Bill** will move agricultural subsidies away from the current flat rate, area-based Basic Payment Scheme under the Common Agricultural Policy, towards a new system of paying farmers 'public money for public goods'. The principal public good the Government wants to invest in is environmental enhancement. This new Environmental Land Management system (ELMs) is intended to incentivise and reward land managers to restore and improve natural capital and rural heritage. It will also provide support for farmers and land managers as the UK moves towards a more effective application of the 'polluter pays' principle (whereby costs of pollution lie with those responsible for it). New and innovative funding and delivery mechanisms will be explored as part of ELMs, which may include private payments for ecosystem services, reverse auctions and conservation covenants.

The **Eastbourne Local Plan** does not cover the estate, with the SDNPA being the planning authority rather than EBC. However, the downland is inseparable from, and contributes much to many issues that the plan addresses, including the town's environment, recreation, visitor offer, health and wellbeing, and achieving carbon-neutrality.

Active Eastbourne Strategy 2017-22, and the county's **Health & Wellbeing Plan**. There is significant and growing evidence on the physical and mental health benefits of green spaces. Research shows that access to green space is associated with better health outcomes and income-related inequality in health is less pronounced where people have access to green space. Increasing the use of good quality green space for all social groups is likely to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. It can also bring other benefits such as greater community cohesion and less social isolation.

South Downs National Park Vision. The SDNPA has a Vision for the National Park as follows:

By 2050 in the South Downs National Park:

The iconic English lowland landscapes and heritage will have been conserved and greatly enhanced. These inspirational and distinctive places, where people live, work, farm and relax, are adapting well to the impacts of climate change and other pressures

People will understand, value, and look after the vital natural services that the National Park provides. Large areas of high-quality and well-managed habitat will form a network supporting wildlife throughout the landscape

Opportunities will exist for everyone to discover, enjoy, understand and value the National Park and its special qualities. The relationship between people and landscape will enhance their lives and inspire them to become actively involved in caring for it and using its resources more responsibly

Its special qualities will underpin the economic and social well-being of the communities in and around it, which will be more self-sustaining and empowered to shape their own future. Its villages and market towns will be thriving centres for residents, visitors and businesses and supporting the wider rural community

Successful farming, forestry, tourism and other business activities within the National Park will actively contribute to, and derive economic benefit from, its unique identity and special qualities

Sussex Heritage Coast: A Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020.

Heritage Coasts were established to protect and conserve the best stretches of undeveloped coast in England. In 1973, the Sussex Heritage Coast was the first to be defined, stretching from Eastbourne, along the iconic chalk cliffs of Beachy Head and the Seven Sisters, past Cuckmere Haven to Splash Point at Seaford.

The Strategy and Action Plan for the Sussex Heritage Coast sets out a number of key principles and actions under seven themes: natural resource management, sustainable cultural tourism and recreation, access, heritage, interpretation, communities, and planning. Of particular relevance to the long-term management of the Estate are the actions around conservation grazing; agri-environment funding; developing a narrative around the special qualities of the estate; Eastbourne as a gateway; marketing initiatives; local outdoor education networks; highways and sustainable access; understanding, conserving and enhancing heritage and archaeological features; resourcing visitor facilities; engagement and training for volunteers; and funding for green infrastructure projects.

Explaining the Vision

The Vision Statement is dissected below to explain the reasoning behind it referencing the consultation input and local and national policy context,

“Our Vision for the Eastbourne Downland Estate over the next 25 years is to...”

25 years is generally taken to be the span of a generation, and this timeframe aligns with the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. Mirroring central government's commitment to be “the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than it inherited...”, EBC is determined to hand on the Estate in a better condition to future generations.

“Conserve the iconic downland landscape and cultural heritage of the Estate...”

- Public consultation showed a strong consensus for conserving the Estate “as it is”. The reality is that natural systems are dynamic, and there is a general recognition that business-as-usual in the way land is managed is not going to reverse the downwards trends seen in key indicators of biodiversity over the last 50 years. However, it would seem sensible to allay concerns that any future management might result in changes to the special characteristics and iconic landscape that the public cherish.
- Sheep-grazed downland is the iconic habitat of the chalk landscape, and this ‘special quality’ as recognised by the National Park was emphasised during public consultation. Well-conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage is also seen as a special quality of the National Park as a whole, but particularly the Estate with its dew ponds, association with well-known writers, and historic landmarks. This landscape is one that has been shaped for thousands of years by man, from monument building and woodland clearance in the early Prehistoric period to the emergence of farmed landscapes from the Bronze Age and beyond. The Estate is itself a legacy of the early 20th century conservation movements to protect the iconic cliffs and Downs, giving it a special place in history.

“...so that these special qualities can be enjoyed, understood and valued by the public, with access for all, contributing to Eastbourne's sense of community, wellbeing and belonging;...”

- Makes specific reference to those ‘special qualities’ of the National Park that are most relevant to the plan. ‘enjoyed, understood and valued by the public’ reflects wording in the SDNPA's Vision. Helping the public to understand and value the Estate can make it an important educational resource, especially for local children. This reflects the Government's aim of ‘encouraging children to be close to nature, in and out of school’. ‘Access for all’ is a priority for the Council.
- ‘Contributing to Eastbourne's sense of community, wellbeing and belonging’ reflects the Council's Corporate Plan Vision of ‘Thriving Communities’; it reflects the SDNPA's priorities and EBC Councillors' wishes to maximise the social value of the Estate, whilst also reflecting

the Government's commitment to connect people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing.

“...and instil a strong sense of public stewardship that encourages visitors and people from all backgrounds to actively care for the Estate and invest in it.”

- Public consultation has shown that there is enormous interest in safeguarding the future of the Downland Estate. ‘A sense of public stewardship’ reflects the Government's aim of improving connections between people and their environment, and the SDNPA's vision that ‘the relationship between people and landscape will enhance their lives and inspire them to become actively involved in caring for it and using its resources more responsibly’.
- Caring for the Estate, and investing in it, reflects the Government's commitment to help people ‘from all backgrounds to engage with nature and improve the environment’.
- This also reflects the reality of securing funding for the maintenance and conservation of the Estate, and one of the key over-arching corporate objectives that the Council has set for its property portfolio: ensuring assets can be self-sustaining. This might include, for example, some form of visitor payback scheme or opportunities to make voluntary contributions.

“Maintain and enhance the ‘natural capital’ of the Estate...”

- This reflects the SDNPA's guidance that recommends the concept of ecosystem services and natural capital should be the core focus of the approach.
- The natural capital approach is a central tenet of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. It is extremely important in public policy terms, and it is a phrase that the public are becoming more familiar with.

- It is important that the Vision goes beyond ‘business-as-usual’ and is aspirational about enhancing natural capital, rather than just conserving or maintaining it.
- Enhancing natural capital and delivering ‘net gains’ for biodiversity is embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework and the 25 Year Environment Plan.
- ‘Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes’ is one of the priorities in the 25 Year Environment Plan, and the Government advocated ‘natural capital investment plans’ as part of their strategy for nature. These plans will be aligned with the 25 Year Environment Plan (ensuring a clear line of sight to national government) but be particularly relevant to the local area or geographies within them.



“...so that high-quality, well-managed habitats are resilient and adaptable to climate change, pests or disease”

- There is growing recognition that the quality or condition of habitat is critically important for biodiversity, rather than just the extent of that habitat.
- The SDNPA Vision refers to ‘large areas of high-quality and well-managed habitat’.
- Resilience to climate change is important and is referred to in the SDNPA vision, and is one of the conservation principles that informs where we should invest in strategic habitat restoration and creation. It supports the Council’s climate emergency declaration.
- Adaptation to pests and diseases, such as Ash Dieback, and the fact that natural systems are dynamic, was emphasised in the consultation with the National Park.

“...support wildlife networks throughout the landscape,”

- Ecological networks are a major focus of conservation efforts. The scientific consensus is that ‘fortress conservation’ does not work effectively, and wildlife need to be able to move throughout the landscape in order to avoid genetic bottlenecks, mitigate the risk of local extinction, and adapt to a changing climate and other pressures.
- The importance of wildlife networks was laid down in Professor Sir John Lawton’s ‘Making Space for Nature’ report – the ‘Lawton Review’⁵ – which was launched in 2009 to look at England’s collection of wildlife areas and whether they were capable of responding and adapting to challenges such as climate change. It concluded that a more coherent and resilient ecological network was needed to help wildlife cope with change: bigger, better, and more joined up.

⁵ Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborner, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.J., Tew, T.E., Varley, J. & Wynne, G.R. (2010) Making Space for Nature: a review of England’s wildlife sites and ecological networks. Report to Defra.

- The SDNPA refers to ‘a network supporting wildlife throughout the landscape’.
- The 25 Year Environment Plan commits the Government to developing a ‘Nature Recovery Network’ to ‘protect and restore wildlife, and provide opportunities to re-introduce species that we have lost from our countryside’. The aim is to provide 500,000 hectares of additional wildlife habitat, more effectively linking existing protected sites and landscapes, as well as urban green and blue infrastructure. Such a network will deliver on the recommendations from Professor Sir John Lawton: recovering wildlife will require more habitat, in better condition, in bigger patches that are more closely connected.

“...and continue to deliver the widest range of ecosystem services into the future.

- As well as helping wildlife thrive, the Government foresees the Nature Recovery Network delivering a wide range of additional benefits: greater public enjoyment; pollination; carbon capture; water quality improvements and flood management.
- This reflects the SDNPA’s guidance that recommends the concept of ecosystem services and natural capital should be the core focus of the WEP approach.
- It also reflects the wording of the SDNPA’s own Vision: “People will understand, value, and look after the vital natural services that the National Park provides”.
- The SDNPA encouraged us to ‘stress test’ the Vision statement for longevity and ensure that all aspects will remain relevant, ambitious and sustainable for the timeframe in mind. Pledging to deliver the ‘widest range of ecosystem services into the future’ is a critical aspect of future-proofing, and helps to contribute to inter-generational equity and fairness.



“...Ensure that these ecosystem services are enjoyed, valued and understood by the public, with all Eastbourne residents feeling they are beneficiaries of the Estate – not just those who are able to visit regularly”.

- This emphasises the public benefits that the Estate provides for everyone, including those who don't visit but who are still beneficiaries of (for example) its clean water, biodiversity or iconic landscape.
- There may be Eastbourne residents who do not feel able to visit the Estate regularly, for reasons of poor mental health, anxiety, or cultural

or social barriers, and who need extra encouragement or support to enjoy, value and understand the ecosystem services it provides.

“...Ensure that our farmers are supported and valued as stewards of our land...”

- This reflects the input of the Estate's agricultural tenants, who are motivated by a strong conservation and stewardship ethic, and who take pride in their responsibilities as stewards of the farmed environment.
- 'Support and value' should come from both the Council, as landlord, and members of the public, who should be encouraged to understand how the Estate is managed and the role that farming plays in that.
- This also reflects the Government's ambition in the 25 Year Environment Plan to improve how we manage and incentivise good land management.
- The SDNPA sees farming as an integral part of the South Downs landscape, with successful farming businesses actively contributing to its unique identity and special qualities.

“...Its soils and ...”

- 'Improving soil health' is one of the priorities set down in the 25 Year Environment Plan. The Government wants to ensure healthier soils by addressing factors in soil degradation such as erosion, compaction and the decline in organic matter, and it wants to work with farmers to achieve good soil management practices, including appropriate tillage choices, reintroducing grass leys into arable rotations and the use of cover crops.
- Wildlife-friendly farming is a priority for the Government and the SDNPA, and it is something that the Estate's farm tenants take pride in.

“...with sustainable and profitable businesses that can continue to flourish and innovate.”

- This reflects the issues around business succession / routes into farming / opportunities for new entrants that were particularly salient in the minds of the Estate’s tenants.
- It reflects the SDNPA vision of successful farming business activities within the National Park actively contributing to, and deriving economic benefit from, its unique identity and special qualities.
- It also reflects the Council’s corporate objectives for the let agricultural portfolio, which should at least ‘break-even’ and pay for itself. Profitable farm businesses will sustain higher rental yields for the Council.
- It recognises that farming will need to innovate to remain profitable, anticipating significant changes in the industry once the UK leaves the Common Agricultural Policy, with the Agriculture Bill likely to usher in a new era in the rural economy, challenging everything from tenancy arrangements to supply contracts.

“Protect the Estate for future generations, ensuring that it is self-sustaining and financially resilient...”

- Reflects the Government’s overriding objective of “leaving our environment in a better state than we found it” over the course of a generation.
- Reflects the Council’s corporate objectives in the Asset Management Plan

“...built on diversified income streams, promoting innovation, craftsmanship, rural creative industries, and high-quality visitor experiences”

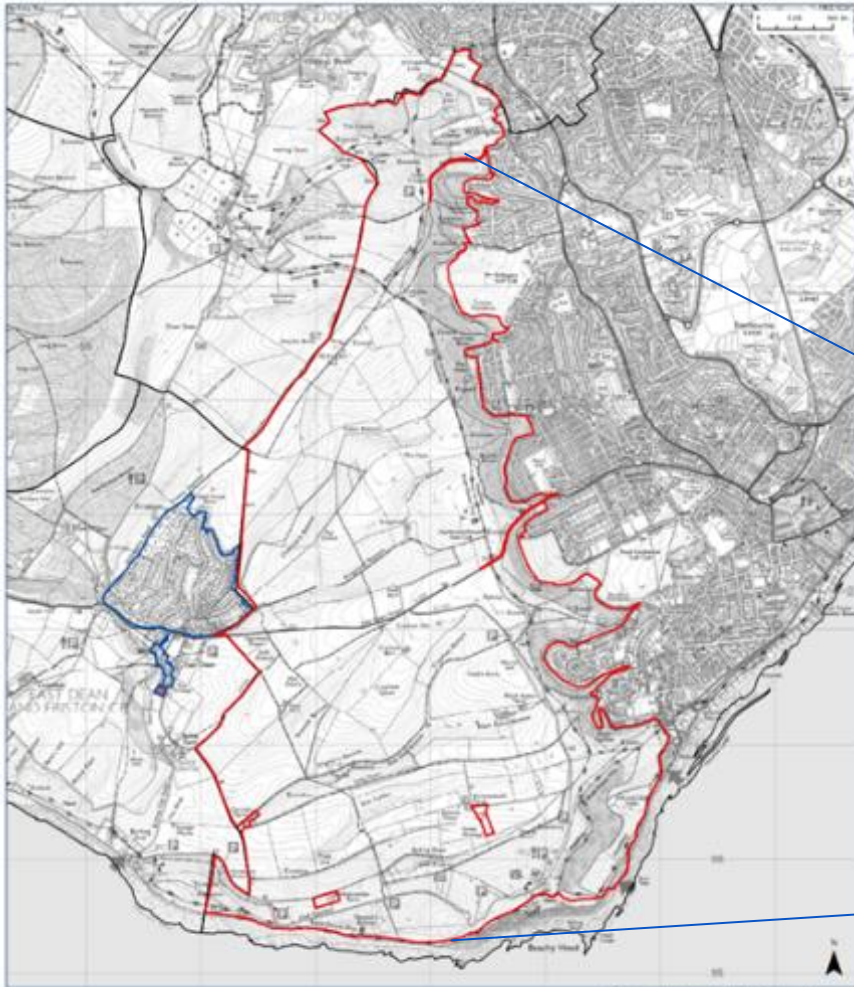
- Reflects Asset Management Strategy theme 4, ‘Seek opportunities where key strategic assets could realise significant capital and/or

revenue returns in order to reinvest in the retained operational portfolio’.

- Reflects EBC Councillors’ aspirations to explore income opportunities beyond agricultural rental income, and to work with the farm tenants to capitalise on other potential opportunities – including different farming systems, renewables, leisure, and tourism enterprises.
- Reflects the Council’s Corporate Vision for growth and prosperity: “a prosperous, thriving and sustainable economy which provides opportunities for businesses to grow and invest, supports employment and skills, invests in housing and regeneration along with the infrastructure to support economic growth. Eastbourne will continue to be an outstanding destination for tourism, arts, leisure, heritage and culture”.
- Reflects the SDNPA’s Vision of successful farming, forestry, tourism and other business activities within the National Park.



Asset Audit: The Downland Estate's Special Qualities



Overview

This chapter sets out the assets and activities on the Estate in their context: locally, within the National Park; and nationally / internationally. This 'Asset Audit' allows everyone involved in the stewardship of the Estate and the National Park to see the context and connectivity of the whole Estate and all of its activities, rather than just individual elements. Particular attention is paid to those 'special qualities' of the Estate which the Council has committed to conserving, maintaining and enhancing in the Vision Statement.

The Estate extends to approximately 1,689 hectares (4,174 acres), of which 1,199 hectares (2,963 acres) is predominantly farmland and a golf course, and 490 hectares (1,211 acres) is open public access land. This open access land includes the land around the internationally famed Beachy Head beauty spot and Belle Tout Lighthouse, and comprises coastal chalk cliff, chalk heath, calcareous grassland, scrub and woodland.



Location

The Estate is situated at the easternmost end of the South Downs National Park in East Sussex. It extends from the English Channel at its south end to the village of Willingdon at the north end with the scarp overlooking the urban area of Eastbourne to the east. Beachy Head is the southern-most headland of the East Sussex coast and the countryside formed of this headland is a complex mosaic of grassland, scrub, woodland and farmland.

A large proportion of the land sits within the Seaford Head to Beachy Head Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is of high ecological, geological, educational and amenity value. Inland are three further SSSIs at Bulling Dean, Long Down and Combe Hill above Willingdon.

Eastbourne, which lies underneath the eastern scarp of the Estate, is a seaside resort town with a population of approximately 100,000 people.



History

The land and property comprising the Estate was acquired from a number of private estates, and principally the Cavendish and Gilbert families, by way of compulsory purchase powers conferred under the Eastbourne Corporation Act 1926. The Eastbourne Corporation was the local authority of the municipal borough of Eastbourne, incorporated in 1883. The late 19th century had been a period of rapid growth for what was essentially a new town, transforming an area of small rural settlements into desirable seaside resort. The population grew from less than 4,000 people in 1851 to nearly 35,000 in 1891. Four villages or hamlets occupied the site of the modern town: Bourne (or, to distinguish it from others of the same name, East Bourne), which is now known as Old Town, surrounded the bourne (stream) which rises in the present Motcombe Park; Meads, where the Downs meet the coast; South Bourne (near the town hall); and the fishing settlement known simply as Sea Houses, which was situated to the east of the present pier.

This period of growth and development continued throughout the early 20th century, and coincided with rapid social change. The Eastbourne Corporation Act 1926 was a landmark piece of legislation, and it reflected an emerging inter-War consensus around the importance of public access rights, leisure opportunities, and preserving scenic and historic landscapes. This was the same year that the Society for the Preservation of Rural England was launched, at the London offices of the Royal Institute of British Architects, with the aim of arresting *“the growing destruction of the beauty of the English countryside... to preserve beauty and to see that what is added to the face of the land is not unbeautiful”*. There were particular concerns at the time about the *“Sussex Downs near Eastbourne [being] threatened with a rash of bungalows”* and the *“unregulated chaos of architecture in building schemes”*.⁶

The Eastbourne Corporation Act 1926 empowered Eastbourne Corporation to raise local taxation to fund the compulsory acquisition of the Downs. Until this point, governments had been reluctant to grant such powers as part of town planning schemes, because it was thought that

⁶ Editorial (1926) Preservation of Rural England: war on ugly buildings: watching growth of suburbs, *The Guardian*, London, 3 September.

public opinion “*is not yet sufficiently advanced for such an interference with private rights*”. This Act was a turning point, and was held up as a good example of enlightened action by a local authority; as such, it can be considered a harbinger of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 and the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

The purchase was completed between 1927 and 1929 at a price of £91,291, 1s, 7d. Restrictive covenants on the land were included in the conveyance. Restrictive covenants are binding obligations on freehold land and were created for the benefit of neighbouring land (including retained land owned by the Cavendish and Gilbert families). They are ‘negative’ – i.e. they are a promise *not* to do something (a restrictive obligation), rather than a promise to do something (a positive obligation). Two examples of restrictive covenants on the Estate are:

‘The Transferees will not do or permit to be done any act or thing on or about the property hereby transferred which shall be or may be or grow to be an annoyance nuisance damage or disturbance to the Transferors or the owner or occupier of any adjoining land and premises.’

‘Not without the previous written consent of the Trustees (such consent not to be unreasonably withheld) to erect or build or suffer to be erected or built upon the premises any new or substituted building nor to alter the exterior of or add to the buildings for the time being on the premises’.

Consequently, land use on the Estate is very strictly controlled: not only is it subject to the usual planning restrictions and statutory and non-statutory designations, there are also established public open access rights dating right back to at least 1929, as well as restrictive covenants that are enforceable at common law.

Eastbourne Borough Council is the successor authority to the Eastbourne Corporation, and is the freehold owner of the Estate today.

‘Natural Capital’

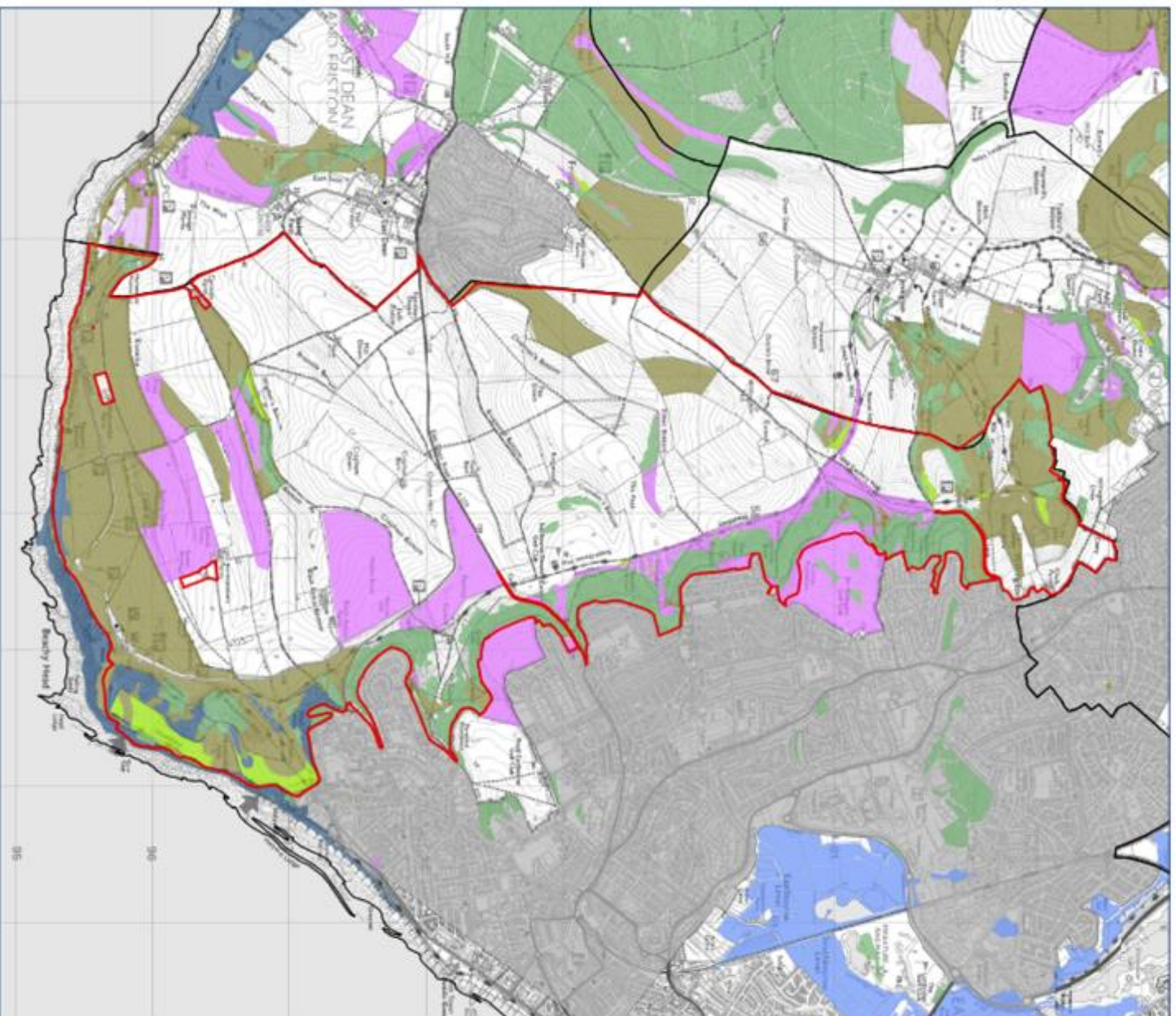
Overview.

The Estate is of high ecological, geological and archaeological value. The number of statutory designations covering the Estate are testament to this:

- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - Seaford to Beachy Head SSSI
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - Willingdon Down SSSI
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – Bulling Dean SSSI
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – Long Down SSSI
- Sussex Heritage Coast
- RIGS (Regionally Important Geomorphological Site)

Woodland. Woodland habitat on the Estate extends to approximately 145.8 hectares (360 acres), much of it running north-south along the steep scarp slope on the eastern edge of the downs. This scarp woodland provides a backdrop to much of Eastbourne and is a defining feature of the wider landscape character. There are also some smaller woodland parcels on the plateau. The woodland habitat is primarily secondary semi-natural woodland, with a number of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland components forming the core of the main woodland areas. These ancient woodlands are comprised of mature Ash, Beech, Sycamore and Oak hanger woodland, with sporadic Lime, Elm, Sweet Chestnut and Cherry throughout. The area of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland extends to approximately 29 hectares (71.7 acres). The secondary woodland that makes up the majority of the woodland resource is Ash dominated, semi-mature (generally 30-40 years old) with a sycamore understory. Shrub species include hawthorn, blackthorn, dogwood, wayfaring tree, elder, field maple and hazel.

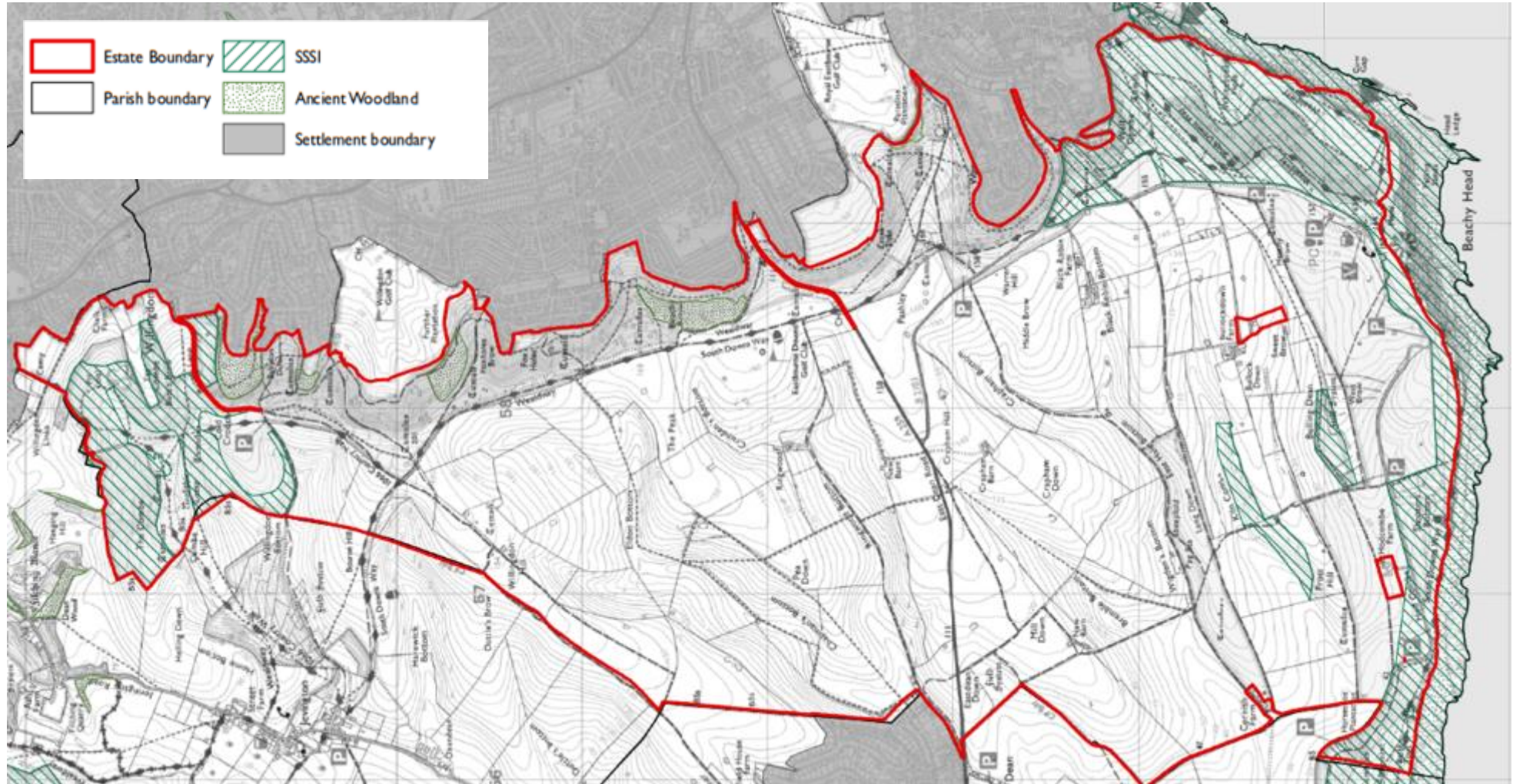
Calcareous Grassland. There are large areas of lowland calcareous grassland across the Estate. The total area is approximately 650 hectares (1,606.2 acres). This is the key feature of the Estate’s SSSI designation at Beachy Head and above Willingdon. The species rich calcareous grassland provides a diverse resource of herbaceous vegetation which supports a rich invertebrate assemblage.



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Burren, Natural England
Scale 1:25,000

- County boundary
- Parish boundary
- Priority Habitat Boundary
- Coastal and floodplain grass marsh
- Deciduous woodland
- Good quality semi-improved grassland
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland heathland
- Lowland meadow
- Pasture off and slope
- Traditional orchard
- Settlement boundary



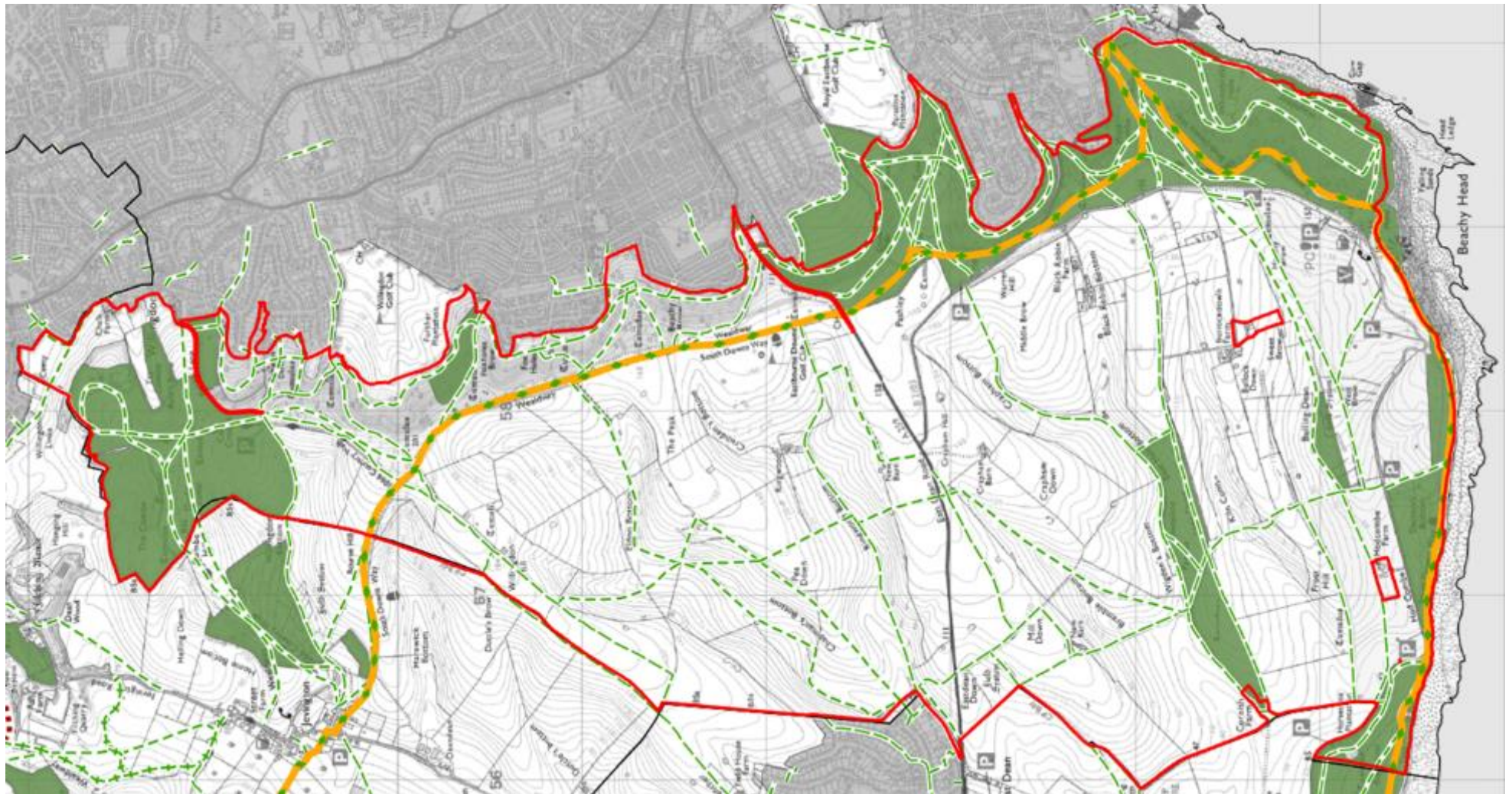


**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK**

Eastbourne Downland Biodiversity



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Source: Historic England



SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

Eastbourne Downland
Public Rights of Way and Open Access



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Source: East Sussex County Council

The calcareous sward can also be an important pollen and nectar resource and the bare ground present within the nutrient poor soils provides nesting habitat for ground nesting bees, wasps and ants.

The most species-rich calcareous grassland occurs as a narrow strip along the cliff edge, at Shooters Bottom, around the Belle Tout, Willingdon Down, Bulling Dean, and Long Down.

Neutral Grassland. The grasslands in this broad habitat have swards (areas of land covered in grass) consisting mainly of Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*. These swards vary in height according to grazing regime. Ungrazed or little-grazed swards are taller, and are most commonly species-poor. More grazed swards are shorter, with a more even mix of the grass species listed above, and commonly with an abundance of herbs. This grassland resource is not only important for vascular plants (those that conduct water and minerals throughout the plant) and invertebrates, but provides habitat for ground nesting breeding bird species such as skylark, and is an important resource for insectivorous migrant birds (those that feed on insects, worms and other invertebrates). The total area of neutral grassland on the Estate is approximately 313 hectares (773.1 acres).

Chalk Heath. There is a very small area (approximately 0.8 hectares) of chalk heath on the southwestern-most boundary of the Estate.

Scrub. There are pockets of scrub across the Estate. On the chalk, species rich chalk scrub occurs, and off the chalk a more species poor scrub is present. Gorse scrub is present on acidic soils particularly on some of the higher summits.

Enclosed Farmland. Farmland in arable cultivation or short rotational grazing extends to approximately 495 hectares (1,223.1 acres).

Amenity grassland. Includes the Downland Estate Golf Course and recreation ground.

Standing freshwater is represented by a series of dew ponds throughout the Estate, some of which have been restored and maintained, but the

total area of freshwater on the Estate is minimal. The permeable nature of the chalk prevents the development of surface streams, although low on the eastern scarp there is a spring line. The base of the sea cliffs often exhibits chalybeate (fresh or brackish water) springs in the section between Holywell and Falling Sands.

'Built Capital'

Residential and Agricultural Dwellings. There are a number of dwellings on the Estate, some of which fall within the agricultural tenancies, some of which are sub-let, and some of which are managed directly by the Council:

Dwelling	Occupation
Black Robin Farm House	With EBC, future holiday let possibility
1 Black Robin Farm Cottages	With EBC; future holiday let possibility
2 Black Robin Farm Cottages	With EBC; future holiday let possibility
3 Black Robin Farm Cottages	With EBC; future holiday let possibility
4 Black Robin Farm Cottages	Falls within Black Robin Farm Business Tenancy
Stables Flat	With EBC; future holiday let possibility
Ringwood Cottage	Falls within Black Robin Farm Business Tenancy
1 Bullock Down Cottages	Falls within Bullock Down Farm Business Tenancy
2 Bullock Down Cottages	Falls within Bullock Down Farm Business Tenancy
Bullock Down Cottage	Falls within Bullock Down Farm Business Tenancy
Bullock Down Farmhouse	Falls within Bullock Down Farm Business Tenancy
1 Chalk Farm Cottages	Falls within Chalk Farm Agricultural Holdings Act Tenancy
2 Chalk Farm Cottages	Falls within Chalk Farm Agricultural Holdings Act Tenancy
3 Chalk Farm Cottages	Falls within Chalk Farm Agricultural Holdings Act Tenancy
Chalk Farmhouse	Falls within Chalk Farm Agricultural Holdings Act Tenancy
3 Cornish Cottages	With EBC; future holiday let possibility
Beachy Head Bungalow	Falls within commercial lease of Beachy Head buildings

1 Halfway Cottages, East Dean	Sub-let
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Farm Buildings

Building	Description / Occupation
Black Robin Farm Buildings	Falls within Black Robin Farm Business Tenancy
Crapham Barn	Falls outside Black Robin Farm Business Tenancy
Ringwood New Barn	Falls outside Black Robin Farm Business Tenancy
Ringwood Farm Buildings	Includes a big steel frame building used for machinery, hay storage; dutch open barn at back used for livestock handling, sussex barn. Adjacent to the barn, as a lean to, is Ringwood farm pumping station. Up to 17 buildings in total.
Bullock Down Farm Buildings, including Sweetbrow fold	Bullock Down FBT. 14 main buildings in total within farm buildings. Sweetbrow fold is a flint shepherd hut used for lambing. One of the farm buildings is used half for EBC arboricultural operations.
Cornish New Barn complex	Bullock Down Farm Business Tenancy.
Summerdown Farm building	Former grain store
Chalk Farm Buildings	Within the Chalk Farm Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy
Old open sheepfold	Within the Chalk Farm Agricultural Holdings Act tenancy
Cornish Farm Buildings	Split into two parts separated by yard. One side EBC operational use – Specialist Advisor and team use for storage of vehicles and materials mainly, three storage areas used by Tourism.

Beachy Head Buildings. The building complex at Beachy Head replaces previous structures which had been gutted by fire. The buildings now comprise The Beachy Head Hotel, the Countryside Centre, and the Chaplain’s facilities.

Youth Hostel. Let to the Youth Hostel Association, operating as Youth Hostel Eastbourne.

Downs Golf Club House. Built in the early 1970s, this is the main club house for the Eastbourne Downs Golf Club. The Golf Club was founded at the beginning of the 20th century, at a time when golf was a very exclusive pursuit, for the ordinary working people of Eastbourne. It continues to provide a popular facility, promoting health and wellbeing for residents and affording a valuable service for the town.

Car parks. There are a total of 9 car parks serving Beachy Head and the Open Downland, and an additional car park at Butts Brow.

Reservoirs and Holding Tanks. These comprise:

- Reservoir at Beachy Head
- Ringwood Farm Holding Tank and pumping station
- Chalk Farm Reservoir and Holding Tank
- Downs Reservoir, above priory heights
- Paradise Woods Reservoir

Miscellaneous Assets. These include the Bird Ringers Hut, three boreholes, pumping stations, Emergency Repeater Station at Butts Brown, an abandoned ROTOR bunker at Beachy Head, the Lloyds Watch Tower, and Public Conveniences at Beachy Heat.

Public Rights of Way and Access

Public Rights of Way and Open Access land are shown at Plan 4. The Estate provides some of the most easily and widely accessible countryside in the South Downs. There are 24 miles of public footpath and 26 miles of public bridleway across the Estate.

Most of the coastal area within the SSSI is open access, whereas on the farmland, access is mainly confined to public footpaths and bridleways except where there are some smaller open access areas.

Open Access Land includes that considered open access by the Borough Council and that designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW). Most of the open access land is either coastal or follows the escarpment north from the coast to Willingdon. In the north, part of Chalk Farm is open access (CROW) as is a small area of woodland on the

margin of Willingdon Golf Course. Two more small areas occur just inland of the coast at Long Down and Bulling Dean. Both of these are designated under CROW and lie within tenanted farms.

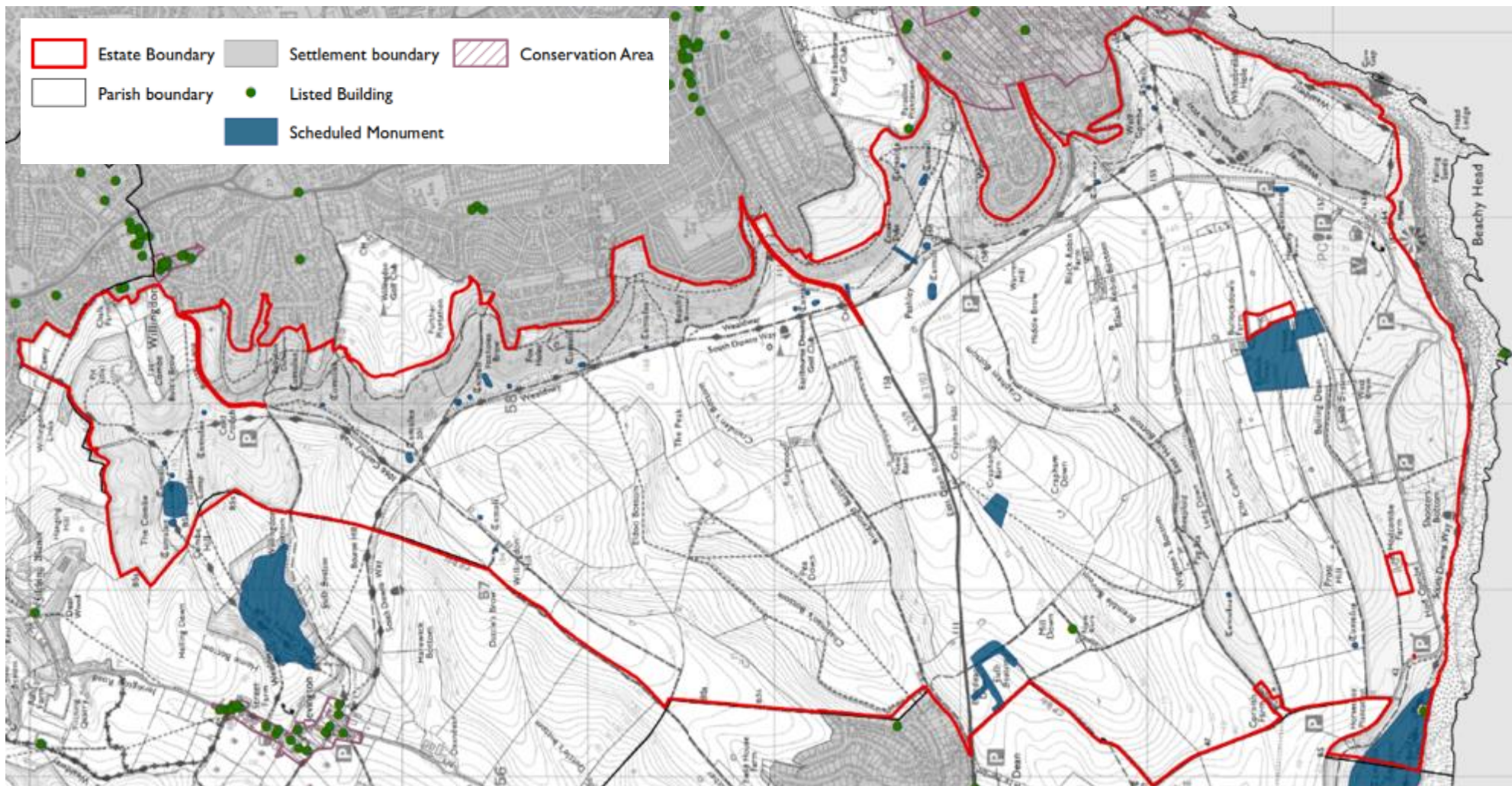
Near the summit of Beachy Head, opposite the main car park, is the Peace Path. This is an accessible surfaced path that takes a short circular route to a coastal viewpoint and Bomber Command Memorial.

The South Downs Way (SDW) crosses the Eastbourne Downland via two different routes. The SDW with a public footpath designation enters the Borough on the cliff tops just west of Belle Tout lighthouse and follows the coast to the start of Eastbourne's urban seafront at King Edward's Parade. A second route designated as public bridleway enters the Borough further north having come up a track from the village of Jevington and then follows the crest of the Downs southward to join the other route at the seafront.

The new national trail, the England Coast Path, should be open and being promoted by the end of 2020.

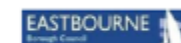
Research shows that access to green space is associated with better health outcomes and income-related inequality in health is less pronounced where people have access to green space. The public health benefits which flow from the open access and rights of way resource on the Estate are considered in more detail as part of the Ecosystem Service Analysis below.





**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK**

**Eastbourne Downland
Historic Environment**



0025879
Source: Historic England

Heritage Assets

There are a significant number of buildings of heritage interest on the Estate. They are mostly agricultural buildings, including farm houses, barns, cottages, field walls and stock yards. All are constructed of traditional materials: flint, brick and tile. They are of varying condition, ranging from well-maintained to ruins. All contribute positively to the landscape to some extent, and are valuable reminders of the farming history of the Downs. However, because they are mainly of nineteenth century date, with the exception of one small shepherd's cottage, none are listed.

A summary of the built heritage assets has been compiled by the Eastbourne Downland Group and is reproduced at Appendix 1.

There are also a number of dew ponds across the Estate. While the concrete linings are understood to date largely from the 1930s, they are all



on the site of traditional clay-lined dew ponds, which can be found on the detailed OS maps from the late 1860s/1870s (and a few on earlier tithe maps from the 1840s).

It is important to recognise that heritage assets comprise far more than standing buildings: the landscape itself is a heritage asset; the stories behind the landscape, the buildings and the farms are heritage assets; the folklore and culture of the downland are heritage assets. They are what makes the landscape 'special' and give the Estate its own unique sense of place. For the purposes of this Asset Audit, these more experiential assets are considered in more detail as 'Cultural Assets'.

Archaeological Features and Cultural Assets

The South Downs are extremely rich in archaeological features created during several millennia of human occupation, and the Eastbourne downland is no exception to this. Archaeological sites, buildings and historic landscape features such as fields and tracks endure from the past and with the geology and topography they give the Estate its own, unique evolved character; a distinctiveness that makes it possible to understand a 'sense of place'. The Estate encompasses a vast archaeological resource comprising both 'designated' and 'non - designated' heritage assets dating from the Palaeolithic period to the modern era. Indeed, many parts of the estate have been assigned as Archaeological Notification Areas, as they are of a known or potentially archaeologically sensitive nature. Crucially, a large proportion of these heritage assets are either archaeological find spots or monuments (the latter often being earthworks). EBC has a management agreement with Historic England that applies to 28 scheduled monuments. These range from relatively large expanses of ancient field systems to individual tumuli (burial mounds). Beyond this, the whole landscape has archaeological potential and could itself be viewed as a vast monument to the impact of nature and man on the Downland.

Human occupation probably extends back to not long after the end of the last ice age around 10,000 years BC. By around 4,000BC there is some evidence of limited cultivation and stock farming. Between about 2,500 and 600BC small ploughs appear to have been used in cultivation, and much of the open downland as we know it today is the product of Neolithic

and Bronze Age clearances. Large farms weren't established until after the end of this period. During the Roman period between about 40 and 400AD perhaps 80 percent of the downland was under arable use. In the period either side of the Norman invasion it appears that farming split about 50:50 into arable and stock-rearing. From around 1400 larger farms began to be formed and, as well as livestock, oats and wheat were cultivated. The Eastbourne Downs were split between a number of farms and owners with Shepherds often managing large flocks with sheep owned by numerous people. By the 19th Century around 40 percent of the downland was grazed by sheep. Oats and wheat were also still grown and several windmills, including ones formerly located on Willingdon Hill and at Pashley Down, were built to process these cereals.

While 28 monuments, mainly conspicuous features such as tumuli, are statutorily protected by scheduling, many remains are not so visually obvious, and there will be many important remains that are currently unknown, none of which are currently protected. The planning system includes requirements for archaeological assessments when development is proposed; these ensure that unscheduled remains are identified and, where necessary, excavated and preserved. However, agricultural activities are largely outside planning control and so archaeological remains could be vulnerable to farming activities, including ploughing, excavating post holes, drainage and pipe laying and construction of farm roads and buildings.

Appendix 2, which is reproduced by permission of the Eastbourne Downland Group, shows the contrast between the number of scheduled monuments and the many other known but unprotected remains included in Historic England's Historic Environment Record. The full Historic Environment Record is reproduced at Appendix 4. It comprises many archaeological finds from the Estate which are now housed in museums, ranging from flint tools to Roman pottery to Saxon brooches. These tell a story about the landscape stretching over millennia.

Economic Activity

Farms. There are four main agricultural holdings on the Estate: Black Robin Farm, Bullock Down Farm, Chalk Farm, and Cornish Farm. These

holdings are let by the Council to farm tenants. The tenants are responsible for the day-to-day management of the land within their tenancies and the conduct of their business, and they pay a rent to the Council. Agricultural landlord and tenant relations are governed by one of two statutory schemes of protection: Black Robin, Bullock Down and Cornish farms tenancies are all governed by the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995, and the Chalk Farm tenancy is governed by the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986. These Acts provide the framework for agreement between landlord and tenant, conferring protection to the tenants in respect of rent, security of tenure, repairing obligations, etc.

Commercial lettings. The Council let the Beachy Head buildings to Mitchells and Butlers plc, which runs The Beachy Head Hotel as a gastropub. The Countryside Centre falls within this lease, and is run by volunteers. The Beachy Head Youth Hostel is let to the Youth Hostel Association, which operates as YHA Eastbourne. About 21 acres of the Downland Estate is leased to the Royal Eastbourne Golf Club, and Whitbread Hollow is leased to St Bede's School as a playing field.

EBC directly managed property. The Eastbourne Downs Golf Course is an 18-hole golf course, managed by the Council. It is run as a members' club, but visitors are welcome and it offers men's, ladies', seniors' and juniors' competitions. The clubhouse was opened in 1974, and offers refreshments, catering and room hire, there is also a golf shop.



Ecosystem Service Analysis

What is an Ecosystem Service Analysis?

The Partnership Management Plan and Local Plan for the South Downs National Park is based on the concept of the SDNPA and landowners' combined stewardship, enabling the National Park to continue providing the many ecosystems services which provide us with 'life's essentials': clean air and water, food, fuel and raw material, climate regulation, flood management, pollution filters and opportunities for improved health and wellbeing.

The Ecosystem Services Analysis is essentially a tailored SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) Analysis, which is a simple but effective tool to understand current and future issues and opportunities. By prioritising what is identified, the greatest opportunities for positive impact can be identified.

Natural Capital Accounting

Natural capital accounting is the process of calculating the total stocks of natural resources, and flows of ecosystem services, in a given area. It is an approach that has been developed by Defra and the Natural Capital Committee to measure the changes in the stock of natural capital, and the ecosystem services it provides, in monetary terms and to integrate the value of ecosystem services into accounting and reporting systems. The development of natural capital accounts and accompanying assessment approaches have been flagged by the Natural Capital Committee and the UK National Ecosystem Assessment as a fundamental activity that is necessary if natural capital is to be mainstreamed in decision-making.

Natural capital assessments aid in the effective and sustainable management of natural capital by combining information on its extent, condition, and value in a structured and systematic way that can be used to identify actions that can achieve higher (long-term) benefits while minimising costs.

These assessments produce information on the presence and condition of natural capital assets, the flow (or annual quantity) of ecosystem services they provide and the value of those flows in monetary terms. This information can be used by the Council to monitor, measure, and communicate the value and health of the natural capital it owns and manages. It can also be used as an assessment tool, for example to quantify and monetise impacts to natural capital that might arise from developments or project and policy decisions, and the associated impacts to the value of services they provide.

Although a relatively new framework and approach, natural capital assessments have already been developed and used by public and private organisations as a tool to make strategic and business decisions about the future management and development of their natural capital.

Natural Capital Accounts provide a structured and transparent way of recording the extent and condition of habitats within the Downland Estate, the value of the ecosystem services that flow from these and the impact of the Estate's habitat management. Crucially, these accounts reflect both value to Eastbourne Borough Council (private value) and wider society (external value), providing a broader perspective than financial reporting.

Asset Register

This is an inventory of the extent, condition and location of natural capital assets. Changes in these metrics over time assist in understanding the capacity of the Downland Estate to produce benefits into the future. The asset register can be used as a tool in its own right to monitor trends in natural capital asset status.

Using an asset register to map habitat types to natural capital/ecosystem services can be an important step in engaging stakeholders with the natural capital concept.

The key objective of the asset account/register is to provide indicators of the extent and condition of ecosystem assets in order to allow monitoring of the capacity of these assets to provide ecosystem services over time. Defra and the Office for National Statistics have issued guidance on a number of indicators of ecosystem condition under five broad categories:

biomass/carbon; biodiversity; soil/water quality; accessibility; and conservation status.

The Asset Register shown below is the starting point for the Estate's Ecosystem Service Analysis. It captures the extent and the average condition of the main habitat categories on the Estate. Note that we have used JNCC Phase 1 habitat classifications; we show how these relate to UK NEA Ecosystems at Appendix 3.

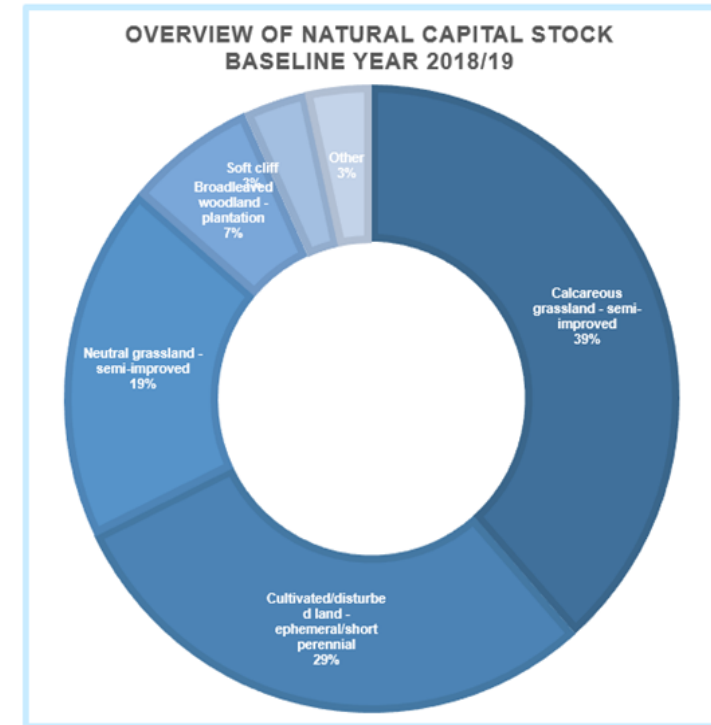
Most of the habitats are deemed to be in good or moderate condition, and management actions undertaken by the Council (for example, scrub clearing) are helping to maintain this. However, some of the woodland habitat is in poor and declining condition, with low species diversity and with the impact of Ash Dieback becoming very severe: a transition to a sycamore monoculture is likely without management intervention.

Name	Natural Capital Account - Eastbourne Downland Estate
Reporting year	2018/2019

Phase 1 Habitat Types	Baseline year (2018/2019)			
	Area (ha)	Condition	Trend	Designations
Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural	29.4	Moderate	Maintaining	
Broadleaved woodland - plantation	116.4	Poor	Declining	
Calcareous grassland - semi-improved	650.0	Good	Maintaining	
Coastal heathland	0.8	Good	Maintaining	
Neutral grassland - semi-improved	313.0	Good	Maintaining	
Soft cliff	56.5	Good	Maintaining	
Scrub	28.0	Moderate	Maintaining	
Cultivated/disturbed land - ephemeral/short perennial	495.0	Good	Maintaining	
Total	1689.0		-	

Asset register summary report outputs

Habitat type	Baseline year (2018)		
	Total extent (ha)	Average condition	Average trend
Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural	29.4	Moderate	→
Broadleaved woodland - plantation	116.4	Poor	↓
Calcareous grassland - semi-improved	650.0	Good	→
Coastal heathland	0.8	Good	→
Neutral grassland - semi-improved	313.0	Good	→
Soft cliff	56.5	Good	→
Scrub	28.0	Moderate	→
Cultivated/disturbed land - ephemeral/short perennial	495.0	Good	→
Total	1,689.0		



Physical Flow Account

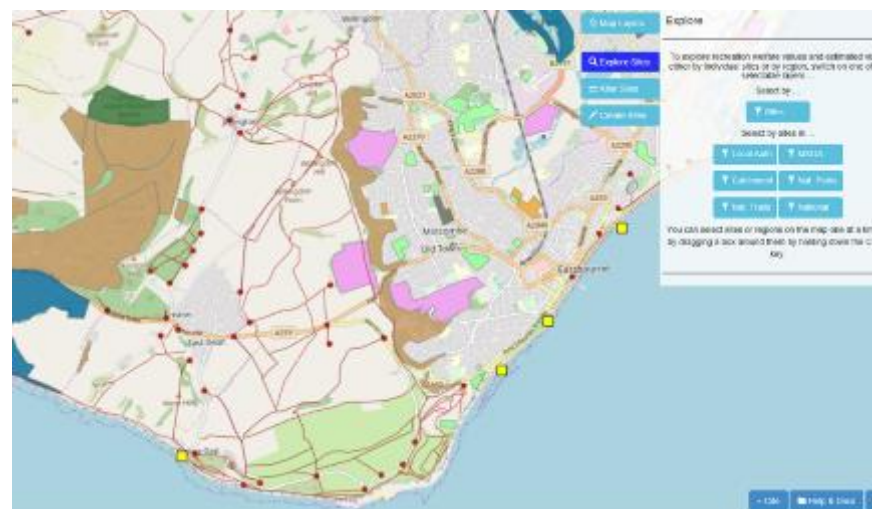
The Physical Flow Account records the volume of ecosystem service flows from the habitats on the Downland Estate. It can cover both market and non-market goods and services.

We have scoped out those ecosystem services that are unlikely to be significant and/or lack a robust method of quantification, and we have had particular regard to those ecosystem services that were prioritised by stakeholders and participants at the workshops: the provision of recreation and benefits to physical health; carbon sequestration; and air quality regulation.

Name	Natural Capital Account - Eastbourne Downland Estate
Year	2018/2019

Ecosystem service	Annual quantity	Units
Recreation	940,911	Visits per year
Physical health		
Active visitors	1,065	Active visits per year
QALYs gained	36	QALYs gained per year
Biodiversity		Biodiversity units
Carbon		
Carbon stock	97,305	t/CO2e
Carbon sequester	871	t/CO2e/yr
Food	495	Ha of arable land
Air quality		
SO2	1,587	kg per year
O3	16,385	kg per year
NO2	2,658	kg per year
NH3	813	kg per year
PM10	812	kg per year
PM25	474	kg per year

A desktop analysis of visitor numbers was undertaken using the Outdoor Recreation Valuation Tool (ORVal), which was developed by the University of Exeter for Defra. ORVal is an online tool that allows users to explore the recreational use and welfare value of accessible open spaces, trails, and beaches in England and Wales. It has recently been incorporated into the UK Treasury's Green Book – the government's guidance for project appraisal and evaluation (H.M. Treasury 2018). ORVal estimates that 940,911 visits are made to the Eastbourne Downland Estate each year.



We have used peer-reviewed studies⁷ to estimate the frequency and intensity of visits to nature involving physical activity. Assessment of the health implications of visits focused on those individuals who met recommended physical activity guidelines either fully, or partly, in natural environments.

Habitats sequester – or lock away – atmospheric carbon dioxide, holding it as soil organic matter or carbon in plant biomass. Different habitats

⁷ White, M.P.; Elliott, L.R.; Taylor, T.; Wheeler, B.W.; Spencer, A.; Bone, A.; Depledge, M.H.; Fleming, L.E. (2016). Recreational physical activity in natural environments and implications for health: a population based cross-sectional study in England. Preventive Medicine. Vol 91, pp. 383-388. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2016.08.023>

sequester carbon at different rates. We have referred to a number of academic papers which examine sequestration rates for those habitats on the Estate, and set these out at Appendix 3. The Flow Account shows that nearly 900 tonnes of atmospheric Carbon Dioxide equivalent is sequestered by habitats on the Estate every year, and this is something the Council is particularly mindful of given its commitments to make Eastbourne carbon neutral by 2030.

Vegetation also plays an important role in regulating air quality. Eastbourne is susceptible to poor air quality owing to its geography, with particulate air pollutants blowing in from both shipping traffic to the south and London to the north. The Physical Flow Account draws on data from the ONS⁸ to calculate the amount of different air pollutants removed by habitats on the Estate: SO₂ (Sulphur Dioxide) O₃ (ozone) NO₂ (Nitrogen Dioxide) NH₃ (Ammonia) PM₁₀ (coarse particulate matter) and PM 2.5 (fine particulate matter). This pollution removal obviously has significant value in avoided health damage costs.

Monetary Flow Account

This is where the annual value of the goods and services flowing from the natural capital on the Estate is reported. Although many ecosystem services are not traded in the market place and do not therefore have a price, they do still have significant *value*; the aim of natural capital accounts is to capture this value, providing a broader perspective than conventional financial reporting. The key points are as follows:

- The 940,000+ visits to the Estate each year are associated with recreational values of approximately £2.3M per annum;
- The direct and indirect costs of inactivity avoided because of this natural resource on Eastbourne's doorstep is nearly £500,000 per annum;
- Welfare gains (increased 'quality-adjusted life years', a generic measure of disease burden, including both the quality and the quantity

Name	Natural Capital Account - Eastbourne Downland Estate
Year	2018/2019

Benefit	Annual value	PV
Recreation	£2,293,446	£39,122,445
Physical health		
Avoided direct and indirect costs of inactivity	£473,353	£9,954,805
Welfare gains (increased QALYs)	£726,021	£15,268,519
Biodiversity*		
Carbon		
Carbon stock**	£6,430,478	-
Carbon sequestration	£57,566	£1,362,583
Food	£122,315	£2,086,486
Water quality		
Air quality	£11,676	£245,553
Total	£10,114,855	£68,040,391

*Monetary estimates for the changes in physical flow of biodiversity units can be incorporated as annual net changes are calculated in future.

**Carbon stock does not represent an annual flow.

Discount Rate (0 -30)	3.5%
Discount rate (31 - 75)	3.0%
Discount rate (76 - 100+)	2.5%
Time horizon (years)	25

Health Discount Rate (0 -30)	1.5%
Health Discount rate (31 - 75)	1.3%
Health Discount rate (76 - 100+)	1.1%

⁸ ONS (2018). UK air pollution removal by vegetation (geopackage).

of life lived and used in economic evaluation to assess the value of medical interventions) are valued at more than £700,000 per annum;

- The volume of carbon sequestered by habitats on the Estate is valued at more than £50,000 per annum;
- The value in avoided health damage costs as a result of air pollution removal by vegetation on the Estate equates to more than £10,000 per annum.



Strengths

Amenity, Tourism and Recreation Resource. Beachy Head and the chalk cliffs between Eastbourne and Seaford are a widely recognised and very important visitor attraction. The area is internationally famous and has appeared in numerous films and television programmes. The stunning natural beauty of this part of the Sussex coastline draws in hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and the Estate is one of the most popular countryside visitor attractions in East Sussex.

The Estate is also important for local amenity and education due to its urban fringe location. The Estate provides an important educational resource for local schools and universities in the south-east England area. The residents of Eastbourne and from other towns in the region such as Hastings, Bexhill and Seaford form a large proportion of the visitors. It is popular for dog walking, hiking, bird watching, photography and paragliding.

Most of the coastal area within the SSSI is open access, whereas on the farmland, access is mainly confined to public footpaths and bridleways except where there are some smaller open access areas. The South Downs Way (SDW) crosses the Eastbourne Downland via two different routes. The SDW with a public footpath designation enters the Borough on the cliff tops just west of Belle Tout lighthouse and follows the coast to the start of Eastbourne's urban seafront at King Edward's Parade. A second route designated as public bridleway enters the Estate further north having come up a track from the village of Jevington and then follows the crest of the Downs southward to join the other route at the seafront.

Cultural Heritage. The Estate benefits from many heritage assets and archaeological features, with a rich history that stretches over several millennia. The rich archaeology of all periods found across the estate has a huge potential to contribute significantly to visitor enjoyment and engagement, education initiatives and local business plans. The changing farming systems and social structures over this period are etched in the landscape. Many recent historical episodes have left their mark on the Estate: for example, the bunkers and radar stations from the Second World War and Cold War. The Estate itself, being born out of the

Eastbourne Corporation Act 1926, is a legacy of the back-to-the-land movement of the 1920s, and testament to enlightened action by a local authority. Its acquisition by the Eastbourne Corporation in 1929 heralded a new era in town planning and environmental protection.

Public Goodwill. There is enormous public interest in the management of the Estate, and a committed group of stakeholders who are motivated by a strong conservation and stewardship ethic and who hold a significant body of knowledge about its special qualities.

Grassland species diversity. These grasslands are located within the most heavily visited parts of the Estate and provide an important amenity and educational resource.

Tenant farmers. Much of the Estate is let, and the Council benefits from agricultural tenants who are conscious of their role as stewards of this iconic landscape and its special qualities.

Human Capital. The Council benefits from an in-house staff resource with an enormous body of knowledge about the Estate and specialist expertise – a resource which can be directed to achieving the actions set out in this WEP. The experiences and insights of Council staff and volunteers are critically important, not just at a practical or operational level but as a source of analysis and ideas about how the Estate should be managed for the public good over the long term.

Weaknesses

Woodland species diversity. Whilst some of the older plantations are highly diverse, the majority of the woodland resource is comprised of Ash and Sycamore. The result of this is being felt now, with the impact of Ash Dieback becoming very severe. A transition to a sycamore monoculture is likely without management intervention (selective felling and restocking with a view to increasing species diversity).

Dense continuous blocks of scrub. In parts of the Estate, dense, continuous blocks of scrub have become established. In these locations, scrub has succeeded valuable grassland habitats, and the build-up of

scrub litter will have enriched and changed the underlying soil, making it difficult to restore grassland here. Scrub encroachment also presents risks to archaeological features.

Transport links with Eastbourne. Public transport links with Eastbourne have been identified as a weakness by a number of stakeholders, making it the Estate particularly difficult to access for people without private vehicles, young people, disabled people, people who are lonely or isolated, and people with complex social needs which affect their wellbeing. Research by CPRE in 2019 showed that transport is one of the main barriers making it difficult for people to visit National Parks and AONBs, and 93% of visits to National Parks were made by car.



Visitor Profile. The visitor profile is a function of more than just transport links: there are other barriers to engaging new audiences, such as the provision of appropriate information, the facilities available and ensuring there is publicly available information about the Estate in the town.

Water supply infrastructure. There is a private water supply system on the Estate, owned by the Council. This system is very old and costly to maintain, and there is the risk of insufficiency due to leaks on the system,

Visitor offering at Beachy Head. There is currently no high-profile visitor centre or 'hub' to which visitors are drawn. Beachy Head is a major tourist attraction, bringing in hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Estate, but lacks a strong sense of arrival or a place to which visitors are drawn in order to understand the Estate and enhance their experience of it. The Countryside Centre performs a critical role disseminating visitor information at the point of need, but there is a need for more exhibition space, an educational and meetings venue, and a hub to co-ordinate and



provide direction to experiences and activities elsewhere on the Estate.

Public cliff safety for all visitors. Many visitors attending take risks on the eroding cliff edges, despite cliff safety warnings.

Opportunities

Change of use for redundant buildings. There are a number of building assets on the Estate that are surplus to the requirements of modern agriculture, but due to their architectural merit are worthy of retention and need a new economic viable use. Many of these buildings are structurally sound and capable of sensitive conversion, and could be re-purposed to alternative uses while retaining their character and heritage interest.

Post-Brexit Agri-Environment Schemes. Both the Council's tenant farmers, and the Council in its own right, are party to agri-environment schemes. These schemes provide funding for habitat management and particular farming practices under Pillar II of the Common Agricultural Policy. The Estate's tenant farmers can also access an area-based subsidy, funded under Pillar I of the Common Agricultural Policy, called the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS); the Council does not qualify to access this. Once the UK leaves the EU, existing agri-environment and subsidy schemes will be phased out, to be replaced with a new Environmental Land Management system (ELMs) based on the principle of 'public payments for public goods'. This presents a significant opportunity for the Council and its tenant farmers, given the value of public goods and ecosystem services delivered on the Estate. Under proposals outlined in the Agriculture Bill, it is envisaged that farmers and land managers will enter into contractual agreements with the government to undertake certain land management practices for the delivery of ecosystem services, and receive payment as a result. The idea is for these to be straightforward to understand; have a streamlined application process to lower the barriers many farmers faced to participation in past schemes; and minimise bureaucracy to encourage wide participation. Furthermore, it is proposed that ELMs schemes will be open to nearly all land managers who wish to enhance the natural environment, they therefore present an opportunity for additional funding on the land that is managed by the Council.

Payments for Ecosystem Services' Schemes. There are a number of emerging private 'Payments for Ecosystem Services' (PES) schemes where beneficiaries of certain ecosystem services contract with 'suppliers' of those services – i.e. farmers and landowners – to maintain or increase their provision. The water and sewerage sectors are considered thought-leaders in the field of PES and are acutely aware of their dependencies on ecosystem services. The utilities sectors increasingly wish to offset emissions, and to value and enhance their natural assets. Sustainable materials are being more often used in the construction sectors and there is some awareness that protecting ecosystem services can enable construction (e.g. nutrient offsetting in Poole Harbour). There is increasing awareness of the benefits of Biodiversity Net Gain, which is driving a demand for biodiversity offsets and habitat banking (discussed in more detail below). In the transport sectors some companies are electively using woodland carbon sequestration to reduce net carbon emissions, or providing options for their customers to do so on a voluntary basis, but there is little evidence of investment in ecosystem services to protect infrastructure or awareness of this potential. Businesses in the travel,



accommodation and sports and recreation sectors have been involved in Visitor Payback Schemes (VPS) and have invested in carbon sequestration, whilst PES has been used to improve recreational fishing (e.g. West Country Rivers Trust, 'Angling Passport'). The wholesale, retail, and food and beverage service sectors are concerned about carbon and water supply chain impacts, especially amongst those with obvious links to ecosystem services (e.g. wood products). Consumers are increasingly interested in the provenance of their food and its ecological footprint, and retailers are sensitive to this.

Overall, these trends present potentially significant opportunities for the Estate. Probably the opportunities most likely to emerge over the timeframe of this Plan include:

- Payments for carbon offsets verified under the Woodland Carbon Code. This is becoming increasingly important as the UK moves towards a 'Net Zero' target.
- Payments from water companies for land management that improves water quality. Under the current price review ('PR19' – the process through which Ofwat regulates to set the price, investment and service package for customers), Ofwat is proposing higher rewards for water companies that deliver innovative and stretching outcomes, including for environmental performance. Ofwat also expects water companies' business plans to embed natural capital approaches at catchment scales. These incentives could spur a shift towards significant innovation in delivering more environmental benefits, supported by private capital.
- Payments from developers who are looking to offset their impacts on biodiversity and the environment (see below);
- Visitor Payback Schemes.

Biodiversity and Environmental Net Gain. Recent updates to the National Planning Policy Framework make it incumbent upon local authorities and developers to deliver measurable gains for biodiversity and the environment, driving demand for biodiversity offsets and habitat banks. Proposals outlined in the Environment Bill to mandate net gain for most

development schemes are further bolstering this demand. There is an opportunity for landowners to offset the impacts of development elsewhere, channelling funds from developers into habitat restoration and creation.

Educational Resource. The Estate provides enormous scope for learning outside the classroom in the natural environment, which has been shown to deliver improvements for pupils in terms of health and wellbeing, behaviour, attainment, social skills, and connection to nature.

One of the limiting factors in the provision of learning outside the classroom is access to somewhere with toilet facilities, indoor/covered space for bags, lunches, and somewhere to retreat to in adverse weather. A potential solution could be found in working with the YHA. It is understood that two other local YHAs (YHA South Downs and Truleigh Hill) have developed interesting models where the YHA provides accommodation and a local education provider (So Sussex) provides the learning experiences for young people. Both are actively promoting the John Muir Award in their delivery. SDNPA has piloted the use of the John Muir Award as an intervention for pupils who are at risk of exclusion in Eastbourne Schools; the Downland resource could be promoted as a venue for this activity.

The rich cultural heritage also provides an important educational resource: heritage and cultural assets provide an opportunity to tell stories about the landscape, and there is the potential for partnership with recognised specialists and museums on the development of site-specific interpretation. Heritage Eastbourne currently has no permanent venue and therefore there may be opportunities to link this to plans for improving the visitor offering. This would support the Council's broader initiatives around education and public engagement.

Eastbourne as a Gateway to the South Downs. Beachy Head is an established visitor destination, and there is an opportunity to strengthen the Estate's place as a flagship gateway to the Heritage Coast and the South Downs National Park more widely.

'Mega-Trend': Environment and sustainable living. In recent years, the level of interest in sustainable living has rocketed and this is seen as a

growth area, with many farm businesses already setting up sustainable diversification projects. Surveys by Booking.com show that 86 per cent of respondents would be willing to spend time doing activities that counterbalance the environmental impact of their stay. Equally, increased public awareness of the problems associated with food waste, climate change and the need to reduce carbon footprints presents an opportunity for farm businesses to create environmentally friendly diversification projects. Farms are increasingly having to think about the link between the farm's natural environment – landscape, biodiversity, soils, water and trees (natural capital assets) – and potential projects.

'Mega-Trend': Experience over possessions. Increasingly, consumers are drawn to experiences rather than material goods. According to Mintel research, 65 per cent of adults say they would rather spend money on experiences than on possessions and this increases to 72 per cent with millennials (those born between 1977 and 1994).

In the tourism sector visitors are demanding authentic experiences in a stunning setting or embedded within a community or place. These can include butchery workshops, guided nature walks, cheese-making or foraging. The Estate is well placed to take advantage of these growing trends.

Linked to this is an emerging 'micro-volunteering' trend, with growing opportunities for people to give small amounts of time to a common cause. Many of the 170 organisations in the SDNP Volunteer Network are also developing new opportunities for younger people to volunteer. With the establishment of South Downs Youth Action, there are opportunities for volunteer activities that would contribute to habitat and heritage management and provide young people with valuable experiences.

'Mega-Trend': Wellness and Healthy Living. There is a growing global interest in wellness and healthy living, and the Estate is well placed to provide a range of activities that promote wellness.

The Global Wellness Institute estimates that wellness tourism is a £500 billion global market and is growing twice as fast as other types of tourism. The forecast is for continued growth in this area and, importantly, these tourists are typically high-spending, high-yield individuals.

In addition to wellness tourism, the idea of social prescribing is gaining the attention of the medical profession with doctors prescribing time getting back to nature in the countryside to their patients.

Social Prescribing. The NHS Long Term Plan states that personalised care will become ‘business as usual’ across the health and care system. ‘Social prescribing and community-based support’ is one of the key components of the NHS Comprehensive Model of Personalised Care, and it is based on emerging evidence that this sort of intervention leads to a range of positive health and wellbeing outcomes for people – such as improved quality of life and emotional wellbeing – and reduces pressure on NHS services and GP attendances.

Social prescribing enables all local agencies to refer people to a link worker. Link workers give people time and focus on what matters to the person as identified through shared decision making or personalised care and support planning. They connect people to community groups and agencies for practical and emotional support; they collaborate with local partners to support community groups to be accessible and sustainable; and they help people to start new groups. There are many projects elsewhere that attract funding for social prescription, and which highlight the scale of the opportunity for Eastbourne. For example, ‘Community Navigation’, Brighton’s primary care social prescribing service, recently secured three-year grant funding from the Department of Health and Social Care to provide more support to patients experiencing health inequalities, and to connect people experiencing isolation. ‘Mental Health Concern’ is a social prescribing scheme covering Newcastle and East Gateshead, and provides funding for physical activity, access to green space, social inclusion, access and transport, and events publicity, with the main focus on tackling low mood and depression.

NHS England recognises that social prescribing works best ‘when local partners work together to build on existing community assets and services’; the Estate is just such a community asset for Eastbourne. As demonstrated in the Ecosystem Service Analysis, it provides massive public benefits in terms of recreation and physical health. There is an opportunity to improve this further, particularly for those people who need support with their mental health, who are lonely or isolated, or who have complex social needs which affect their wellbeing.

There are different ways that local commissioners can provide funding to properly embed social prescription:

- develop a ‘shared investment fund’, bringing together all local partners who can provide funding to charities and community groups, including the private sector;
- commission existing, staffed voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, which provide services such as welfare benefits advice and befriending, to deliver social prescribing;
- provide small grants for volunteer-led community groups providing peer support and activities, such as walking groups, conservation groups and art classes;
- micro-commission new groups where there are gaps in community provision - which may be in the form of a start-up grant and development support;



- enable people to use their Personal Health Budget (PHB) to pay for support in the VCSE sector.

Threats

Pests and disease. Current threats from pests and disease include:

- Ash Dieback currently presents a severe safety risk within the woodlands, which are all publicly accessible (with Ash being the principle species in the majority of compartments). Felling operations will be needed to mitigate the risk to public health and safety.
- Dutch Elm Disease. Elm is present within a number of the woodland compartments, particularly at the foot of the scarps. Generally these are immature, although some mature specimens are present in older plantations.
- Deer are currently not regularly present in the woodlands, although there are populations nearby. The exceptionally high level of public access makes most of the Estate woodland poor habitat for any large number of deer.
- Grey squirrels. Squirrels can cause serious damage to trees and may be a threat to the successful establishment of native trees on the Estate, but they are currently causing little visible damage in the woodland.
- Invasive species. Invasive cotoneaster is present on some woodland edges and areas of chalk grassland adjacent to woodlands. This is controlled and removed through on-going management under a HLS scheme.

Visitor pressure. The sheer number of visitors to the Estate presents a threat to natural capital and heritage assets, through erosion, nitrogen and phosphorus deposition from dog faeces, littering, and physical damage.

Coastal erosion. This has led to the cliff edge being very near to the road at Hod Combe, and a cliff fall here could result in its closure at any time. This poses many public safety risks, restricting safe walking space for

visitors and also providing very quick access to cliff edge. Visitor fatalities have occurred as result of these risks. Future erosion will increase these safety risks.



Scrub Encroachment. Scrub poses a significant threat to the grassland communities. If left without management the majority of the grassland within the site will by natural succession become dominated by scrub and eventually woodland. The ecological value of the nationally scarce chalk grassland and chalk heath communities will be lost if this is allowed to happen, so scrub control is one of the key priorities for the management of the Downs.

A number of areas of grassland within the Estate have been under-grazed or undergone a period of minimal management. These areas are threatened by serious scrub invasion, especially bramble, and are within an early successional development to scrub. In terms of scrub control these are the highest priority areas as the greatest gain for grassland restoration can be made within these areas by appropriate management to

eradicate bramble and scattered scrub from the sward via grazing/cutting/weed wiping with herbicide.

Soil erosion. Soil erosion is likely on the scarp slopes following felling operations. There is also a risk of soil degradation as a result of some agricultural operations, as a result of extreme precipitation events, and as a result of heavy footfall in 'honeypot' locations on the Estate.

Pollution. There is the threat of specific pollution incidents – such as spillage of agricultural fertilisers or chemicals – as well as the effects of diffuse pollution from agricultural operations on the Estate, the poor storage of manure and slurry, or the spreading of manures, slurries and mineral fertilisers. There is also the threat of dry deposition of nitrogen oxides from air pollution, which has the potential to eutrophy and acidify low-input calcareous grasslands. The effect is to favour productive grasses at the expense of fine-leaved grasses and wildflowers, reducing species diversity.

Transitioning away from the current agricultural subsidy and trading regime. The Council's agricultural tenants currently receive an area-based subsidy under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) of the Common Agricultural Policy. BPS payments underpin the profitability of many farm businesses.

Once the UK leaves the EU, the Estate's tenant farmers will see BPS funding phased out and new agri-environment funding rolled in over a seven-year transition period under proposals outlined in the Agriculture



Bill. BPS money will be reduced in stages from 2021-2027, with none available in 2028.

It is likely that the overall funding available during the transition and beyond will be reduced from the current BPS rates, which could lead to lower subsidy receipts for the Estate's tenant farmers. The loss of subsidy income is a significant risk. It is also currently unclear what trading relationship the UK will have with the EU post-Brexit, and tariffs on agricultural commodities could apply. This could reduce the competitiveness of UK agricultural exports, posing a risk to farm businesses. Any negative impacts on the profitability of the Estate's farm businesses will impact on the Council's rental income.



Action Plan

What is the Action Plan?

The Action Plan takes the opportunities and threats set out in the Ecosystem Services Analysis and identifies the actions required and the possible specific projects attached to achieving those actions. It is an opportunity to clearly articulate the activities which will take the Estate forward in its role as a steward within the National Park and as an individual organisation. It allows the National Park Authority to see individual projects within the context of a wider set of actions. This is particularly important for development management activities where individual requests for planning consent may need to be understood within the context of the collective stewardship of the National Park.

Actions are split between short term and those that could be achieved over a longer timeframe, with specific projects and further actions developing over the lifespan of the WEP. The Council will, working with stakeholders and other partners where appropriate, help support delivery of the actions below.

It is important to note that this Action Plan does not by-pass the normal decision-making process of the Council, and each of the actions would need to stand up to detailed scrutiny, costing, monitoring and review. The WEP is not intended to be a detailed management plan, and does not supersede the Eastbourne Downland Management Plan 2015-2022; instead, it is envisaged as a 'live' document that will help provide a long-term strategy within an informed context.

Actions in the short term

Opportunities for public recreation, education and improved well-being through access to **safe and sustainably managed woodland**. As has been identified in the Ecosystem Service Analysis, Ash Dieback is a serious threat to the Estate woodlands. Ash is the most common species in the woodlands, and Ash Dieback is beginning to have a severe impact,

already resulting in mortality in young and semi-mature Ash. Progressive dieback in the crowns is resulting in large volumes of aerial deadwood, and more vulnerable trees are also beginning to suffer failure due to decay in the root collar in combination with severe dieback.

All of the woodlands are accessible to the public, being either designated as access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 or having numerous rights of way and / or permissive access. The combination of factors listed above means that the likelihood and magnitude of the safety risk posed by Ash Dieback is high.

To mitigate this, a series of felling interventions will be necessary, some of which has already commenced. Felling of all Ash (other than healthy specimens without significant loss of crown or presence of basal lesions) within falling distance of key access routes, public rights of way and woodland rides will be necessary over the short – medium term. Elsewhere, a 'minimum intervention' approach will leave the majority of Ash, but with appropriate signage to ensure public awareness of the risks posed by tree failure.



Continue with a programme of **scrub control**. The Council's objectives for scrub management on the Estate are as follows:

- Restore grassland under threat of scrub invasion via grazing/mechanical control/herbicide treatment.
- Ensure blocks of continuous scrub do not expand into areas of species-rich grassland.
- Within a grassland/scrub mosaic ensure small scale removal around grassland patches so scrub does not coalesce into continuous blocks thus decreasing the amount of species-rich grassland.
- Improve grassland/scrub ecotone by creating scallops into scrub edging paths and by coppicing the edge of woodland.
- Ensure species rich grassland and features of archaeological interest are not damaged by scrub management.
- Ensure that there is a programme of rotational coppicing.



Work with East Sussex County Council, neighbouring Local Authorities, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust and VCSE partners to **explore opportunities for social prescribing schemes on the Estate**. Social prescribing is a means of enabling health and care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services to address people's needs in a holistic way. It also aims to support individuals to take greater control of their own health.

Under the NHS's Comprehensive Model for Personalised Care, over 1,000 trained social prescribing link workers will be in place by 2020/21, rising further by 2023/24, with the aim that over 900,000 people will be able to be referred to social prescribing schemes by then. The Department of Health and Social Care provides grant funding for social prescribing schemes and community-based services that include, for example, improving access to green space, the natural environment, physical activity, and social inclusion.

A lot of the day-to-day management activities on the Estate – whether that is scrub control, coppicing, maintaining footpaths and stiles, or maintaining and restoring dew ponds – provide opportunities for greater community involvement. It is easy to envisage social-prescription-link-workers recommending and introducing people to a range of participatory and volunteering activities and opportunities to support conservation on the Estate, encouraging people, their families and carers to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence, and fostering that sense of public stewardship envisaged in the Vision Statement. There is clear potential for diversifying the visitor profile, and the Council will actively promote a welcoming Downland environment for everyone – in line with the Glover aspirations of 'National Parks for everyone'. The Council will also look to work more closely with South Downs Youth Action, and to promote opportunities for volunteering more generally.

Work with local stakeholders, including East Sussex Public Health and the existing East Sussex Coastal Suicide Prevention partnership, on a communication strategy that ensures all public communications present the Downland Estate as a positive and safe place. The aim is to focus on the Estate as a place for recreation, wellbeing and community use. The Council envisages this as part of a wider wellbeing campaign, promoting

positive activities that can improve wellbeing on the downlands, as well as offering safety advice and signposting support.



Work with the Estate's tenant farmers to **prepare for the transition away from the current subsidy regime**. The UK's exit from the EU presents both risks and opportunities for the Estate. The Estate's tenant farmers will see Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) funding phased out and new agri-environment funding rolled in over a seven-year transition period under proposals outlined in the Agriculture Bill.

BPS money will be reduced in stages from 2021-2027, with none available in 2028. The cuts have been announced for 2021 but no figures are available beyond that. Businesses receiving up to £30,000 in BPS will face a reduction of up to 5%, with those receiving £150,000 or more seeing a reduction of 25% in 2021. The new Environmental Land Management system (ELMs), also referred to as Environmental Land Management

scheme, began its test and trial period in 2019, with pilots planned to run from 2021.

Defra's ambition is for 1,250 businesses to enter the ELMs pilot scheme in 2021, building to 15,000 by the end of the pilots in 2024. The Council will liaise with its tenant farmers with a view to taking part in these pilot schemes, where appropriate. The Council will also explore how its tenant farmers can make the most of the opportunities these pilots present, and see what support it can give.

Work with the SDNPA and Catchment Partnerships to **promote best practice in sustainable land management to protect the aquifer**, and promote the Estate as a priority for investment in catchment sensitive farming (CSF). CSF is a partnership between Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England working with farmers and a range of other partners to improve water and air quality in high priority areas offering free training, advice and support for grant applications.

Increase opportunities for holiday lettings. Agriculture accommodation property will be brought back into use where possible in order to support increasing tourism vacations in the heart of the Estate through high quality holiday lets.

Actions in the medium and longer term

Creation by the Council of a group or body to help fundraise and take projects forward Recognising the Council's limited finances and capacity to take on additional pressures, the group/body would act as the main fundraiser and partnership link for the Estate to deliver the majority of the Action Plan priorities. This could over time be developed into a separate legal entity with charitable purposes (e.g. a charitable trust or a charitable company). A separate charitable entity could help attract external funding not open to local authorities and also benefit from the fiscal advantages available to charities (tax reliefs).

Prepare for the rollout of the new Environmental Land Management system. Once the pilot phase of ELMs comes to an end in 2024, the new subsidy regime will be rolled out and replace BPS and Countryside

Stewardship from 2025 – 2027. It will pay farmers for environmental services and benefits, with pricing based on a natural capital valuation approach. The underlying principle is ‘public payments for public goods’. These public goods include: improved air, water and soil quality, increased biodiversity, climate change mitigation, cultural benefits and better protection of historic environments – all of the things that the Estate is already doing, and all of the things that have been considered as part of the Ecosystem Service Analysis within this document. The Council and its



tenants are therefore already well placed to capitalise on this, having identified those opportunities on the Estate to increase the provision of public goods.

Maximise the biodiversity and amenity value of the Estate woodlands. Due to Ash Dieback, there is a risk that sycamore will come to dominate a substantial component of the woodland, reducing light penetration of the forest canopy over the next few decades. Accessing the

steep escarpment makes felling interventions very difficult, so – to ensure that ground flora is not crowded out – a series of wide access ways could be established along the main footpaths, linking up open areas. As the Jubilee Way demonstrates, there is the potential to upgrade some of these footpaths along the escarpment to tracks that are more suitable for disabled access.

Such tracks and rides could offer the walker a series of places and experiences. ‘Box junctions’ could be created where these rides cross, and it could be explored whether these could offer walkers particular experiences – such as viewing points, picnic areas, or venues for foraging and folklore courses. For example, viewing points from the escarpment over Pevensey Bay, with story boards telling of the Norman invasion, or the skyscape where the Battle of Britain unfolded. Landscape art could be incorporated. Or perhaps individual veteran trees could become focal points; these trees could be tagged and an inventory kept of such trees, as well as ‘future’ veterans, with regular surveys to ensure this valuable and rare resource is protected.

Upgrading these public access routes through the woodland and along the escarpment from Butts Brow to Beachy Head would be an additional reason to include Eastbourne in a cultural tour of East Sussex, as well as something for local residents to enjoy and connect them more closely to the downs. They would help to draw people along certain routes, and could help direct them away from other parts of the woodland – which may be important for European Protected Species, or include features such as badger setts, or retained standing deadwood, or deadwood habitat piles. Thinning will need to be undertaken within the older plantations, where the slope permits access. This will allow a more varied ground flora and shrub layer to develop. Thinning will be undertaken selectively with a view to retaining the best stems, as well as trees of high biodiversity value (such as those with a potential for bat roosting).

Planting interventions to improve diversity and resilience to pests, disease and climate change also provide an opportunity for members of the public to ‘adopt’ or sponsor a tree or group of trees. This would help to build a connection between people and particular locations, instilling a sense of public stewardship as expressed in the Vision Statement, and encouraging people to actively care for the Estate and invest in it. Technological

developments make this even easier, with the emergence of mobile apps such as 'GPS OS Grid Reference' that allow people to position themselves accurately at their 'own spot' on the landscape.

The programme to remove the diseased ash gives an unprecedented opportunity to restore ancient habitat or create a more vibrant mixed wood pasture mosaic habitat. In older plantations it may be possible to avoid re-planting, as natural regeneration may work in combination with free-ranging grazing animals: for example, cattle are particularly important vectors of seeds, with studies showing that they can transport up to 230 species of plants around a landscape through their guts, hooves and fur. This approach could result in a mosaic of open areas and scrubby regrowth which is far more beneficial for wildlife than a closed canopy woodland.

It may also be possible to get highly valuable chalk grassland returning to areas of secondary woodland that has been cleared, particularly in locations adjoining open downland. The existing open downland in many areas has been simply mown for a number of years, resulting in a low diversity of species: conservation grazing could improve the diversity, and



it would help to re-connect the public with the animals that played such an important role in shaping the landscape in the first place – although the problems of managing grazing livestock on these sites to avoid conflict are noted.

Contribute to a Nature Recovery Network. Helping to identify opportunities for habitat restoration and creation on the Estate that will contribute to the government's vision of a national Nature Recovery Network. The idea is to more effectively link existing protected sites and landscapes, as well as urban green and blue infrastructure. Such a network will deliver on the recommendations from Professor Sir John Lawton: recovering wildlife will require more habitat, in better condition, in bigger patches, that are more closely connected.

Maps could be developed showing where actions to improve and restore habitat on the Estate would be most effective in the context of this Nature Recovery Network, engagement undertaken with neighbouring landowners, with findings drawing on the lessons of initiatives such as Nature Improvement Areas or the farmer clusters which have been co-ordinated by Natural England and the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust.

Explore opportunities on the Estate to deliver **Biodiversity Net Gain for Eastbourne**. The Government has committed to embedding 'Biodiversity Net Gain' in the planning system, and in 2019 proposed making this a mandatory planning requirement for most development schemes. Provisions in the Environment Bill mean that developers will need to leave wildlife habitats in a measurably better condition than they were before development started. The key elements of the requirement are as follows:

- Impacts on wildlife habitat have to be measured, using a metric developed by Natural England. This metric takes account of the distinctiveness of the habitat (i.e. how rare or how common it is), the area of habitat affected, and the condition of that habitat. Assessing habitat using this metric gives a score, in 'biodiversity units'; developers must aim for an overall increase in this score once the development scheme is built out. They need to understand the biodiversity unit score before development commences, and use their design plans to calculate the biodiversity unit value of the habitats to be retained after works finish, together with the value of any enhanced or newly created

habitats. The change in biodiversity is calculated by subtracting the total number of projected post-intervention units for the site. The figure arrived at should show a net gain of at least 10 per cent to be maintained for at least 30 years.

- If the development scores less than 10 per cent, then a revised design may be needed. There may be circumstances where it is simply not possible to achieve this 10 per cent gain within the red line of the development boundary; in these circumstances, the developer may be able to bring in 'off-site' compensation to the calculations. According to the Natural England rules, losses of habitat must be compensated on a 'like for like' or 'like for better' basis.
- Third-party landowners may offer to deliver this habitat compensation on their own land, in return for a payment from the developer. So there may be a loss of biodiversity at the development site, but a much larger increase in biodiversity at the compensation site, resulting in an overall net gain in biodiversity.
- Developers who are unable to mitigate biodiversity net loss or purchase biodiversity units locally, will be required to pay a cash tariff on their shortfall against net gain obligations. The tariff system will strongly incentivise protecting existing habitats and creating local habitat creation by imposing a fixed charge of between £9,000 and £15,000 per biodiversity unit (subject to review), which will be used to fund compensatory habitats.

Biodiversity Net Gain requirements will come into effect during a two-year transition period which begins when the Environment Bill receives Royal Assent. Before then, there is much detail to be settled, and the Council will need to prepare for its implementation across the Borough. The following steps could be considered:

- (1) Working with Natural England and the SDNPA to improve environmental mapping across the Borough, and develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The LNRS will include a statement of biodiversity priorities for the Borough, as well as a local habitat map. This will reflect the priorities identified in the Nature Recovery

Network, and will inform planning decisions and underpin local action to protect or enhance biodiversity.

- (2) Looking into whether Supplementary Planning Guidance on biodiversity net gain is required to give further clarity for developers in the Borough.
- (3) Looking into the feasibility of setting up a habitat 'bank' on the Estate. The areas that are earmarked for habitat restoration and creation under a Nature Recovery Network could provide off-site compensation for developers elsewhere in the Borough who are unable to meet their net gain obligations within the red-line of their developments. Overall gains for biodiversity could be achieved either by increasing the extent of this important habitat on the Estate, or by improving its condition. This would be a means of channelling developer contributions towards habitat restoration and creation on the Estate, generating a new revenue stream for re-investment. It would also give developers across the Borough access to a more streamlined, cost-effective compensation solution than relying on them to negotiate their own biodiversity offsets.
- (4) Investigating the most appropriate planning mechanism to pool developer contributions to such a habitat bank. Most local authorities do this by way of either a planning condition on development or through s.106 Agreements. Community Infrastructure Levy is not generally deemed an appropriate mechanism for delivering biodiversity net gain. Off-site habitat compensation falls outside the definition of 'infrastructure', and by definition they are designed to deal with the impact of development, rather than supporting the final development. Furthermore, biodiversity offsetting specifically aimed at Biodiversity Net Gain will not generally meet the definition of 'open spaces' – unlike Suitable Alternative Greenspace (SANGs) which have a specific purpose for human recreation. However, because CIL regulations do not apply, habitat banking can circumvent regulation 123 – which would ordinarily restrict the number of s.106 obligations that can be pooled to fund any one project. This means that developer contributions from across the Borough could be pooled to fund habitat restoration or creation on the Estate.

The Council would work closely with the SDNPA in this: Eastbourne Borough Council is not actually the planning authority for the Estate, SDNPA is. However, there is a duty to co-operate in planning matters, and the delivery of biodiversity net gain on the Estate would be deemed sufficiently local to development within Eastbourne.

The Council is mindful of concerns that this approach to delivering biodiversity net gain could become a 'licence to trash'; in order to allay those concerns, the Council, as planning authority, would ensure strict adherence to the mitigation hierarchy, so that developers are obliged to first of all avoid impacts where possible, then reduce them, then mitigate them, and only as a last resort compensate for them. Irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland, or ancient and veteran trees, remain out of scope of the biodiversity net gain approach, and will continue to be protected by requirements of existing law and policy.

It is important that any compensatory habitat created and/or restored on the Estate will be maintained in the condition necessary to deliver net gains for biodiversity. The government has committed to bringing forward new legislation that would give effect to 'Conservation Covenants' – legally binding obligations that run with the land and commit the landowner to 'positive', proactive management, instead of the purely restrictive or 'negative' covenants that exist in English law today. As we have seen in the Asset Audit above, the Estate is currently subject to restrictive covenants; positive Conservation Covenants could be a powerful 'double lock' to guarantee a net gain legacy over the lifetime of this Plan and beyond.

Whether it is through ELMs, woodland management plans, nature recovery plans or biodiversity net gain strategies, **calcareous grassland should be a focus of restoration efforts**. The extent of calcareous grassland restoration and creation will be informed by emerging habitat network mapping across the Estate, and the priorities identified through the *Changing Chalk* project. The Council appreciates just how valuable this habitat is, being home to an incredibly rich and diverse range of plant and insect life.

In order for chalk grassland to reach a target condition of 'good', Defra guidance on delivering Biodiversity Net Gain suggests 25 years is a

realistic timeframe. The Council is committed to seeing its existing chalk grassland resource reach 'good' condition status over the lifetime of the WEP, and will work with its tenant farmers to target restoration and creation efforts across the let land.



Improving the Visitor Centre offering at Beachy Head. Beachy Head is a major tourist attraction, bringing in hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Estate every year. The Council believes there is a strong argument for a higher profile visitor centre here, fulfilling the following roles:

- Providing visitor information at the point of need
- Inspiring and make people want to visit and stay for longer on the Estate
- Promoting opportunities for understanding

- Generating funds to support operating costs
- Educational and meetings venue
- Exhibition space
- Hub from which to run guided visitor experiences of the Estate

A visitor centre could serve as a 'gateway' to the Estate and part of a better integrated network of visitor centres across the South Downs National Park. It should function as a place to which visitors (and local people) are drawn in order to understand the Estate and enhance their experience of it. There is potential to deliver a sufficiently high quality of experience to generate visits in its own right, and to be talked about and positively recommended. It presents an opportunity to engage more closely with the public, by connecting visitors with compelling stories of the Estate's history (economic, social and cultural), the built heritage, natural environment, environmental management and future challenges. To achieve this, the centre would need:

- A strong sense of arrival and good first impressions;
- Distinct qualities, including uniqueness, sense of place, location, reputation;
- A focus on delivering a high-quality customer experience, which is supported by appropriate catering and potentially retail offers;
- High standards of service by customer-focused, on-site staff;
- Regular reinvestment to refresh the visitor experience;
- Emphasis on entertaining the guest through activities, events and animation. As the experience develops there could also be focus on income generation in addition to 'free' experiences – for example, cycle hire.

The Council envisages this centre as a 'hub' to co-ordinate and provide direction to experiences, activities, and specific offers elsewhere on the Estate. In bringing forward this project, the Council would be able to draw on the expertise of its own officers, and relevant experts within the County Council, who have delivered exhibitions and public programming based on material culture collections.

The Council also recognises that it would make a significant positive difference if appropriate disabled access toilet facilities, such as Changing

Places provision, are included in any development of visitor infrastructure over the medium term.



Improving the educational offering. The visitor centre could provide an education space for school groups, and the educational offer on the wider estate could also be improved. Days out and trips to the Estate could form a key part of the curriculum for Eastbourne schools in particular, as well as schools from further afield with the feasibility of paid-for school visits and ranger led activities being explored. The Estate provides multiple opportunities for learning outside the classroom in the natural environment, which has been shown to deliver improvements for pupils in terms of health and wellbeing, behaviour, attainment, social skills, and connection to nature⁹. More educational packages and courses in the natural environment, including practical environmental conservation work, and ecological, geographical and environmental fieldwork could be

⁹ Natural England Commissioned Report NECR215: Natural Connections Demonstration Project, 2012-2016: Final Report

developed. Outdoor learning sessions could help to develop self-confidence, self-esteem, communication and team building skills. Courses could be linked to curriculum delivery in a wide variety of subjects, with knowledge and skills gained practically applied in fieldwork, conservation and construction projects. Learning experiences might range from short, in-school sessions, to structured programmes which could last for a school term. Over the Easter school holidays, May half-term and the summer holidays, a programme of daily ranger activities could be introduced to create an additional reason to visit. These could run for 2 to 4 hours each day, and might include, for example, pond-dipping, bushcrafts and wildlife walks.

Diversification and re-purposing of redundant farm buildings.

Opportunities to re-purpose some of the Estate's built assets could be explored as part of efforts to improve the overall offering to visitors and locals. It is possible to envisage the visitor centre serving as a focal point or hub for an integrated, dispersed visitor experience that includes Black Robin Farm, Crapham Barn and New Barn.

The buildings at Black Robin Farm include Victorian barns, milking parlours and stables that are no longer suitable for modern farming systems and which could potentially be used (subject to planning) to host local artisans, craftspeople, and business start-ups. The Council could work with these third-parties to develop and operate specific elements of the visitor experience - for example, the catering and retail offer. The business case for a farm shop could be explored, which could showcase artisan producers from the local area, and which could be a retail outlet for lamb and beef produced on the Estate. Black Robin could also be the venue for running courses on local and traditional crafts, cooking, arts, wellbeing, history or archaeology. With the closure of Stanmer Park Farm and the Seven Sisters Sheep Centre, there does appear to be an opportunity for a genuine working sheep farm that would continue to manage the land traditionally while providing greater access to the public – both generating income and providing educational benefits.

Crapham Barn and New Barn could form part of this offering, being vernacular buildings of a style that is characteristic of the Estate and the local area. Open-air museums provide a three-dimensional setting for explaining historic way of living or working; Crapham Barn and New Barn

could give context to the techniques, equipment, furnishings, clothes and art of the Victorian period. Although these buildings are not listed, the Council sees them as valuable reminders of those historic farming systems which shaped the Downs, and recognises that they contribute to the special qualities of the Estate. The Council would like to explore ways of stimulating public awareness and interest in the built environment and historic farming practices on the Estate. It might be possible to come to some arrangement with the Weald and Downland museum, whereby some of their resources are utilised to deliver public engagement activities at one of these locations. Alternative uses for these buildings that preserve their special qualities for the future could be considered: this might include venue hire, a facility for events (especially in the low season and involving local communities) and a meeting space for schools and other groups. Energy efficiency and renewable energy systems could be incorporated into any re-purposing programme.

Notwithstanding these ambitions, the Council is mindful that Crapham Barn and New Barn are in exposed settings, and any proposals must be careful not to lose the rural and historic character that makes these locations so special. The associated development which comes with such changes of use, such as car parking, can be difficult to successfully assimilate into such open settings. If space at Black Robin Farm could be used for public engagement, this would enable the Council to deliver some immediate improvements to public engagement and provide a platform for ongoing engagement / testing of learning opportunities to feed into longer-term ambitions.



Providing more tourist accommodation. Given the potential alternative uses for the Black Robin farm buildings, there is also an opportunity to accommodate visitors on residential courses out of season. There may be scope for a high quality 'glamping' offer, and exploring the possibility of developing the Eastbourne Downs Golf Clubhouse in order to provide hotel accommodation. The Clubhouse occupies a unique location on the eastern scarp of the Estate that offers extensive views over Eastbourne and beyond, and it could serve as a wedding venue, offer conference facilities, or even operate as a spa alongside its clubhouse function. The current building is prominent in views from the east, as the site was regrettably opened up by quarrying in the 1960s, but its design is inappropriate to its setting, and could be developed more sensitively.

Improving the provision of public transport. If the Estate – and indeed the wider area between the Ouse, the A27 and Eastbourne – is to become an integrated, dispersed tourist destination, the Council wants to avoid that

being based on the use of private cars. Options with local bus operators to make public transport more readily available and flexible could be explored including an improved, more frequent service on Beachy Head Road, and additional services to Butts Brow or points at the foot of the escarpment. It is also possible to envisage a much more flexible service for tourists, based on a fleet of minibuses, responding to requirements of passengers for a fixed daily fee, ferrying them to the nearest trunk route or picking them up from a stop on such a route – so not a direct service over longer routes, but a responsive one.

The Council will also explore ways of better connecting the Estate with the town by way of upgraded walking and cycling routes from the town centre and station (including, for example, by incorporating the start of the South Downs Way) and raising the profile of the Estate within the town (for example, through the provision of information boards in the town and along the seafront, to encourage people to explore it further).

Encouraging a transition away from private vehicle use on the Beachy Head Road. The Council estimates that there are 800,000 vehicle movements a year on the Beachy Head road. In parallel with moves to increase the provision of public transport, it will explore means of reducing dependence on private cars to access Beachy Head, as part of a wider visitor management plan being developed with Sussex Heritage Coast partners, and in line with the ESCC Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2026. The ultimate aim is to help manage the movement of people through this part of the Estate safely and sustainably. The Council is also mindful of just how close the road at Hod Comb is to the cliff edge, and the risks posed by erosion; encouraging through traffic is not desirable. The solution may involve road infrastructure changes, and will go hand in hand with public safety interventions to identify people at risk. Access-charging for non-locals on the Beachy Head Road is one idea that was suggested as part of the stakeholder engagement process, although EBC is sensitive to the concerns about this raised during public consultation. Such a charging system would produce an immediate and substantial cash inflow which could be ring-fenced to maintain the upkeep of the downs for wildlife and tourists – however, there are many practical challenges, and this idea would not be explored further without much more extensive public consultation and clear support from local residents. The emerging Heritage Coast Visitor Management Plan will consider a wide range of evidence on

transports matters, and will be guided by the principles set out in the Heritage Coast Strategy.

Maintaining and, where possible, restoring the Estate's dew ponds.

The Council recognises that dew ponds are one of the Estate's unique qualities, to be enjoyed, understood and valued by the public. They are a reminder of historic farming systems that helped shape the downland, and since they hold the only surface water on the chalk, they are potentially of great value for wildlife. However, the general picture of the condition of the (with one exception, concrete) dew ponds across the Estate is a gradually deteriorating one, and a targeted programme of management and restoration is required to provide these heritage assets with a new lease of life. The Council envisages the dew ponds forming part of the Estate's educational offering on the historic farming systems and the natural environment.

Putting the Estate's water supply network on a more sustainable footing.

There is a private water supply system on the Estate, owned by the Council. This system is identified in the Ecosystem Service Analysis as a significant weakness; any issues impacting on the water supply are considered an extremely high priority by the Council, and the system may need to be future-proofed with additional boreholes and/or reservoirs to avoid insufficiency. There would certainly need to be significant upgrading of the system as part of the proposals to re-purpose farm buildings on the Estate, and water supply to troughs on the downland would make it much easier to graze livestock here. Engagement with South East Water and other providers to explore the adoption of the supply pipes and infrastructure, thereby spreading the cost of repairs and maintenance more equitably, could be explored, possibly as part of an overarching agreement whereby the Estate undertakes to safeguard the water catchment through more catchment-sensitive farming.

Encouraging visitor donations. A number of specific, small-scale projects on the Estate could be identified and actively promoted, with visitors encouraged to make donations to part-fund these projects through online, contactless and traditional means. The growth of digital connectivity allows many visitors, especially Millennials, to bypass conventional information centres, and opportunities to donate could be developed as

part of an online offering that provides information about the Estate. This might include a mobile phone app, perhaps linked to QR codes (a type of matrix barcode) on posts at certain locations on the Estate. Such an app could effectively serve as a virtual guide to the Estate; this has been piloted at some National Trust properties, where QR codes at different locations link to the web urls of short, informative YouTube videos, giving an extra level of engagement with the property for those who are capable of, and choose to, use it.

Help to build a **value-added brand for produce from the Estate.** A distinct brand based on the special qualities of the Estate could add value to their produce. Consumers are increasingly interested in the provenance of their food and its ecological footprint, and retailers are sensitive to this. The Council values the role of its tenant farmers as stewards of the important habitats and ecosystems on the Estate, and it is hoped that discerning consumers will also value this.

