

Action Plan Update

Project name	Description	Outcomes and benefits	Update October 2024
Safe and sustainably manage woodland	Ash dieback felling interventions		Advantage is being take to increase biodiversity with the creation of new glades, mixed species replanting and natural regeneration. Woodland management plans have been created which takes into account the ash dieback issues.
Scrub control	<p>Restore grassland under threat of scrub invasion via grazing/mechanical control/herbicide treatment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	Limit the risk for public on access routes, public rights of way and woodland rides.	Scrub control continues to be carried out across the Open Downland. This is achieved via a mix of manual removal, machine cut-and-collect and grazing. Scrub management (including to restore chalk grassland and improve structure/age diversity of scrub) are included within the Council's Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) scheme - as below. Scrub Clearance plans for winter 2024-25 completed. S&P are happy to assist with grazing activities where required.

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Explore opportunities for social prescribing schemes on the Estate	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.	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.	Proposed development of Black Robin will help support social prescribing opportunities through education, leisure and culture activities.
Prepare the transition away from the current subsidy regime	Work with the Estate's tenant farmers		<p>Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) has now been secured for the open downland and woodland. EBC worked with partners and the scheme is now secured and live from January 2024. The scheme lasts 5 - 10 years.</p> <p>All farming tenants are currently in management schemes including Higher Level Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Some tenants have investigated capital grants across their holdings for new fencing.</p> <p>The Rural Payment agency replaced the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) in England with delinked payments in 2024. The amounts paid to farmers will decrease each year by way of progressive reductions. 2027 will be the last year that farmers receive delinked payments.</p>

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Promote best practice in sustainable land management to protect the aquifer	Work with the SDNPA and Catchment Partnership	Promote the Estate as a priority for investment in catchment sensitive farming (CSF)	<p>The tenant farmers have been contacted and asked if they wish to join the Eastern South Downs Farmer Cluster. Clusters are awarded funding to achieve greater improvements in bio-diversity, nutrient neutrality and importantly water quality on a greater scale than individual holdings could on their own.</p> <p>In 2021, the cluster held a webinar and Q&A session with South East Water for farmers and landowners within the Seaford and Eastbourne catchment areas, to discuss the upcoming groundwater catchment projects South East Water are undertaking. These projects aim to study the amount of nutrients entering the aquifer and to see if a catchment based approach can reduce the treatment required by the raw water and the associated carbon footprint. Farmers were encouraged to attend the event which allowed farmers to ask any questions they had about the projects, how they can get involved with the research, and about the support South East Water is looking to offer farmers as part of these projects. For the EBC managed open downland the Council are also currently working with Natural England and local partners on the proposed National Nature Reserve (NNR) expansion. SE water is a partner in this, and part of the proposals link to protection of the aquifer.</p>
Creation by the Council of a group or body to help fundraise and take projects forward	The group/body would act as a fundraiser and partnership link for the Estate to help deliver 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).	MOU has been entered into with the South Downs National Park Trust for fundraising for WEP priorities through visitor donations. Fundraising entity to be kept under review in line with the Council's desire to create a circular economy on the downland.
Prepare for the rollout of the new Environmental Land Management System	The council and its tenants will capitalise on the new ELM underlying principle of "public money for public goods", having identified those opportunities on the Estate to increase the provision of public goods.		Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) has been secured for the open downland and woodland, EBC worked with others, including NE and FC over 2023 and the scheme is now secured and live from January 2024. The scheme lasts 5 - 10 years. Draft Management plan for the Open Downland written September 2024

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Maximise the biodiversity and amenity value of the Estate woodlands	Updating the public access routes through the woodland and along the escarpment from Butts Brow to Beachy Head. Planting interventions	Offer experience to walker and draw people on certain routes instead of others.	The EBC managed areas of woodland are included in the secured CSHT grant, with measures such as ride management (to provide varied habitat structure) proposed. Still exploring opportunities for dewpond restoration at Old Mansion Close.
Contribute to a Nature Recovery Network	Helping to identify opportunities for habitat restoration and creation on the Estate by developing maps and engage with neighbouring landowners.	Link existing protected sites and landscapes.	EBC continue to be involved in the LNRS as a 'Supporting Authority' and have regular catch ups with ESCC, who are the Responsible Authority. Mapping of habitat maintenance and restoration undertaken for our grant scheme, with advice from Natural England specialists. Working with other landowners/partners in the local area as part of the proposed National Nature Reserve (NNR) expansion project.
Explore opportunities on the Estate to deliver the biodiversity net gain for Eastbourne.	(1) Work with NE and SDNPA to improve environmental mapping and develop a LNRS	Could provide off-site compensation for developers	Work ongoing - in the early stages of investigation.
Explore opportunities on the Estate to deliver the biodiversity net gain for Eastbourne.	(2) Looking into whether Supplementary Planning Guidance on biodiversity net gain is required to give further clarity for developers in the Borough.	Could provide off-site compensation for developers	BNG work ongoing, in early stages. There is an EBC Technical Advice Note for BNG (approved Sept 2021) - however SDNPA are the LPA for the downland. SDNPA also have a BNG TAN. BNG is now mandatory (from 12/02/2024) and further guidance has become available from Government since last year.
Explore opportunities on the Estate to deliver the biodiversity net gain for Eastbourne.	(3) Looking into the feasibility of setting up a habitat bank on the Estate.	Could provide off-site compensation for developers	In the early stages of investigation
Explore opportunities on the Estate to deliver the biodiversity net gain for Eastbourne.	(4) investigating the most appropriate planning mechanism to pool deeper contributions to such a habitat bank.	Could provide off-site compensation for developers	In the early stages of investigation.

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Improving the Visitor Centre offering at Beachy Head	<p>A strong sense of arrival and good first impressions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 retails 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. 	<p>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.</p> <p>Providing visitor information at the point of need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	Council is investigating opportunities for alternative operation of the centre.
Improving the educational offering	<p>More educational packages and courses in the natural environment, including practical environmental conservation work, and ecological, geographical and environmental fieldwork could be developed.</p> <p>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.</p>		As part of Changing Chalk a Chalk Life Ranger is working on engagement and education opportunities at Butts Lane Meadow. Black Robin development will support education and culture learning. Planned increase volunteering offer across the Estate e.g. conservation volunteers.

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Diversification and re-purposing of redundant farm building	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. 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.		A successful Levelling Up Fund bid was submitted for development of the Black Robin main site to include new/redeveloped buildings providing culture and education opportunities (incl. art/workshop/shop/accommodation/additional employment/improved farm buildings), plus relocation of the farmer to Ringwood Farm. Heads of Terms being agreed with Towner for the new hub and finalising designs alongside cost analysis of project.