

Case Study

Improving woodland management within the South Downs National Park

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WOODLAND
TRUST

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The South Downs National Park has over 38,000 hectares (ha) of woodland which covers approximately a quarter of the landscape. Active management of this forest resource has been estimated to bring £22.8m to the local economy as well as provide an educational resource for the local community.

Improving woodland management can deliver multiple benefits in terms of enriched habitat and an enhanced local forestry market. The Woodland Trust has been working as part of The South Downs Forestry Partnership to bring more woodlands within the National Park into active management. The partnership coordinates the efforts of key organisations acting within the National Park, including the Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and Wildlife Trusts, and is working closely with landowners and local enterprises to seize new opportunities and respond to emerging markets such as woodfuel and sustainable development.

The partnership is working on a collective landscape scale approach to encourage networking for environmental, social and economic gains. This will enable the use of timber to become an integral part of life within the South Downs National Park.

An example of project success

Seaford College is located in the heart of the National Park. The estate features historic buildings, parkland and a large woodland that encompasses the scarp slope of the downs and is visible from Petworth over six miles away. The college has more than 150 acres of woodland including 30 acres of plantation on an ancient woodland site (PAWS) and a large area of ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW). This area of woodland has been assessed as in urgent need of restoration due to its habitat potential and visual impact on the landscape.

The woodland holdings at Seaford College have not been actively managed for at least 30 years, making the site a top priority for the region. In addition, both neighbouring estates to the college have recently begun woodland management and there is a clear opportunity to connect habitats across the landscape.

“We have taken our school woodlands for granted in the past, but now we value it as an educational resource to inspire the students about history, the environment, landscape and wildlife.”

Jackie Kyte, Teacher and CCF Commander, Seaford College



Thinned Pine

WTPL/Jim Smith-Wright

Key Facts

- The area of the South Downs National Park includes over 38,000ha of woodland.
- The improved woodland management on the National Park could bring £22.8 million into the local economy.
- Seaford College, situated within the National Park, has over 150 acres of woodland made up of ancient semi-natural woodland and ancient woodland planted with non-native species.
- The college has earned “Green Credentials” since opening the Forest School and is planning to introduce a woodfuel heating system.
- Five acres of new native woodland has been planted by the college and a local Army cadet group to create a memorial woodland.

The outcome

The college is seeing many benefits from the project, including the establishment of a new educational resource and Forest School; a future woodland resource that will be economically sustainable and a unique asset to the estate. Woodland management has also provided valuable “green credentials” that the school can use in its future prospectus. They have also begun planting a First World War memorial woodland, creating five acres (2.02ha) of new native woodland with trees provided by the Woodland Trust and planted by their local Army Cadet group. In the near future the college is looking to explore the potential of woodfuel heating systems as a replacement for its current oil-powered systems.

As a direct result of engagement with the South Downs Forestry Partnership, Seaford College has commissioned a woodland management plan from a local forest agent and contractor. The college will take advantage of Countryside Stewardship Capital Grants to commission a management plan and forecast the future woodland management requirements. It aims to restore the ancient woodland site and manage the whole woodland as an ancient semi-natural woodland habitat. Fundamentally, through working with the Forestry Partnership, they are aiming to use grant funding where available in the short term with the long term aim that the woodland will be economically sustainable in the future. Overall targeted engagement has delivered economic, environmental and social benefits on a site with no previous woodland management history.

The future

“We always looked at our woodland as an uneconomic aspect of the estate, but now we have been made aware of grant funding and the value of the woodland we are working to manage it as an asset to the estate, and restore the habitat for the future.”

Paul Boarer – estate manager

The improved woodland management at Seaford College will improve the ancient woodland habitat through restoration and woodland creation with funding from Countryside Stewardship grants and support from the Woodland Trust. The work on the site will continue to help facilitate future work for local forestry enterprises by releasing more timber into the local market.



Cadets planting

How the Trust can help

The Woodland Trust is working with partners across the UK to offer landowners and managers independent advice and support to plant new native woodland and to sustainably manage and restore existing woodland on their land.

If you own a plantation on an ancient woodland site, we can help you discover its history and advise you how restoration can complement your woodland business and interests.

We also offer expert advice on planning and creating new woodland and a variety of tree packs at a reduced cost.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Woodland Creation Team
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