

Judges' Citation RTPI South East Awards for Planning Excellence 2019

Award: Excellence in Natural Environment

Winner: [South Downs National Park Authority](#)

South Downs Local Plan

The first local plan for the UK's newest national park adopted in July 2019. It covers the whole of the National Park, spanning three counties, twelve local authority areas, four housing market areas and extending from Winchester to Eastbourne. It replaces over a thousand old local plan policies with just 92 new policies.



The Plan is innovative in the way it considers the geology and geography and working practices that have shaped the landscapes and settlements of the National Park. It is unambiguously landscape-led, with the landscape first approach being applied across the whole National Park on both a local and strategic level.

The Plan innovatively embodies the principles of 'ecosystem services' into the making and delivery of the Local Plan. This approach ensures the services nature provides us (such as wood fuel, clean water, health and well-being) from nature's own 'capital' (timber, water, fresh air) are factored into decision making and allocations.

The Plan also responded to the increasing emphasis on innovative environmental enhancement. In particular, the Plan introduced into planning policy the principle of net biodiversity gain. Both the ecosystem services approach, and biodiversity net gain, provide new approaches that are being rolled out to other authorities, whether national park or otherwise.

The judges are proud to award **South Downs Local Plan** an RTPI SE Award for Planning Excellence in the Natural Environment.