



Seaford Town Council

Seaford Head Local Nature Reserve Management & Grazing Meeting

Council Chamber, 37 Church Street, Seaford, BN25 1HG

Thursday 16th April 2026 10:00AM – 11:30AM

Attendees:

Peter Cousin, Head of Place, Seaford Town Council

Sharan Brydon, Assets & Projects Manager, Seaford Town Council

Simon Lambert, Head Greenkeeper at Seaford Head Golf Course

STC Councillors:

Cllr Maggie Wearmouth, Seaford Town Council

Cllr Christina Bristow, Seaford Town Council

Cllr Rod Buchanan, Seaford Town Council

Cllr Christine Brett, Lewes District Council

Group representatives:

Terry Hallahan, Sussex Barn Owl Group, (Chair)

Mark Monk-Terry, Sussex Wildlife Trust

Paul Dixon, Seaford Natural History Society

Denise Scott Fears (for Stephen Hallam)

Rhiannon Masters, Farmer

Minute Taker: Louise Dickson, Projects & Facilities Administrator

Introductions and Apologies

A warm welcome to everyone in the meeting and apologies were received from Alex Gant (Natural England), Tom Simpson (South Downs National Park), Dan Fagan (National Trust) and Jamie Parsons (Sussex Wildlife Trust).

MINUTES

1. Review of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed, with the following updates:

Coastal Path: Progress has been made on the lower section. Thanks were extended to Natural England, the Environment Agency and the South Downs National Park. The section leading up to South Hill Barn (SHB) has been budgeted for this financial year. Work from Splash Point to Seaford Head is ongoing, with efforts focused on securing funding.

Visitor Data Monitoring: Commissioning mobile data tracking to monitor visitor numbers on the National Park. This detects the presence of devices rather than tracking individuals. Concerns were raised about privacy and whether signage will inform visitors. It was confirmed that this approach is permitted and appropriate notices will be considered.

Publication of Minutes: The group was advised that the minutes from this meeting will be published on the STC website, following requests from the public for Stakeholder Meetings to be made available on the Town Council website.

Traffic Survey from SHB The traffic survey from South Hill Barn has also been made public on the Town Council website.

2. Updates

Seaford Head Golf Course

- Limited updates regarding the 17th/18th greens. Paul Quanstrom (STC Project Officer) is in discussion with Historic England; proposals do not affect the hillfort.
- Funding opportunities are being explored with Sussex Wildlife Trust and Natural England.
- Proposals will be presented to Full Council.

Sussex Wildlife Trust

Staff & Volunteers:

- Staff: 32.5 days (October–March).
- Volunteers: 293 hours (approx. 41 days).
- Additional ranger support due to staff injury.
- Brush Cutting (Scrub clearance) and grassland management undertaken.

- Contractors used for brush cutting to minimise impact on ant hills.
- Ongoing control of invasive species (e.g. Russian vine). It requires annual or bi-annual hard pruning to keep it in check; burning not permitted on site due to badger activity.
- Highly pathogenic avian influenza was confirmed in the region in late 2025, having a devastating impact on wild bird populations in the area.
- **Grazing:** The western side was cleared for sheep grazing (29 sheep); this is resource-intensive due to the need to regularly move the netting. Eastern side continues with cattle grazing, gate repairs and signage were needed to notify the public of the cattle. Interest in expanding cattle grazing to western areas as well.
- **Maintenance:** Gate repairs and signage improvements completed. Meadow management (mowing and raking) undertaken by the cottages. Cutting in the green-winged orchids.
- Ongoing litter management and administrative workload with questions about parking, coaches at South Hill Barn and other events.
- Monthly volunteer sessions, increasing to twice monthly in summer.
- A map of the finalised NNR is now available. Discussions will be required regarding signage for the reserve. Monthly delivery group meetings are ongoing to coordinate the implementation of improvements and the continued stewardship of the National Park.

Seaford Natural History Society

- Multiple surveys completed in 2025 (including orchids and Moon carrot). A moth survey at Hope Gap recorded notable species (e.g. barred tooth-striped moth). The Seaford Parish Moth Register showed 811 moth species recorded in Seaford (corrected figure and 22 new species identified).
- Seaford BioBlitz launch scheduled for **18 July** to promote community engagement.
- In 2025 a Small Blue butterfly was sighted for the first time since 2017.
- **Concerns:** Rye cutting is undertaken on the West Head. Surveys in this area have been less positive, likely due to the use of heavy machinery, which can disturb species. Introducing more scalloped management along the rides may help improve conditions.

- There are also many active members working on the Head and in other areas, including Friston Forest.

Sussex Ornithological Society

- **Kittiwake Colony:** Decline noted; however, 364 occupied nests recorded. Monitoring is conducted by drone from a boat in the sea and without disturbance to the birds.
- **Bird Ringing Group:** Positive feedback from public walks, despite low bird sightings.
- **Upcoming Event:** 29 July 2026-Youth group visit organised with *Action for Conservation*, which is a UK environmental charity that empowers young people (aged 12–24) from diverse backgrounds to lead nature restoration and advocate for the planet. The session is an example of how important it is to play an active role in inspiring the next generation of environmentalists and naturalists. The opportunity to see these incredible birds up close and personal was an unforgettable experience for these young people.
- **Owls:** Previous year saw very low numbers. Current year showing improvement (Barn Owl brood of 4; Tawny Owl broods recorded).

Farm Update

- Cattle grazing has been successfully managed; electric fencing installed along cliff edge with no complaints. Happy how this is working and for the cattle to remain. STC and Sussex Wildlife did a great promotion on their websites for this.
- Bird seed planting entering its fourth year on the field by the concrete road.
- Paul Dixon requested permission from the farm to install corrugated metal sheets to provide shelter for adders, allowing them to retain warmth overnight, and asked whether these could be placed near the concrete road area of the farm. Simon Lambert reported sightings of three grass snakes, and it was noted that slow worms are present in the rough near Hole 11.
- It was recommended by Paul Dixon that wildlife sightings are recorded using the iRecord app or website.

South Downs National Park Update (supplied by Tom Simpson)

South Downs Adder Project

Adders are an icon of the downland landscape. This protected species is undergoing a catastrophic decline nationally, with 90% of Adder populations being monitored in decline, and they have already disappeared from whole counties. The reasons for the decline are well established, with a lack of landscape connectivity causing isolation of populations leading to declining fitness due to inbreeding, disturbance by people and dogs, overgrazing and indiscriminate removal of scrub all contributing.

Surveys of a number of sites across the Eastern South Downs shows that the downland landscape is still a stronghold for the species, but sites being monitored are isolated and recording of Adder across the wider landscape is sporadic. SDNPA ranger, Kim Greaves is coordinating a landscape scale project across the eastern downs which will expand survey effort across the area in a targeted way, aiming to establish a truer picture of the distribution of Adder, and identify potential corridors for increasing landscape connectivity for Adder and other threatened native reptiles with similar habitat needs. Data on the locations of adders is sensitive so will not be shared publicly, however, this information is key for site managers, surveyors and researchers and should be available to them.

Surveyors will collect sloughs during surveys for analysis, following the protocol described [here](#). These sloughs can be sent to Bangor University for analysis. If anyone finds sloughs but is not comfortable to collect themselves, please let me know the location and I can go and collect. Analysis of sloughs can give insight into the genetic fitness of populations and alert us to at risk populations which have become genetically isolated

In addition to surveying and producing reports containing land manager advice, an additional outcome of the project will be to run training workshops for land managers to upskill and be inspired to integrate reptiles into their general approaches to managing their sites.

Adder project at Seaford Head –

There is an established transect at Seaford Head, thanks to a big monitoring effort by Jim and Janet Howell since 2017. The results have identified locations of potential

hibernacula of both Adders and Grass Snakes. SDNPA Rangers Tom Simpson & Kim Greaves met with Jim and Janet on site to discuss their findings and, Tom Simpson has agreed to continue monitoring the transect and look at potential land management actions to improve habitat for reptiles and reduce disturbance. Tom's first survey took place on 17th March; due to annual leave he has not had a chance to get over there again but will be surveying tomorrow (17th April) and more regularly into summer.

Casual records are particularly helpful, so for those of you who are seeing reptiles out onsite, ideally, they will be recorded via i record so that the data will be captured and shared amongst relevant parties. If this isn't possible, records can be shared directly to me and I will upload. A photo, date and location are ideal.

Seaford Head is one of the key sites this year, but the project aims to increase in range over the coming years. Any additional sightings from anywhere in the project area will help establish a baseline and identify potential new transects. The project area and survey sites can be found - [South Downs Adder Project map](#) and the boundary is attached as a screen shot below.

If anyone is interested in surveying or getting involved please contact Tom Simpson – tom.simpson@southdowns.gov.uk or Kim Greaves – kim.greaves@southdowns.gov.uk.

3. Seaford Town Council Updates

Parking (SHB)

- Seaford Town Council has approved a one-year trial of a cashless Pay & Display parking scheme at South Hill Barn Car Park, starting in 2026, to address traffic, visitor congestion, and coach parking. While the site will charge visitors, a free permit scheme is available for residents to park free during the trial. Aim: manage visitor numbers and protect the estate (not profit-driven).
- STC confirmed it has no authority to prevent coaches from accessing the site and cannot install a height barrier, as it does not own the first sections of the track.
- As part of a trial, coaches will use the turning circle to drop off passengers and exit the site, assisted by two staff members. The outcome of this trial will be reviewed to inform any future decision on restricting or banning coach access.

Signage

- Ongoing collaboration with the National Park Authority. Aim to improve visitor awareness of conservation and responsible behaviour. Wider signage strategy under review. Denise Scott Fears requested to be included in the sharing of the audit.
- Paul Dixon raised concerns about the Vanguard Way cycle route from the Cuckmere Inn entry point. Signage for cyclists is insufficient, resulting in riders unintentionally continuing onto the reserve rather than heading up the hill. There is a lack of clear cycle signage in this area.

The Compostable Toilets

The compostable toilets at the reserve are being emptied more frequently than anticipated and will continue to be monitored over the coming year. Denise Scott-Fears raised concerns regarding odour when they were placed at the sea front and noted that many users are unclear on how to use them correctly.

4. Any Other Business

Cllr Bristow raised concerns from residents about anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping in the brush land of the reserve. Has advised the concerned resident to contact police if this continues. Mark Monk Terry-Rangers may increase monitoring in affected areas.

Rhianon Masters also highlighted the beach litter which the farm is collecting from the beach and depositing in the café area and hoped this was okay, LDC then collect. Peter Cousin is in contact with Norman from The BHASS EXPLORE project.

Denise Scott-Fears raised concerns regarding parking issues and coach visits to South Hill Barn, as well as the impact on local amenities within the town. Denise also monitors planning applications for Seaford.

Cllr Wearmouth acknowledged the successful launch of the *National Nature Reserve* and thanked officers and partners for their work, with particular thanks to Rhianon for her efforts at short notice in relation to the King's visit.

There was recognition of increasing tourism at South Hill Barn, partly influenced by TikTok. The importance of water conservation and effective land management was

emphasised. It was agreed that while tourism should be encouraged, it must be managed responsibly. This will require a coordinated, partnership approach.

The Friends of Seaford Head have organised a presence at Chyngton Fields on Saturday 18th April, to coincide with the nationwide Day of Action for Nature, Parks and Green Spaces, in response to concerns regarding potential development of the site.

Cllr Brett confirmed that no formal decisions have been made at this stage over discussions in the meeting concerning the field.

5. Closing Remarks

Terry thanked all attendees for their contributions.

6. Next Meeting

Thursday 8th October 2026 at 10:00AM at Seaford Town Council.

Disclaimer: These minutes are a summary of discussions and decisions made during the meeting. They **do not record every word that was spoken during the meeting**. Any corrections or amendments should be submitted to the minute taker before the next meeting for approval.