

Eastbourne Borough Council : Whole Estate Plan 2020 - 2045

Action Plan Update February 2026

Project name	Update
Safe and sustainably manage woodland	Advantage is being taken 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	Scrub control has taken place across the open downland with both contractors and volunteer/ officer work at Whitbread hollow, Belle Tout, Shooters Bottom, Beachy Brow Meadow and other sites. Larger scale grazing options are actively being discussed with new graziers, including the use of no fence collars.
Explore opportunities for social prescribing schemes on the Estate	Social prescribing has been discussed with community groups such as the Meads Community Association; this has included discussions of potentially working with young men with experience of the criminal justice system.
Prepare the transition away from the current subsidy regime	<p>We are now in the third year of the countryside stewardship agreement for the open downland. have been using the cut and collect machine to remove excess grass growth and brambles from select areas of the open downland that would have previously been inaccessible without this machine as part of our obligations under the agreement. We are undertaking capital works for scrub clearance utilising grant funding through Higher Tier Capital Grants. Part of project has been reassessed in the last couple of weeks with a view to contractors being on site in the autumn/ winter of this year. We are also looking into the potential of new graziers moving onto sites that have not been grazed for considerable periods of time, including Warren Hill and Frances bottom.</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>
Promote best practice in sustainable land management to protect the aquifer	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. For the EBC managed open downland the Council is 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.
Prepare for the rollout of the new Environmental Land Management System	Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) has been secured for the open downland and woodland, the scheme lasts 5 - 10 years. Draft Management plan for the Open Downland is currently being reviewed to properly incorporate the CS agreement, which is now in its third year. The agreement document is currently acting as the management plan for now, however the full management document will be revisited in the near future.

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Maximise the biodiversity and amenity value of the Estate woodlands	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. This work is ongoing.
Contribute to a Nature Recovery Network	EBC continue to be involved in the LNRS as a 'Supporting Authority'. While the consultation has closed, you can review the draft LNRS documents and Local Habitat Maps here https://www.sussexnaturerecovery.org.uk/publications . Amended versions of these, taking on board the comments received through the recent public consultation, will be published in early 2026. 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.	Cornish Farm is to be utilised as a BNG site through the Eden Project Wildflower Company. Heads of Terms for the new let are almost agreed. It is anticipated that Eden will be on site later this year. The land is currently under an interim grazing agreement which is beneficial from a biodiversity baseline perspective for future BNG units.
Improving the Visitor Centre offering at Beachy Head	Animazing are due to re-open the site in early 2026. The new centre will include a shop and information point, community space and exhibitions. There will be a permanent exhibition on the history of the downland, digital trail apps available for walks, and changing exhibition space.
Improving the educational offering	EBC Countryside Ranger has been working actively with the Changing Chalk Ranger to discuss legacy for the project, which is coming to an end in March 2026. This has included the possibility of erecting some permanent signage about the project, as well as helping the Butt's Meadow Minders group to become an independent friends of group supported by EBC ranger. Similar discussions to be had with CC archaeology officer about monument monitors for the Eastbourne downland's heritage features.
Diversification and re-purposing of redundant farm building	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. Rising costs due to the impact of inflation are impacting the scheme. Project phasing is being revisited in line with current funding envelope.