The Value of Nature in the Constituency

The natural world supports many aspects of our lives, from economic activities to health and general quality of life. Society has often overlooked this in the past, harming both ecosystems and our own interests.

We are now learning more about the deep interdependencies between natural and socio-economic systems, providing us with exciting opportunities to generate greater support for nature conservation which at the same time sustains wider human interests.

Much of Lewes constituency lies amongst the rolling hills of the South Downs, whose chalk grasslands contain some of the UK’s most spectacular wildflowers.

**Chalk Grassland**

The constituency is blessed with a number of chalk grasslands, including the internationally important Castle Hill. The site has an astonishing array of species including the largest colony of rare Early Spider-orchid in the UK, and many insects such as the Small Blue butterfly. Lewes also has areas of chalk heath at Lullington Heath. This rare habitat has a unique mixture of heathland and chalk grassland plants.

**Wetland habitats**

The area around Newhaven and Seaford is important for grazing marsh and in particular the rare communities of water beetles found there. The valleys of the rivers Ouse and Cuckmere pass through Lewes constituency, and both present considerable opportunities for enhancements. Along with an extremely important chalk stream at Offham.

**Coastal habitats**

Either side of the river estuaries, chalk cliffs rise including the eminent Seven Sisters. These cliffs support important colonies of seabirds as well as several uncommon plants and insects.
A Living Landscape Vision for the future

Moving to an era of restoration

The reserves of Malling Down and Southerham form the heart of the Lewes and Ouse Valley Living Landscape Scheme. A crucial part of a Living Landscape is putting people back in touch with their local environment and we lead over 7000 pupils each year in visits to Seven Sisters Country Park. We run numerous wildlife walks and talks in Lewes constituency and work with the local community to improve school grounds, churchyards and greenspaces in Lewes for both people and wildlife.

We are working with local landowners to manage and restore chalk grassland, and to restore wetland habitats and functioning floodplains along the River Ouse. The Sussex Flow Initiative aims to increase the Ouse catchment’s capacity to store and slow floodwater to decrease the impacts of flooding downstream.

We have worked to help identify a network of Marine Conservation Zones to ensure a healthy marine environment for the future. The marine habitats running close to shore from Brighton Marina to Beachy Head are now designated as part of this network. The platforms, gullies and submerged caves found here are considered to be some of the richest examples in the region.

Thinking big

Traditionally nature conservation focused on protecting important sites. Whilst this approach is vital, it alone cannot sustain wildlife long-term - our species need space to adapt to ongoing pressures such as climate change.

Nature conservation at landscape scale is essential for the resilience of our ecosystems and to maintain the capacity for the natural world to provide a wide range of benefits for both people and wildlife.

A Living Landscape is The Wildlife Trusts’ vision for the future. It is about working with local communities and partners to reconnect habitats, allowing wildlife to move, and ensuring we have a healthy ecosystem to support us.

To help us achieve our vision, we need you to...

Support us in our calls for the designation of more Marine Conservation Zones

Help protect our marine wildlife and its habitats. Research has identified and recommended 127 sites as potential MCZs, so far only 27 of these have been designated.

Demonstrate your party’s commitment to a protected and sustainable marine environment by signing up to the Marine Charter for Marine Protected Areas and helping to secure an effective network of protected sites.

Tell us how your party intends to protect and enhance your constituency’s natural resources in the planning process

Sussex is under increasing pressure from unsustainable and environmentally damaging development that compromises our ecological connectivity.

It is vital that strategic planning is based on sound up to date evidence about the local environment and that local authorities have the resources to ensure this evidence is correctly interpreted and implemented.

Support us in spearheading calls for a Nature and Wellbeing Act for England

The Wildlife Trust and RSPB want to see the future government put nature at the heart of how decisions are made about health, housing and development, education, economic growth and flood resilience.

Demonstrate that your party truly values nature and what it does for the health and wellbeing of people, society and the economy of your constituency.

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