

Environment

This is one of four short documents setting out the strategic approach of the Friends of the South Downs to tackling climate change.

The Environment - and its Conservation

The environment is the key to the existence of life on earth. The natural environment is a gift of nature and we need to conserve it for the benefit of life in the future.

Health: To have a healthy life one needs fresh air (free of pollution), clean water supply and clean surroundings. If air and water are polluted and surroundings are filthy, then we are prone to fatal health disorders.

Air: All living things breathe air for survival. The air is mostly composed of nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide and other gases. Of these, oxygen is the key for the body as it helps in the generation of energy from the food.

Water: Water comprises nearly 60% of total body mass. Clean water is essential for humans, plants and animals. Much of the water we drink comes from rivers and streams, so preventing chemical and pollutants entering our water course is essential. The sheer amount of water we consume, especially in south-east England, threatens natural river systems.

Sea Water: clean, uncontaminated seawater is essential for all fish and animals that live in the oceans. If the oceans become contaminated plant life and fish and animal species that live off it will die. There is already plenty of evidence to show what plastic pollution does in the oceans and how it affects fish and animal life. Water and plastic pollution must be reversed to stop the decline in fish stocks. A healthy marine environment is essential to feed the world's growing population.

Soil: It is important to have uncontaminated soil for woodland and forest areas as well as for farm cultivation, plant and wildlife. Extensive use of chemicals may produce fast growing crops but they have the effect of potentially killing off insect life and contaminating rivers and streams. Dead rivers mean no aquatic life which then unbalances the food chain.

Plants & Trees: Plants, which include trees, shrubs, bushes and even small grasses, help in purifying the air, generating oxygen and taking up carbon dioxide. Thus, they keep oxygen levels in the air at optimum and decrease the global warming component of air, i.e., carbon dioxide.

Wildlife, insects and pollinators: These are all part of our ecosystem and if we pollute the atmosphere or damage the balance of plant life using chemicals this part of our environment may be damaged irrevocably. These are essential to pollinate the plants which are part of our food chain and the food chain of animals and insects. It is critically important that we maintain the delicate ecosystem balance.

Landscape: This is important because it contributes significantly to our well-being and quality of life. It provides the broader context within which we live our lives. Living within aesthetically pleasing and culturally meaningful landscapes enhances our sense of wellbeing. Visiting largely undeveloped landscapes enables people to re-connect with nature, to refresh their minds and bodies and to gain a greater appreciation of our natural heritage. Accessible natural landscapes within proximity of urban areas, such as the South Downs, play an important role in increasing the quality of life within nearby urban areas.

Countryside: The countryside is important because it is the principal means by which our environment is sustained, and all the points mentioned above can only exist within the countryside and green spaces. We can only mitigate the effect of building large housing estates, factories and motorways by introducing landscaping, plants and encouraging ecosystems to survive. But without the countryside itself mitigation measures will only provide a fraction of what we need for our environment to survive. That is why national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and natural heritage areas are critically important. The countryside is the engine of our environment.

See also our strategic approach to tackling climate change in our linked documents: Carbon, Sustainability and Education.

[See also our planning policy documents.](#)