

Sharpham Trust Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020

1. Introduction

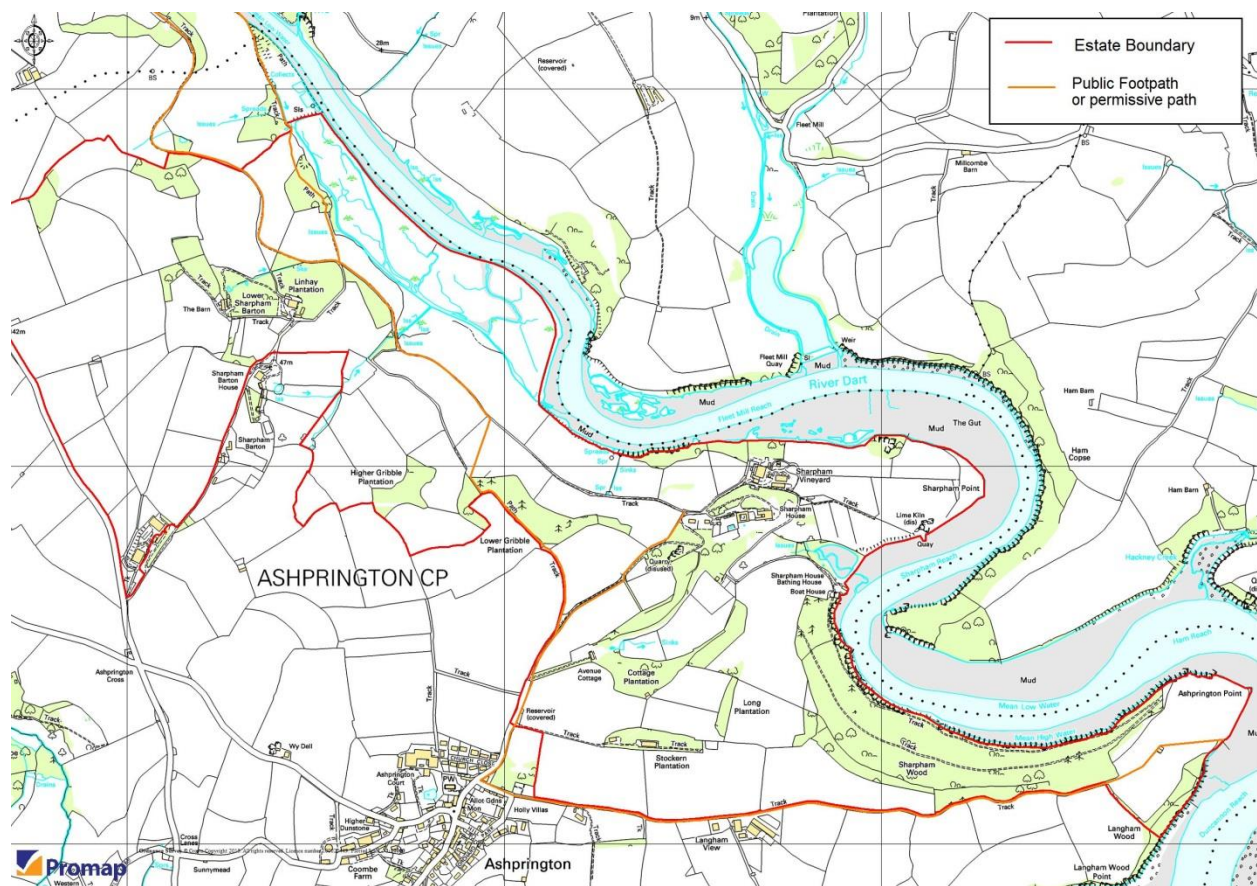
1.1 Structure of the plan

The Trustees of the Sharpham Trust have been engaged in a process to develop a coherent strategy for the next five years. This document outlines the aims and objectives which will inform the Trust's day to day activities over this period. More detailed action plans will be formulated for the various areas of the Trust's work.

1.2 Brief Description of the Trust

The Sharpham Trust, based on the Sharpham Estate near Totnes in Devon, was founded in 1982 by Ruth and Maurice Ash. The Estate comprises 550 acres of land following a three mile stretch of the River Dart. Sharpham House, originally a Manor House, was redeveloped in the 1760s and set in a Capability Brown landscape. It is now a Grade I listed Palladian mansion which is the base for a diversity of educational and creative activities constituting a balance of practical endeavours with a spirit of enquiry. The Trust is also the landlord to three farms on the Estate. The operations of the tenanted farms are actively engaged in sustainable farming and rural regeneration.

Map of Sharpham Estate



2. What we do

2.1 Current areas of activity

The Trust concentrates on the following areas of work:

Conservation of the estate's heritage

The Trust takes its responsibilities to care for the historic estate seriously and has commissioned surveys about the house, the landscape, and the estate as a whole. It remains committed to its care and conservation for the enjoyment of future generations as well as recognising the need to keep the land and buildings in use and generating income to meet the considerable maintenance obligations. The Trust is actively pursuing grant funding to help meet the costs of the restoration work needed in the main house, the gardens and the Capability Brown parkland.

Stewardship of the wider estate

The estate is managed with the future in mind and in line with our ethos of respect for the natural world. Organic and sustainable farming practices are encouraged and wildlife monitoring and woodland management are in progress. We intend to maintain a healthy, productive estate that will contribute positively to the locality in years to come. We have recently agreed a new ten year Higher Level Stewardship agreement with our farming tenants designed to enhance our environmental management of the land.

Mindfulness based courses and retreats

Sharpham House is used as a venue for the Trust's mindfulness courses and retreats. In addition the house is used by external course providers as a venue for courses, away-days and events that are compatible with the Sharpham style and ethos. The Trust aims to enable a wide cross section of people to enjoy the unique experience of staying in a Georgian Palladian mansion so that it is the living breathing heart of the estate.

The Barn Retreat Centre

This is a popular residential meditation retreat centre providing accommodation for up to twelve people at any one time. Established in 1986, the Barn is managed by a part time manager and three residential volunteer retreat co-ordinators. Retreats comprise a balance between meditation, gardening and community living and are based on Buddhist principles. The participants include people from all walks of life and backgrounds. They may be adults in need of a break or respite from daily life, or people at a cross roads or experiencing stressful situations or who want to establish or strengthen a meditation or mindfulness practice.

Sharpham Outdoors

Sharpham Outdoors runs a programme of outdoor activity focusing on environmental education and conservation work. Participants include schools, colleges, universities and community groups including those with special needs and mental distress. Our partners Ambios and Robert Owen Communities also deliver a mix of education and training activities based at Lower Sharpham Barton Farm.

Public programme of events and workshops

The public programme provides opportunities to learn and develop new skills, which range from learning to manage stress in daily life to exploring poetry and other creative crafts, participating in discussions at talks or discovering more about the natural world through an outdoor adventure or walk. The public programme uses the seasons as its canvas and caters for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Open days invite visitors to get a flavour of and become involved in the diverse range of activities and projects that are based on the estate and linked by the common threads of our vision statement.

Creative Arts

The Trust seeks to cultivate an innovative creative arts programme that engages people with the natural world, inner enquiry and enhances their experience of the estate. This has included an annual artist in residence programme, music, poetry and outdoor theatre.

Kitchen and formal gardens

The kitchen and formal gardens provide food, educational and volunteer opportunities. We aim to develop our volunteering and training opportunities across the different gardens and we hope to restore them with the help of grant funding in the future.

Celebrations

The charitable programme is supported in part by renting Sharpham House as a stunning and unique venue for weddings and celebrations. The Trust has a wedding license and encourages a small number of low impact weddings using our own and other local produce. We have also recently opened a Natural Burial Site on the estate which is proving a valuable community asset.

2.2 Current financial position

The Trust generates income through:

- A portfolio of investments
- Rents and leases
- Courses and retreats in the main house
- Retreats at The Barn
- Group visits and training on the estate
- Use of Sharpham House as a venue for external providers
- Grants for specific projects
- Donations

3. Our Purpose

The Sharpham Trust offers access to an inspiring, nourishing environment in order that people have the opportunity to participate and explore what gives meaning to their lives through interaction with the natural world.

Our Principles

The principles guiding the Trust's activities are

- an understanding of the interconnectedness of all life
- a deep respect for the natural world
- a belief in learning through experience
- creative engagement and enquiry
- an acknowledgement of the value of stillness and awareness

The Trust aspires to be a living demonstration of these principles in all its activities.

Our Vision

“To create a more mindful, compassionate and environmentally sustainable world”

Our Mission

“To connect people with nature and foster mindfulness and wellbeing”

4. Our Key Aims

Key Aims 2015 – 2020:

1. We will offer opportunities for people to connect with nature and foster mindfulness and wellbeing through a varied programme of activities
2. We will restore and maintain the unique built and natural heritage across the estate
3. We will promote access to the Sharpham Estate to a broad range of people and groups
4. We will manage the land sustainably balancing the needs of wildlife, food production and people
5. We will pursue environmentally and financially sustainable sources of income to support our charitable activities

5. Our Objectives

1. We will offer opportunities for people to connect with nature and foster mindfulness and well-being through a rich and varied programme of activities

- 1.1. Develop Sharpham as an internationally recognised centre for nature based Mindfulness and enable more people to benefit from our mindfulness programme
- 1.2. Develop a successful programme of retreats in the main house
- 1.3. Maintain the successful operation of the Barn Retreat centre
- 1.4. Offer experiential learning experiences through Sharpham Outdoors
- 1.5. Develop an innovative Creative Arts programme that aims to connect people with the natural world and themselves
- 1.6. Promote volunteering and training opportunities on the estate
- 1.7. Develop the Next Generation Leaders programme
- 1.8. Foster the well-being of our staff, Trustees and volunteers
- 1.9. Develop public engagement activities which promote the work and vision of the Trust
- 1.10. Investigate a new friends scheme

2. We will conserve and restore the unique built and natural heritage across the estate

- 2.1. the Georgian Palladian Mansion
- 2.2. the kitchen, woodland and Percy Cane gardens
- 2.3. the Capability Brown C18th parkland landscape
- 2.4. the Withy Pool and Dam
- 2.5. the North & South Quays
- 2.6. the Coachyard
- 2.7. the stone barns on the estate
- 2.8. Support the Heritage Group volunteers

3. We will promote access to the Sharpham Estate to a broad range of people and groups

- 3.1. Re-open the C18th carriage drive to Totnes as a cycling and walking route
- 3.2. Increase the use of quays for river access
- 3.3. Improve access related signage and information across the estate
- 3.4. Provide a visitor information point
- 3.5. Increase access to the main house, gardens and parkland whilst maintaining the special atmosphere for individuals to enjoy

- 3.6. Support the education and development of young people
- 3.7. Develop opportunities for people to engage with nature on the estate, including on the river
- 3.8. Improve the promotion and marketing of Trust activities

4. We will manage the land mindfully and sustainably balancing the needs of wildlife, food production and people

- 4.1. Manage estate land using sustainable practices through recognised schemes such as organic accreditation and the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme
- 4.2. Support and increase biodiversity on the estate
- 4.3. Bring woodlands in to active and sustainable management
- 4.4. Develop volunteering and/or training opportunities in the gardens and connected to the land
- 4.5. Supply the house and café kitchens with estate produce
- 4.6. Explore alternative land uses and farming practices that fit with the Trust's vision

5. We will pursue environmentally and financially sustainable sources of income to support our charitable activities

- 5.1. Operate a balanced budget
- 5.2. Develop charitable fundraising by the Trust, including grants and individual giving
- 5.3. Invest in low carbon technologies where appropriate
- 5.4. Increase the occupancy of the Main House
- 5.5. Develop appropriate commercial income streams including celebrations and holiday lets
- 5.6. Develop a new Café and visitor information point on the estate
- 5.7. Pursue the responsible reuse of redundant buildings and other development possibilities with regard to the Trust's vision
- 5.8. Develop our campsites to offer additional accommodation and spaces
- 5.9. Develop outdoor activity provision on the estate
- 5.10. Maintain successful operation of Natural Burial site
- 5.11. Pursue an ethical purchasing policy