



SDNPA BUSINESS PLAN 2011-12

INTRODUCTION (M Paren, Chair)

More than 60 years ago the South Downs was identified as a future national park. It has taken that long for the South Downs National Park to come into being. I have always believed that national park status would benefit the communities and businesses in the area as well as its natural beauty. But that will not happen overnight and I am conscious that there is a great deal to do to turn a dream into reality.

Our first non-operational year has been very busy as we have put in place the foundations for the future. Importantly, we have clarity of our funding for the next four years and that will help us determine the priorities for our first few years.

We have established the Authority with 27 members, most of them elected local councillors, from a variety of backgrounds and able to represent a range of interests and communities. I pay tribute to them for the way they have taken up the challenge with great enthusiasm and commitment to shape the strategic direction of the National Park. We have established some important "Guiding Principles" which have shaped our decision making and our planning. Where we felt it was appropriate, we have moved away from traditional methods of operation to ensure flexibility and to make the best use of the resources we have at our disposal.

The South Downs Joint Committee, which has been funded by local authorities across the National Park area and Natural England, will wind up in March 2011; a majority of its staff and assets will transfer to the National Park Authority.

In line with our guiding principles we have emphasised the importance of working with others: individuals, partners, communities and other stakeholders. We are determined to ensure that we engage with others to help shape our vision and priorities for the Park and, more importantly, to deliver our shared aspirations.

We have begun the journey but there is a long way still to go. We are looking forward to developing our strategic plans for the National Park, completing the transition programme and ensuring our actions deliver on the ground.

I want to thank you all: Members, partners, staff and all those others who has helped us to reach this point. I hope we can continue to work positively together for the future of the South Downs National Park

THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK (R Shaw, CEO)

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Establishing the National Park

The South Downs National Park is England's newest National Park, covering the South Downs and western Weald situated in the counties of Hampshire, and West and East Sussex.

The proposal for a national park for the South Downs goes back to the original concept of National Parks in England in 1947, but it was only in 1999 that the Government announced consultation on its creation, and another decade passed before the idea became a reality, with the park formally coming into being on 31 March 2010.

On 31 March 2009, Environment Secretary Hilary Benn announced that the area would be designated a National Park, and on 12 November 2009 signed the order confirming the designation.

The National Park Authority was appointed in early 2010. The 2010/11 financial year was a transitional year and the Authority will assume its full operational responsibilities from April 2011.

SDNPA Purposes and Duties

The South Downs National Park Authority has 2 Purposes:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public

And a Duty:

- To seek to foster the social and economic well-being of the local community in pursuit of these purposes

Since the Park was established

During the six months prior to April 2010, extensive engagement took place with organisations and individuals throughout the National Park to seek views on their aspirations for the National Park and on how the Authority could best add value to the area. On 13 May 2010 Members adopted Guiding Principles, reflecting these views, to inform decisions on the shape of the future organisation.

Guiding Principles

The Role of the Authority is to:

- Champion the SDNP with inspiring, strategic leadership and priorities that carry wide support
- Bring people together, acting as a coordinator for partners and community groups, to engage, inspire and achieve more for the South Downs through combined action

- Influence policy making and the decisions at local, regional and national levels, acting as a voice for the SDNP and a source of knowledge and expertise
- Deliver flagship projects, drawing down external funding and filling the gaps that others cannot fill and are too important to be left
- Engage directly with local residents, farmers, land owners, land managers and visitors to understand their priorities and provide advice or support in helping achieve our shared aspirations for the South Downs
- Encourage volunteering to support National Park purposes and help strengthen communities
- Build effective partnerships to tackle the challenges facing the SDNP, including climate change, demographic change and development pressures

In summary, the Authority's Guiding Principles commit the organisation to:

- Champion the South Downs National Park with inspiring, strategic leadership and priorities that carry wide support
- Bring people together, acting as a coordinator for partners and community groups, to achieve more for the South Downs through combined action
- Engage directly with residents, farmers, land managers and visitors to understand their priorities and to provide advice or support in helping achieve our shared aspirations for the South Downs
- Encourage volunteering to support National Park purposes and help strengthen communities
- Build effective partnerships to tackle the challenges facing the South Downs National Park

Subsequent decisions which have shaped the organisation

The Authority's subsequent decisions have been consistent with the Guiding Principles. These include:

1. Planning: the National Park Authority will be the statutory planning authority for the National Park, but it will carry out this function in partnership with the local authorities in the area. The large majority of development control decisions will continue to be made by local authorities, on behalf of the National Park Authority, under an agency agreement. The National Park Authority will determine only a small number of significant applications and will also develop a policy framework for the National Park. The Authority aims to achieve improvements in the quality and cost of the planning service.
2. Countryside Management: Rangers working for the South Downs Joint Committee, (which will wind up in March 2011) will transfer to the National Park Authority – this was a top priority for farmers in the area. The rangers will support farmers in delivering environmental land management, accessing grant funding, and managing their interface with visitors.
3. Volunteering: As part of its commitment to encourage volunteering, the Authority invited the existing South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service to affiliate to the National Park Authority. A ballot of volunteers resulted in overwhelming endorsement of the proposal. The Authority will explore opportunities for widening and developing volunteering in the National Park.
4. Partnerships: The Authority is required to develop a National Park Management Plan setting out strategies and priorities for the South Downs. It has pledged to do so in

partnership with others and is establishing practical arrangements to achieve this. These include regular dialogue, underpinned by Memoranda of Understanding, with the South Downs Land Management Group, the South Downs Network and others.

5. Premises: The Authority carried out a survey to establish the views of residents and partners on criteria for selecting office premises. This showed strong support for the main office being located in a market town, within the boundaries of the National Park and as centrally as possible; in a building that reflects the character of the National Park and that can be refurbished to high environmental standards; and in a place with good transport links. Survey results also supported area offices to enable local working. Consistent with these findings, the Authority is purchasing Capron House in Midhurst. It will move into the building when the college occupies its new Academy site in 2012.
6. Staffing and outsourcing The Authority aims to maintain a lean organisation, and many corporate functions are provided by partner local authorities in the area.

Culture

- Valuing partnerships and the contribution that other people and organisations can make towards National Park Purposes
- Respecting local people and visitors
- Releasing the potential of communities and other organisations
- Acting with integrity and local and national accountability
 - listening, engaging and responding
 - open and transparent
 - evidence based
 - inspiring, enterprising, innovative
- Delivering value for money and effectiveness
- Striving for best practice and excellence in all we do

Values

Working for the National Park.....

We will:

- have a common goal determined by the Park's purposes and duty
- champion the Park's aspirations
- communicate clearly and listen well
- be flexible, encourage innovation and welcome challenge

.... and working together

We will:

- trust and respect people within and outside the SDNPA
- work in an open way
- work as one organisation which is mutually supportive
- be committed to working in partnership with others to develop shared priorities and gain mutual benefits

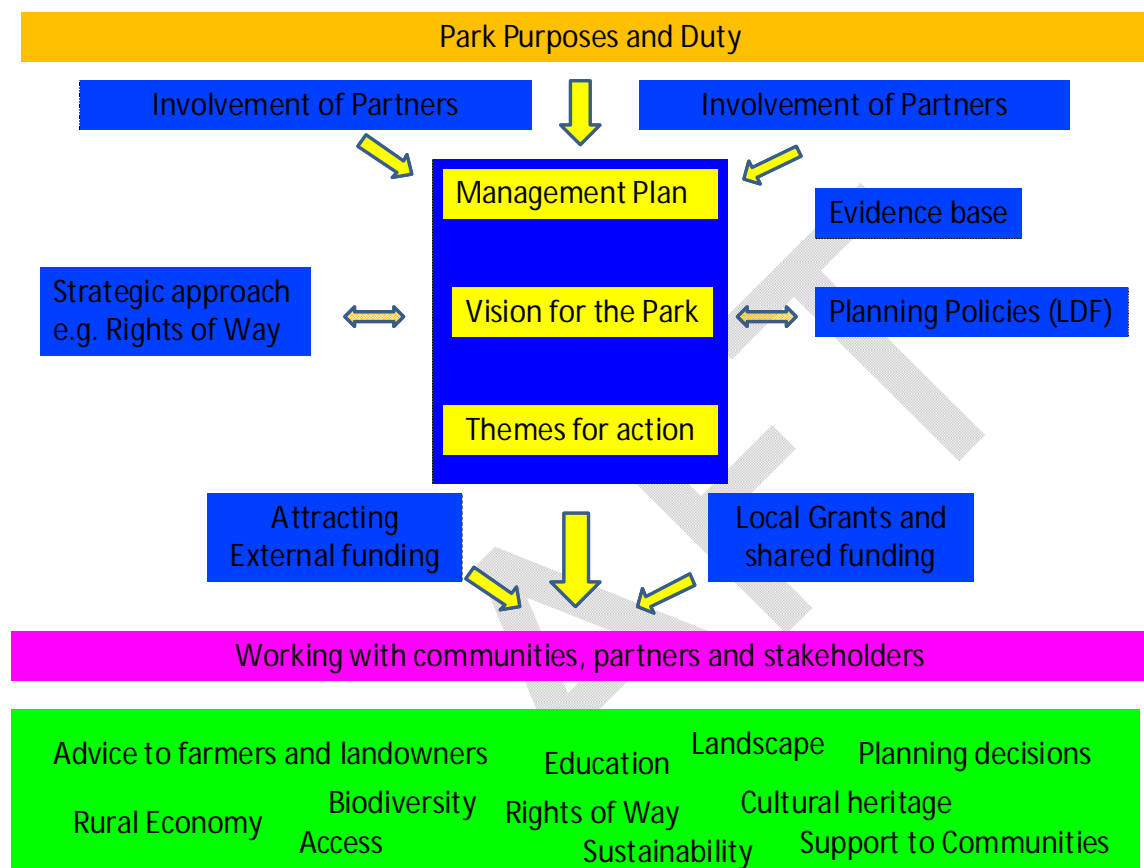
...to deliver results

We will:

- Ensure our approach and decisions are informed by evidence
- Be positive and enthusiastic: take the initiative
- be seen to add value in all that we do.

LOOKING AHEAD - STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL DELIVERY

The work of the South Downs National Park Authority is rooted in its statutory purposes and duty. This year's business plan is intended to set out the conclusion of the work involved in the transitional year to establish the Authority and now to put in place the important building blocks which will support the future direction and work within the National Park.



Objective 1

Define the strategic priorities and actions for the South Downs National Park by working effectively with partners and stakeholder and set these out in the National Park Management Plan

A key objective will be working with communities, partners and other stakeholders to develop the vision for the National Park which will shape future priorities, strategic direction, implementation plans etc. Having a shared Vision for the National Park will be an important task to be completed in the first year.

The Authority is committed to ensuring that this work is undertaken in partnership with others to secure commitment to the implementation of the shared plans. So early tasks will be the creation of the Partnership and Partnership Forum to provide a basis for future discussions and joint working.

This work will be brought together in the South Downs National Park Management Plan – a plan of action for all who have a stake in the future of the South Downs National Park not just the Authority. Work will commence in 2011-12 to collect information and evidence to inform the debate about priorities for the future.

Objective 2

Support actions that help achieve the emerging priorities of the South Downs National Park Management Plan

The breadth of the Plan and the commitment to ensuring widespread involvement, means that it will take some time to produce the SDNPMP. However the Authority is keen not to lose momentum and to act upon priorities that emerge during the development of the Plan.

The Authority will set aside resources in its budget to allow it to invest in the emerging priorities for the Park.

In this period there are some key working arrangements that the Authority needs to get in place which will be of strategic importance; these include the approach to Rights of Way (involving the highways authorities), supporting agro-environmental schemes (in conjunction with Natural England) and an enhanced role for the South Downs Way (a National Trail supported by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

Another immediate priority will be to improve access and the Authority aims to establish an effective Local Access Forum.

Objective 3

Deliver effective and efficient planning services that support the National Park Purposes and Duty

On 1 April 2011 the Authority will become the planning authority for the whole of the National Park area. This is significant part of its work and means it will become the 8th largest planning authority in England.

Continuing the theme of partnership working and securing the best value for money, the SDNPA is intending to delegate a large part of the decision making in relation to planning applications to the 15 local planning authorities in the National Park area. This should make it easy for local people and organisations to apply for and comment upon planning permission in their locality. SDNPA will be responsible for deciding a limited number of major or significant planning applications itself.

Behind the scenes there will be extensive work to set up systems, procedures and monitoring arrangements to ensure consistency of approach and a seamless process for those using the system.

But the Authority will be responsible for the planning policies across the National Park. So in the next couple of years the Authority will be developing its own planning policies (known as the Local Development Framework). This will include some important strategies such as the approach to minerals and waste. There will be a transitional period until the Authority has its own planning policies and in this period it will be relying on the existing local authority planning policies .

There will be a major programme to implement a new planning system by April 2012 which will be then used for all of the estimated 4000 planning applications per year that lie within the park area.

To be successful these changes need to be communicated effectively to a wide range of interested parties.

Objective 4

Encourage community involvement in meeting local needs and emerging priorities in accordance with the South Downs National Park purposes

The Authority is keen to work with communities and partners to further the Purposes and Duty of the National Park. It will provide funding and other services to support local initiatives that strengthen communities.

The Authority places great emphasis on encouraging and supporting volunteering. An early project for 2011-11 will be to complete a review of volunteering arrangements across the National Park with the aim of increasing and diversifying opportunities for volunteering and strengthening communities.

One its major operational activities will be the work of the Rangers service. This will provide a 'first stop shop' for advice and assistance to communities, land managers and other partners. It will help to ensure successful community action to support the Purposes and Duty and emerging priorities from work on the National Park Management Plan

Objective 5 (Internal)

Ensure an effective and efficient organisation that is able to support achievement of the Purposes and Duty

Internally, the Authority will continue to put in place staffing, systems and support arrangements to enable it to fulfil its Purposes and Duty and meet its objectives.

The aim is to complete the recruitment of permanent staff so that there is a full complement by September 2011.

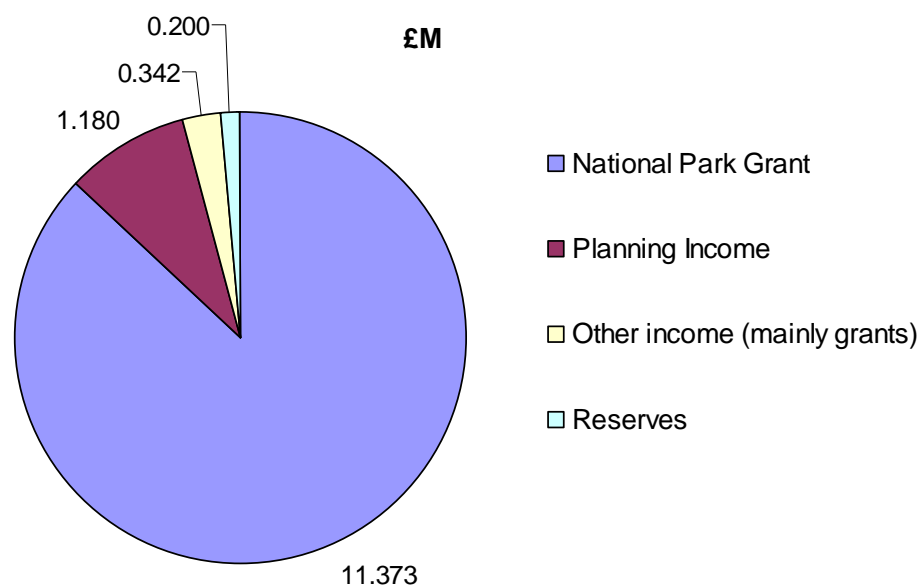
In terms of the Authority's buildings, work will progress on the refurbishment of the new headquarters building to enable occupation in late 2012 and a review of the provision of area offices.

In accordance with its guiding principles the Authority will review and secure effective support services and is committed to procuring these through partnership arrangements as far as possible.

KEY INFORMATION

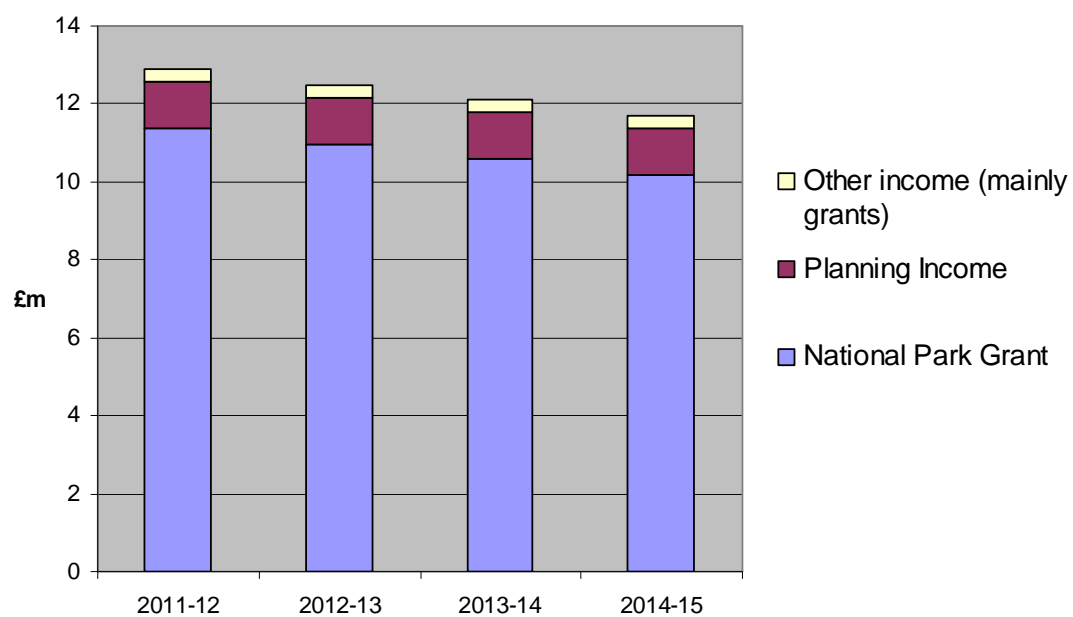
Where the Authority's income comes from

The main source of income is a grant from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The other significant income is from fees charged for planning applications.



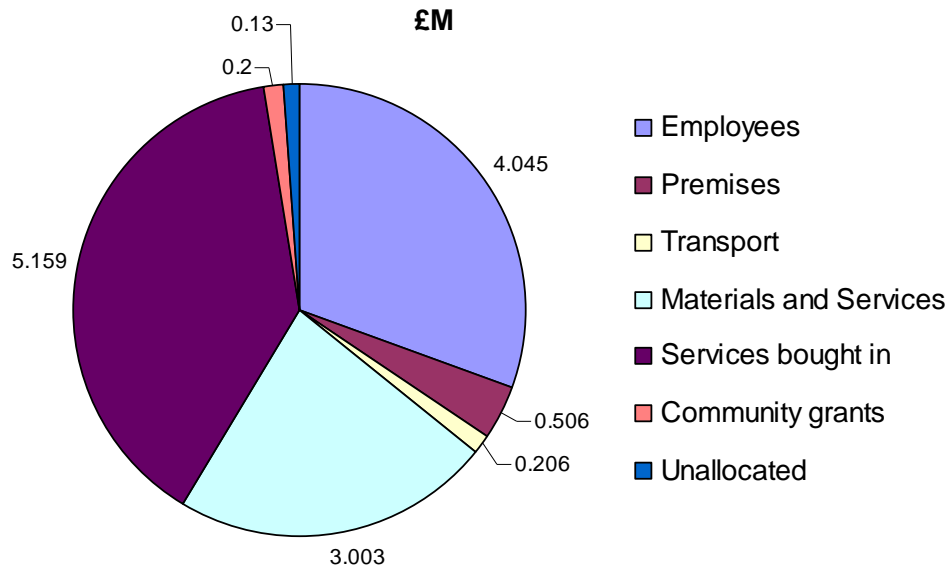
Funding over 4 years

The Income from Defra is expected to reduce over the next four years. The Authority has established a Medium Term Financial Strategy which ensures that its plans take account of this reduction.



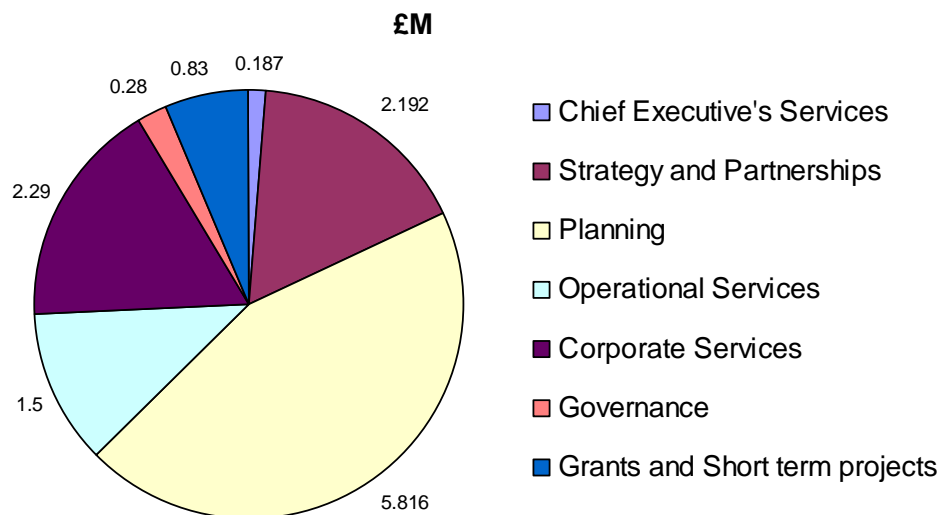
What the Authority will spend

The Authority has made a decision to buy in services in areas such as planning and support services from other Local Authorities.

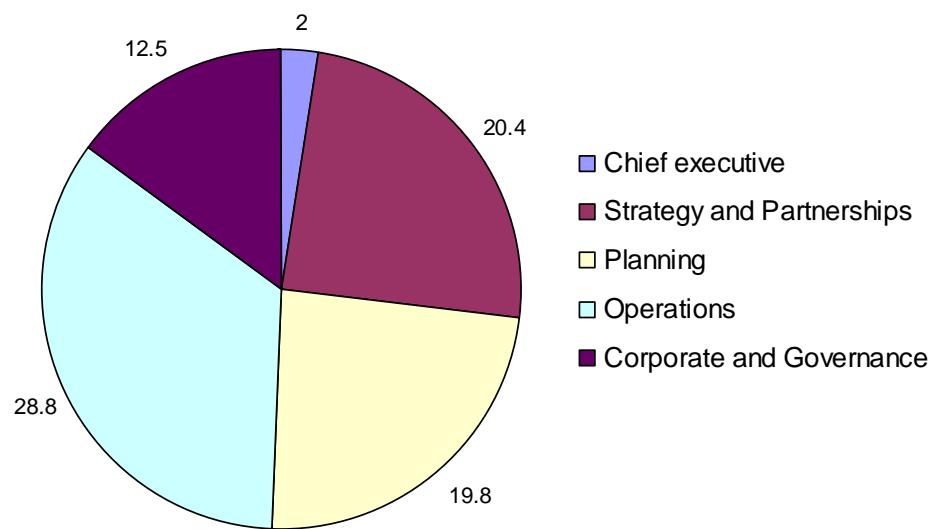


Spending against the objectives

The main areas of spending are relating to planning, operational services and working with partners to develop the Park.



Staffing information



CONTACT INFORMATION

[How to]

2011-12 OBJECTIVES AND KEY TASKS

Objective 1 Define the strategic priorities and actions for the South Downs National Park by working effectively with partners and stakeholder and set these out in the South Downs National Park Management Plan (SDNPMP)		
Work with partners and stakeholders to develop draft strategies that identify the most important challenges and opportunities in the South Downs, consistent with the Purposes and Duty	Strategic Leads	March 2012
Clarify the evidence base required for the National Park Management Plan by June 2011 and produce a timetable for its collection and presentation	Research and Evidence Manager	September 2011
Establish the Partnership Forum	Partnership Delivery Manager	May 2011
Establish the Partnership	Partnership Delivery Manager	June 2011
Create opportunities for all stakeholders to contribute their views and evaluate this evidence	Strategic Leads	December 2011
Clarify the structure, key issues and timetable required to produce the SDNPMP	Partnership Delivery Manager and Strategic Leads	December 2011
Establish an agreed vision for the SDNP	Strategic Leads	March 2012
Objective 2 Support actions that help achieve the emerging priorities of the South Downs National Park Management Plan		
Identify and progress opportunities for support and investment in early actions that will help achieve the emerging priorities of the SDNPMP	Strategic Leads	First phase by July 2011
Work with Natural England and other partners and stakeholders to establish a strategic approach to the South Downs Way.	Head of Operations	July 2011
Secure agreement with the Highways Authorities to the approach to be adopted to maintaining the Rights of Way network across the National Park	Strategy Leads – Access and Visitors, RoW officer	Agreement in place by 31 March 2012
Identify and implement opportunities to promote improve access to areas of the National Park including establishing a Local Access Forum that has clear objectives and that the Forum membership finds to be effective	Strategy Leads – Access and Visitors, RoW officer	Forum in place by 30 April 2011 Measure effectiveness by 31 March 2012

Objective 3 Deliver effective and efficient planning services that support the National Park Purposes and Duty		
Introduce effective arrangements for determining planning applications in partnership with the 15 local planning authorities in the area covered by the National Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the planning service level agreements by April 2011 • Establish monitoring arrangements for planning services by June 2011 • Ensure the effective creation and operation of systems, procedures and governance for the SDNPA planning related work by June 2011 • Establish the efficiency gains for planning services to be achieved beginning 2012/13 	Development Management]	See detail
Define the approach and timetable for determining planning policy for the National Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a report for the Authority by May 2011 which recommends the initial approach to be adopted to produce the Planning Core Strategy, and Minerals & Waste policy, informed by dialogue with local authorities • Define the technical stages to producing the Planning Core Strategy by December 2011 	Policy Planning	See detail
Implement effective systems and processes to handle the planning applications arising in the National Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the implementation programme for the SDNPA planning system by April 2011 with an agreed go live date no later than 1 April 2012 • Implement the SDNPA planning system, including training, scanning and data transfer, for the transitional year 2011-12 by May 2011 	Planning team and others	See detail
Ensure that the people and organisations across the National Park are aware of the planning arrangements introduced on 1 April 2011.	Communications	Complete by June 2011

Objective 4 Encourage community involvement in meeting local needs and emerging priorities in accordance with the South Downs National Park purposes		
Undertake a review of volunteering across the National Park with the aim of increasing and diversifying opportunities for volunteering that help achieve the Purposes and Duty and that strengthen communities, with a report to the Authority	Volunteer team and strategic leads	By March 2012
Support local initiatives that contribute to delivering the Purposes and Duty and that strengthen communities by providing funding and other services to support local community projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Sustainable Development Fund and community grants panel • Complete an initial review of the impact of this funding 	External funding team	Panel established by May 2011 Review completed by February 2012
Provide advice and assistance to communities, landowners and other partners that helps ensure successful community action to support the Purposes and Duty and emerging priorities from work on the National Park Management Plan	Rangers, strategic leads, planning staff	Assessment of the work undertaken by November 2011
Seek to promote and maximise funding schemes (such as HLS) to support individuals and the statutory purposes of the SDNPA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have completed [TBC] HLS schemes by 31 March 2012 • To have helped resolve tensions between farmers and visitors in at least one pilot area by 31 March 2012 	Rangers, countryside management advisors, farm and land managers advisors	See detail
Objective 5 (Internal) Ensure an effective and efficient organisation that is able to support achievement of the Purposes and Duty		
Review and secure effective support services, where appropriate through partnership arrangements, by March 2012	Corporate Services Directorate	Individual procurements complete 31 March 2012
Carry out refurbishment of the new headquarters building in a timely fashion to the extent that operations allow	Head of Procurement, ICT and Estates	Achievement of agreed refurbishment timetable
Review the provision of area offices to support local services and arrange improved facilities	Head of Procurement, ICT and Estates	Achievement of agreed programme for each office
Complete recruitment of permanent staff so that there is a full complement by September 2011	Head of HR and Health and Safety, HR recruitment team	September 2011

KEY PERFORAMNCE INDICATORS (still subject to development)

Planning application targets

Level of external funding secured

DRAFT