

**Agenda Item 12**  
**Report RPC23/12**

Report to	<b>Resources and Performance Committee</b>
Date	<b>14 November 2012</b>
Report from	<b>Director of Corporate Services</b>
Title of Report	<b>Update on Area Offices</b>
Purpose of Report	<b>To provide an update on work to improve working conditions at the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) area offices.</b>

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**Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to note the report.**

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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At its meeting on the 5 September 2012, the Resources and Performance Committee requested an update on any health and safety or other matters that could be adversely affecting the SDNPA area offices.
- 1.2 This report gives a brief summary of all work undertaken at each location.
- 1.3 The Resources and Performance Committee will receive an annual report on health and safety each financial year. The first of these is intended to be following the end of the 2012-13 financial year.

**2. Actions and lease status at Area offices**

**2.1 Midhurst Depot:**

- Office and workshop on a lease to 31/03/14 from West Sussex County Council. Three month notice required from either side to end lease.
- The buildings are adequate to support operations in the short term. Medium term options being considered include joining forces with other partners, amalgamating with the Weald & Downland museum area office at Singleton or acquiring a new interpretation centre using the 'South Downs Centre' model.
- Recent maintenance items include replacing broken guttering, repairing roof leaks, fixing toilets, repairing water leaks in the kitchen, clearing access route to the emergency exit, removing self seeded vegetation from the flat roof.
- There are no outstanding health and safety issues.

**2.2 Singleton Depot:**

- Office and tool store on a lease to 31/03/15 from the Weald & Downland Museum.
- The buildings are adequate to support operations in the short term. Medium term options are being considered in partnership with the Weald & Downland Museum, including the potential provision of interpretation space as well as office accommodation and a work shop or linking up in another partnership if museum plans change.
- No major maintenance or repairs have been required this year to date.
- There are no outstanding health and safety issues.

**2.3 Stanmer Park and Seven Sisters:**

- Office, tool store and shared workshop facilities at Stanmer Park are on a licence to 31/03/15 from Brighton and Hove City Council. A tool store at Seven Sisters Country

Park supporting the Eastern Area Ranger team and Volunteer Rangers is on a lease to 31/03/14 from East Sussex County Council.

- The buildings are adequate to support operations in the short term. Medium term options are being considered in partnership with Brighton and Hove City Council, including restoration of Stanmer Park farm buildings to provide office accommodation, interpretation space, café etc. Brighton & Hove City Council are leading on this work and SDNPA Officers are working closely with them. Other partnership options may be possible if the Stanmer Park re-development does not happen.
- A leaking roof has been attended to this financial year.
- There are no outstanding health and safety issues.

#### **2.4 Queen Elizabeth Country Park:**

- Office and site of tool store container on a lease to 31/12/13 from Hampshire County Council (on a site owned by the Forestry Commission).
- A planning application has been submitted for the supply of a temporary second storage container to split an overcrowded tool-store and workshop in the existing unit, into two safer areas and to carry out ground works to improve pedestrian travel across the site.
- The buildings are adequate to support operations in the short term. Medium term options are being considering in partnership with Hampshire County Council and the Forestry Commission (the Council's lease with the Commission expires in 2013). Initial outputs from this work are expected in December 2012. There has been a long-term working partnership with the Council and encouraging work with the Forestry Commission (such as working with them to improve their Alice Holt site, to include a public face for the National Park).
- There have been no major maintenance or repairs required this year to date.
- The only current health and safety issue is resolving the cramped Volunteer Rangers' facilities.

### **3. Next Steps**

- 3.1 Orders are to be placed for Portable Appliance Testing and Fire Risk Assessments.
- 3.2 Quotes are to be obtained for the QECF container so that an order can be placed should the planning application be approved. It is estimated that the total cost to purchase and install would amount to £8,000.
- 3.3 Continued work with partners (WSCC, Weald & Downland, BHCC, HCC, FC) on feasibility work at area office locations.
- 3.4 A sequential approach will be taken to resolving accommodation issues in priority order in line with the estates strategy.

### **4. Resources**

- 4.1 Officer time to carry out tender evaluations and to manage contractors once on site to carry out works.
- 4.2 The 2012/13 revenue budget includes £0.0283 million for the running costs of all SDNPA offices which includes costs for leasing, utilities, repairs and maintenance.
- 4.3 The Authority has an earmarked reserve of £0.250 million for area office refurbishment in addition to the £0.113 million approved capital programme for Western Area Scheme. Any medium term solutions for Area Offices will be reported for approval by Members to release any funding required.

### **5. Risk Management**

- 5.1 The anticipated approval of an additional container at QECF, will offer more space for tool storage and for the short term resolution of space constraints.

- 5.2 Portable appliance testing is required in all SDNPA offices to ensure the safe working of all electrical equipment. This is arranged on a regular basis.
- 5.3 All SDNPA offices now have fit for purpose fire evacuation procedures and fire marshals in place. All staff have attended fire training.
- 5.4 Regular maintenance schedules are in place for all area offices to ensure the safe working of facilities such as boilers.

## **6 Human Rights, Equalities, Health & Safety**

- 6.1 These works are necessary to ensure a safe working environment for staff and volunteers..

## **7 External Consultees**

- 7.1 BHCC, Forestry Commission, HCC, ESCC

## **HÉLÈNE ROSSITER**

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Appendices None

SDNPA Consultees Chief Executive Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Planning, Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Director of Operations, Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer & Legal Services.