

Report to	Audit Committee
Date	5 April 2011
By	Director of Corporate Services
Title of Report	Whistleblowing Policy
Purpose of Report	To present the draft Whistleblowing Policy

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to approve the Whistleblowing Policy attached at Appendix 1.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The report sets out a draft Whistleblowing Policy which is intended to provide an effective way in which people working for the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) can raise concerns.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 18 January 2011 the Audit Committee received an Internal Audit report on THE SDNPA's governance arrangements. One recommendation was:

"Recommendation 5: Both a Whistleblowing and Complaints Policy should be put in place."

- 2.2 This recommendation was accepted by SDNPA managers and a complaints policy was submitted to the Standards Committee on 11 February 2011 and will be recommended to the Authority meeting on 29 March 2011. This report deals with the Whistleblowing Policy.

3. Whistleblowing Policy

- 3.1 A whistleblower is a person who tells the public or someone in authority about alleged dishonest or illegal activities (misconduct) occurring in a government department, a public or private organization, or a company. The alleged misconduct may be classified in many ways; for example, breaking the law, rules, regulations and/or a direct threat to public interest, such as fraud, health/safety concerns and corruption.
- 3.2 Whistleblowing has received particular public attention in recent years with a number of high profile cases reported in the media. Put at its simplest "whistleblowing" occurs when an employee or worker provides certain types of information about malpractice, usually to the employer or a regulator, which has come to their attention through work. Usually the whistleblower is not directly, personally affected by the danger or illegality but makes the disclosure "in the public interest".
- 3.3 A Whistleblowing policy is designed to encourage employees and workers to raise their concerns without jeopardizing their own positions.
- 3.4 It is good practice for employers to adopt a Whistleblowing Policy to reassure employees that there will be no adverse repercussions for raising cases with their employer. Evidence suggests that employers who have a policy are less likely to be taken to an employment tribunal on such issues, and employees are more likely to raise matters internally rather than referring them to an external regulator, thus giving the employer the opportunity to take quick and decisive action.

- 3.5 The draft Whistleblowing Policy is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.6 Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, employees and workers who make a “protected disclosure” are protected from being treated badly or dismissed. For a disclosure to be protected it must be made to an appropriate body. For example, disclosing a health and safety issue to the employer or to the Health and Safety Executive is likely to be protected, but not if the concern is disclosed to the media.
- 3.7 In 2008 the British Standards Institution, in partnership with Public Concern at Work, produced a Code of Practice on Whistleblowing arrangements, and the attached Policy at **Appendix 1** follows the guidance in this Code
- 4. Resources**
- 4.1 There are no additional resource implications arising directly from this report.
- 5. Risk Management**
- 5.1 The Whistleblowing Policy provides a way in which people working for the SDNPA can raise concerns about what is happening within the organisation. This may provide the opportunity for the SDNPA to take firm and prompt action, thereby reducing the SDNPA’s exposure to ongoing risks.
- 6. Human Rights, Equalities, Health and Safety**
- 6.1 The policy is based on principles of equality and diversity. Specifically it is intended to encourage and support anyone working for the SDNPA in raising concerns and prevent subsequent repercussions.
- 7. External Consultees**
- 7.1 None.

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Appendices	Appendix 1 – Whistleblowing Policy
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive Officer, Head of Planning, Head of Operations, Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer & Senior Solicitor.