

Report to **South Downs National Park Authority**
 Date **16 October 2025**
 By **Head of Communications & Engagement**
 Title of Report **Annual update on SDNPA Communications and Engagement work**

Note

Recommendation: **The Authority is recommended to receive and consider an update on the Authority’s Communications & Engagement Work.**

I. Introduction

- I.1 The Communications and engagement work of the Authority is determined by the Communications & Engagement Strategy which was agreed by members in December 2022 (see Appendix 1).
- I.2 This report is to provide an update to the Authority on our communications and engagement work as we begin work to develop our new Communications & Engagement Strategy which will come to the P&R Committee in February 2026 and to the full NPA in March 2026.

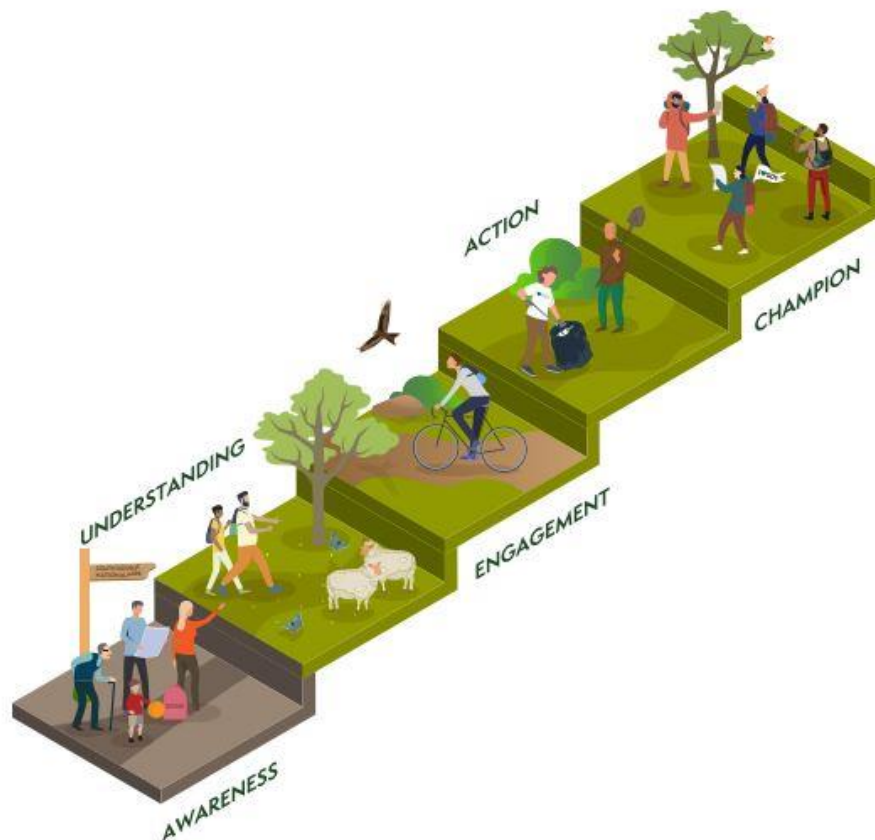
Figure 1: Objectives of our Communications & Engagement Strategy:



2. Policy context of our Communications and Engagement work

- 2.1 Our Communications and engagement work is built around three key pillars:
- Our Partnership Management Plan (PMP) and its priorities
 - Our Corporate Plan
 - Supporting delivery of our statutory functions
- 2.2 It underpins and is guided by these three key pillars and the associated work needed to make these happen – project delivery, partner support, income generation, supporting our policy work through NPE, and our wider National Park, National Landscape and Protected Landscape Partnership collaborations.
- 2.3 In addition, our Communications and engagement work depends on a number of additional factors including good internal communications, the creation, constant curation and development of our communications channels; and the building of relationships with our partners and audiences – from farmers, to communities, to businesses, visitors and more.
- 2.4 Our communications and engagement work sets out to create a connection between people and the South Downs National Park. It then seeks to move them along the ladder of stewardship to taking action to help deliver on our purposes and duty (see Figure 2)

Figure 2: SDNPA Ladder of Stewardship



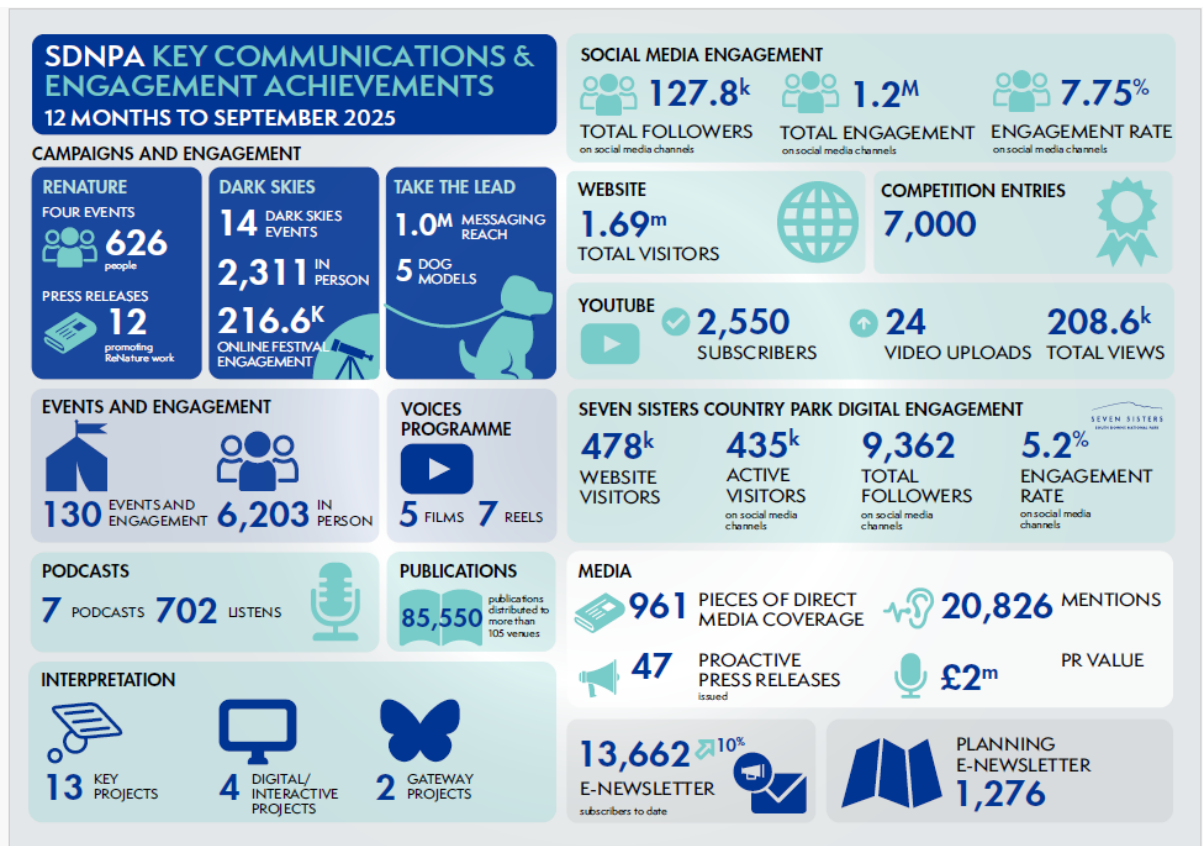
- 2.5 This work is often the first point of connection for visitors, residents, farmers, partners, businesses and policy makers, and it therefore lays the foundations for our wider engagement, outreach and project work.
- 2.6 Our Communications & Engagement work, by its very nature, includes: carefully planned proactive work and time-sensitive, reputationally important reactive work; innovative new projects; and the vital, daily business as usual that begins and builds our relationships with our key audiences. Some of our most effective communications work is that which you never see. It includes all internal and external communications and engagement work for:

- the Authority including delivering communications for externally funded projects such as Downs to the Sea and HeReSAMM and partner projects such as Changing Chalk and Big Chalk;
- Seven Sisters Country Park;
- South Downs National Park Trust;
- National Parks England and National Parks UK; and
- meeting the communications and engagement requirements of funding/partnership deals brokered by National Parks Partnerships.

3. Communications & Engagement Highlights for the last 12 months

- 3.1 This has been a very busy year for our communications and engagement work involving work on the big strategic documents that shape our work, projects of all shapes, scales and focus, and a rapidly changing and difficult external environment.
- 3.2 In addition to growing and maintaining our audiences, our focus this year has been to help support the big strategic pieces of work such as the development of our new Partnership Management Plan (PMP) and Local Plan, while staying ahead of emerging trends and ensuring that the National Park and National Park Authority have a strong, relevant and welcoming voice to deliver on our purposes and duty in a challenging external communications environment.
- 3.3 Figure 3 captures some of the key communications and engagement highlights for the last 12 months in numbers.

Figure 3: Key Communications and Engagement Achievements



Our Corporate Plan KPIs

- 3.4 **HLT#7: Work to make sure the landscape, scenery and tranquillity of SDNP is available to everyone, no matter what their access needs are.**

Figure 4: Progress Against HLT#7

KPI	KPI Target (yrs 4-5)	2023/2024	KPI contribution Q1/Q2	KPI contribution Q3/Q4	Cumulative progress (yrs 4-5)
H7.3 Number of visits to the digital Accessibility Hub	5,000	11,260	4,988	3,081	19,329
H7.4 Number of page views of the Seven Sisters Country Park Accessibility Guide	N/A	3,445	4,629	160	8,234

3.5 **HLT#8: Digitally engage 100,000 people per year with the SDNP**

Figure 5: Progress Against HLT#8

KPI	KPI Target (yr5)	2023/24	2024/25	Change on previous
H8.1 Total number of E-newsletter subscribers	11,500	11,989	13,326	+11%
H8.2 Total social media audience	110,000	97,774	115,876	+18.5%
H8.3 Total visits to the hubs throughout the year: (Nature Recovery, Climate Change, Walking hub, Communities*)	20,000	27,694	25,502	-7.9%

3.6 The SDNPA social media audience has grown considerably this year due to successful digital campaigns.

3.7 Reaching currently underrepresented and younger audiences is a key priority for us. This year we have looked to reach out in new ways across our digital channels. This has included:

- Working on targeting a younger audience through YouTube shorts.
- "TikTok" style reels.
- Developing a series of dark skies podcasts called "Embrace the Darkness."
- Developing a series of Health & Wellbeing focused podcasts.
- Supporting the development of content and podcasts by new and unheard voices through supporting a podcasting workshop.

3.8 We have seen a steadily growing increase in our YouTube views, particularly among younger audiences

3.9 Total visits to the hubs has easily met the annual target, despite overall number of visits being slightly fewer than last year. It is positive that visit numbers have been roughly consistent; these vary hugely depending on season, weather and other external factors.

3.10 In addition, we contribute engagement figures to **HLT#6: Increase diversity of those engaging with the South Downs National Park**

3.11 While it is always difficult to choose what to highlight among such a busy programme of activity, I thought it would be useful to focus on some important yet less obvious areas of

our communications and engagement work that not only deliver on purpose two but also support delivery of our nature recovery and climate action work.

Supporting Development of Our Partnership Management Plan

- 3.12 We have been involved from the very start working alongside colleagues in the development of the PMP review: producing communication principles, bringing together the experts to draft the new PMP and Vision 2060 to go out for consultation, supporting the consultation and identifying how we can bring the PMP to life as a living, shared commitment for staff, Members, our partners and the public. This work is ongoing and an update on the PMP is coming back to the P&R Committee in November.

Our Dark Skies Engagement

- 3.13 As we head towards the tenth anniversary of becoming an International Dark Sky Reserve it becomes ever clearer that our dark skies are an important part of our unique appeal to visitors and residents alike. Our dark skies capture the imagination, foster awe, spark our creativity and scientific wonder, and connect us across history. They also provide an important habitat for our wildlife and offer health and wellbeing benefits. They have a unique appeal cross all of our audiences and provide a key means for us to create a National Park for All.
- 3.14 We have held 14 events which has enabled over 2,300 people to connect with our dark skies. We reached over 216,000 on our digital platforms. We are continually looking for new ways to engage people and this year we have expanded our dark skies work, developing our first podcast series with Embrace the Darkness. The series has focused on an eclectic mix of topics from nature connectedness to health and wellbeing, and episode six features our own Authority member for Darkness, Vicki Wells. Across the introduction and six episodes we have had more than 700 listens. We have also created a range of opportunities for people to engage with nature at night through bat walks, moth trapping and night jar walks.

Our Interpretation

- 3.15 Over the last 15 years our interpretation has branched out from more traditional panels to becoming an important tool in our work to reach new audiences and to reengage existing ones. It is also a key component of our welcome and place setting and of supporting our partners.
- 3.16 In the last year our interpretation has included a gateway project at Winchester City Mill, and another almost complete at Falmer as we look to encourage and support public transport use into and around the National Park.
- 3.17 We have also continued to use technology to engage in new ways. Three photo posts have gone in at Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP). These not only provide a new way for people to engage with the landscape, they also encourage those 'Instagramable' photos from safe spots and provide an important record to support land management and nature recovery on site. An easy way for everyone to become a citizen scientist. We have also produced a Digital Archaeology Trail at St Roche's Hill (the Trundle) on the Goodwood Estate.
- 3.18 We are also working with communities to bring their visions to life. This year we supported the Midhurst Vision, with welcome signage and interpretation at key points in the town. In Seaford we worked as part of OVCA to deliver interpretation for a community garden.
- 3.19 Our interpretation has supported direct delivery of our wider objectives on the ground. For example, it has supported our nature recovery work through production of a chalk grassland management guide in partnership with Changing Chalk and Pasture for Life, and interactive video plaques at a key ReNature site, Pen Hill.
- 3.20 Finally, interpretation plays an integral role in our access work and promoting active travel. This year we worked closely with the access team and partners to develop interactive interpretation at the newly opened section of the Centurion Way, including at the culturally significant and wonderful Singleton Station.

Creating and Supporting National Park Champions

- 3.21 Our communications work is delivered by everyone – our staff, members, volunteers, partners and supporters. To enable this we have focused on a number of key activities over the last 12 months. To be able to have a positive, transparent and responsive media and PR service, we organised media training for 15 key spokespeople across the organisation, ensuring that we can be that authoritative and trusted voice on key subjects.
- 3.22 We have worked to improve our internal communications through our weekly Update, encouraging contributions from across the organisation.
- 3.23 We have provided numerous briefings to senior staff, the Chair and members, as needed, to support delivery of our objectives.
- 3.24 We have supported our parish-elected members to deliver our annual programme of parish meetings. During 2025 we have held three meetings, two general and one PMP focused during the PMP consultation period. The new Park-wide, online format is proving popular with over 80% of attendees saying they preferred the online format when polled.
- 3.25 We have looked to broaden the voices on our platforms. As part of our Voices programme we developed five films and seven reels and provided training on podcast production.
- 3.26 We have also begun the process of reviewing the Member Bulletin with Member Services to ensure that it is supporting the important role members play in championing the priorities of the PMP with partners and policy makers.

Our Digital Engagement

- 3.27 Finally, I wanted to highlight our focus on relationship building. It is what good communications and engagement is based on. It takes time and effort and while it is not always visible, it underpins all of the engagement that we do. 13 social media channels and three websites take a lot of day-to-day work to manage. Monitoring and evaluating our communications and engagement work can't be done with a few KPIs alone. The big numbers of followers and reach are only part of the story. It is the impact that our communications and engagement work has on those followers and those reached. We spend time on an ongoing basis looking at what various sources of information tell us when knitted together. Engagement is one of the really important indicators that helps us monitor the effectiveness of our communications, and I wanted to highlight it here.
- 3.28 To set context, social media engagement rates are judged against a pretty standard industry benchmark:
 - **1-3%:** Average engagement rate; many brands and influencers fall in this range.
 - **3-5%:** Very strong engagement, suggesting your audience actively interacts with your content.
 - **Above 5%:** Exceptional engagement, indicating your content is highly impactful.
- 3.29 The average engagement rate for our SDNPA social media channels is 7.75%, with variation across channels – with Instagram generally sitting somewhere around 9-10%. For SSCP channels the engagement rate is 5.2% but again, much higher on its most popular channel, Instagram.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 We have big plans for our communications and engagement work going forward. Some key next steps include:
 - Complete delivery of the PMP, from drafting to design and digital.
 - Development of a new Communications and Engagement Strategy to deliver on our new PMP and Corporate Plan. This will come before Members at the P&R Committee in February 2026 and the full NPA in March 2026.
 - The Strategy will identify a number of key, large-scale activities we will focus on over the next five years.

- Reviewing how we monitor and evaluate our communications and engagement work. As an area that changes so much in a very changeable and difficult external environment, we need to constantly review how we are capturing our areas of success and where we need to shift focus or work differently.

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	Not in relation to this report, however, a new Communications & Engagement Strategy will be considered by P&R Committee in February 2026 and NPA in March 2026.
Does the proposal raise any resource implications?	No additional ones – all proposed work will be costed as part of the upcoming budget round in the core communications and engagement budget.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	N/A
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	All PMP and Corporate Plan Outcomes.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	PMP
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	We are continuing to build and promote the Knowledge Hub to bring together communities and community groups taking action for climate change, as part of our wider climate change action hub.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	No
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes. Our communications and engagement strategy focuses our communications and engagement work at those currently underrepresented and underserved.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	No.
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Data Protection implications?	No

5. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

5.1 As this is an update report there are no risks associated with a decision.

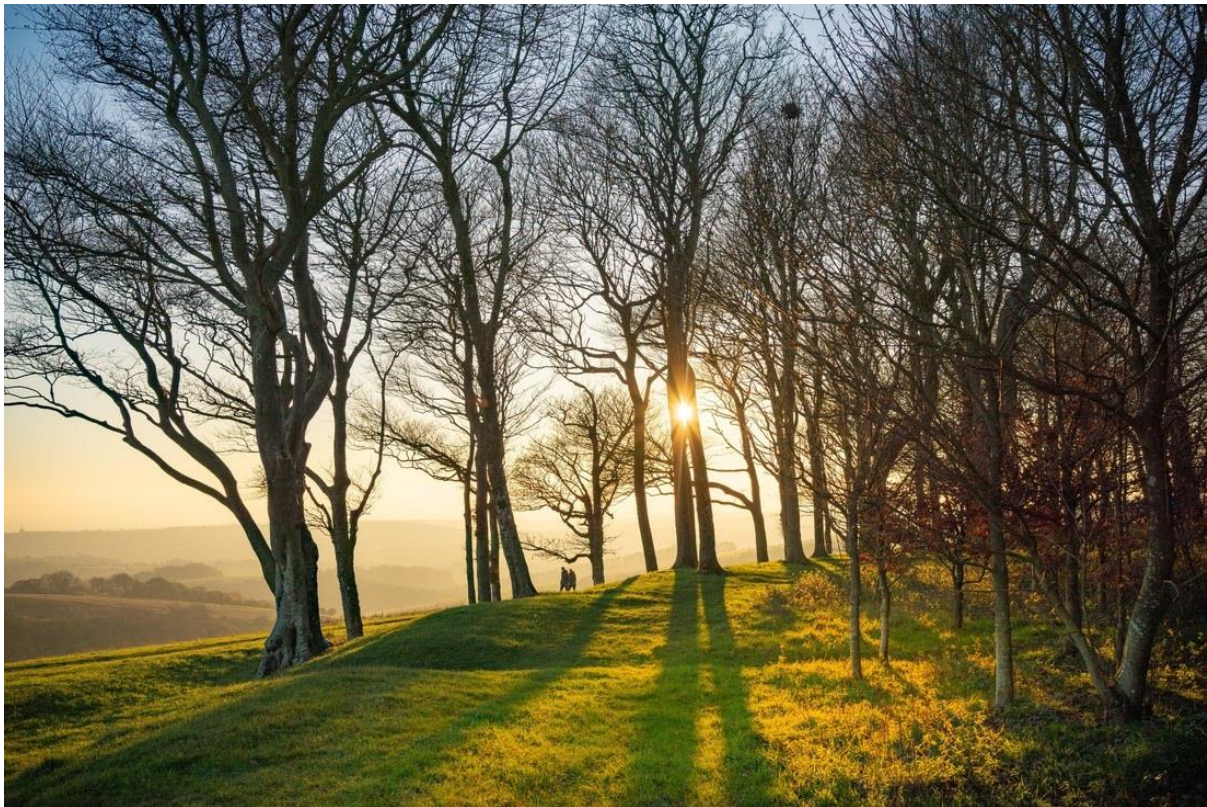
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Appendices:	I. Communications and Engagement Strategy
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive; Director of Growth and Organisational Development; Monitoring Officer.
External Consultees	None

South Downs National Park Authority
**Communications &
Engagement Strategy**
2021-25





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Introduction

The South Downs National Park covers over 1,600km² of England's most valued lowland landscapes shaped over millennia, by the people who have lived, worked and visited here. Its inspirational and varied landscapes, internationally important wildlife, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant market towns and villages hold a special place in the hearts of millions. It is truly where people and place come together. To ensure the future of one, we must secure the hearts, minds and commitment to care of the other.

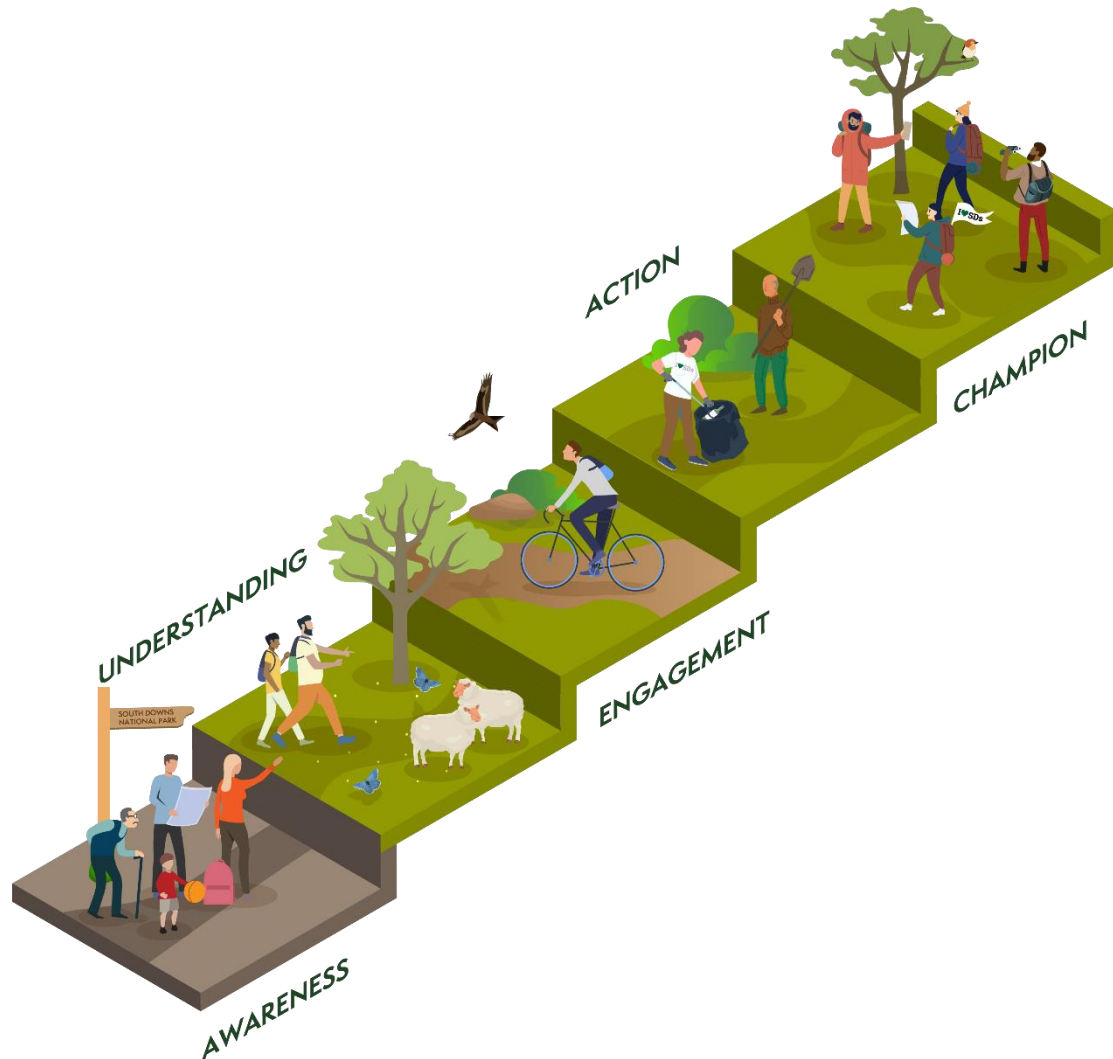
Situated in the busiest part of the UK, 117,000 people live within the National Park and a further 2.2m live within 10km of the boundary. This creates challenges that we must work with our partners to manage, but also huge opportunities to deliver a National Park that is truly for the nation – a National Park for all.

Our goal is to create a long-lasting relationship between people and the South Downs National Park, as individuals, part of communities, businesses and organisations. Great achievements have been made since the designation of the National Park, from achieving International Dark Skies Reserve Status, to developing the first landscape-led Local Plan for the whole National Park, to helping thousands of children to learn outside in their National Park, and reintroducing water voles and restoring rare chalk grassland and lowland heath. So it can be all too easy to forget that the National Park is only ten years old and that we have much to do to continue to make people aware of the National Park and its special qualities.

In particular, we must rise to the challenge of truly creating a National Park for All – a place that represents, gives voice to and welcomes everyone, and that works to ensure that everyone has a role to play in the environmental movement and in determining the future of the South Downs National Park. This Communications & Engagement Strategy is built on two important premises – we will bring the National Park to people and we will listen and learn about how we can do better to be a National Park for All.

It is through a long-lasting connection that we move people along the ladder of stewardship from awareness of the National Park to taking action to help secure its future whether that be through positive behaviour, volunteering, financial support or being a champion for this internationally important landscape (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Ladder of Stewardship

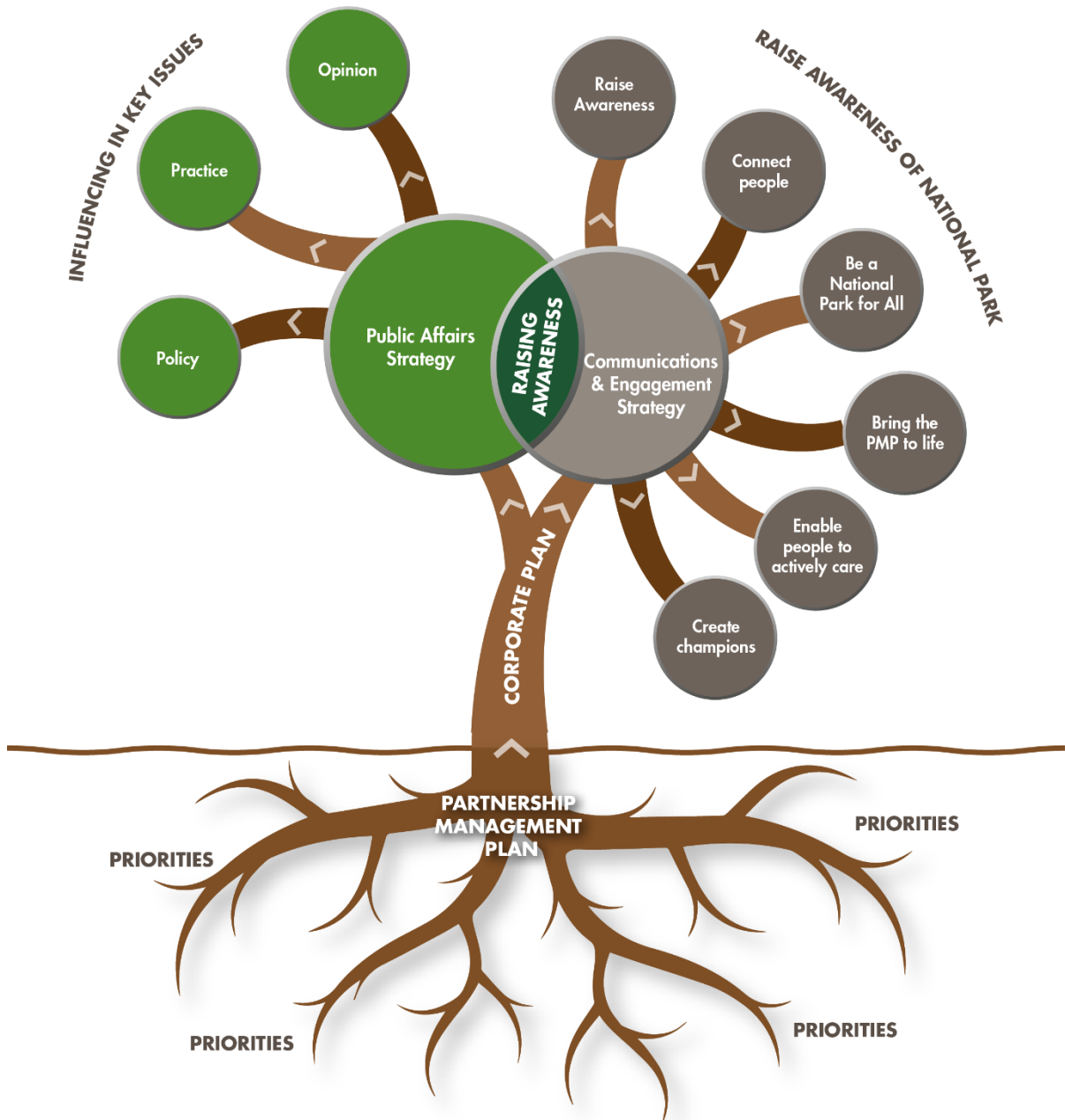


This connection and commitment to care underpins all of the work of the National Park Authority over the next five years, as set out in the Partnership Management Plan (PMP).

This Communications & Engagement Strategy sets out a framework to enable us to meet these challenges and to grasp the opportunity to build on the connection and commitment of all those who should and would join us in working towards securing the sustainable future of the South Downs National Park. Its scope is set by the outcomes of the PMP and it is, in turn, crucial to the delivery of the PMP. Our communications and engagement work will also enable us to deliver on the key priorities of the Authority’s Corporate Plan, the National Park’s Local Plan and the national agenda set out by Government.

The public affairs element of our Communications & Engagement work is captured in a separate Public Affairs Strategy. The Public Affairs Strategy identifies the three key strategic issues affecting the National Park where the Authority has the opportunity to influence policy, practice and opinion in pursuit of our Purposes and Duty (see Figure 2). The Public Affairs Strategy will be for a period of 2 years and will be reviewed by SMT every six months to ensure we continue to prioritise the right topics in a fact changing external environment.

Figure 2: How our Communication & Engagement Strategy and Public Affairs Strategy work together



Positive communications and engagement is happening right across the work of the Authority in our day-to-day work, from our ranger and planning teams to our strategic leads and our reception. This Strategy does not seek to capture or plan for all of this important engagement work. Rather, it seeks to support the achievement of the ten outcomes of the PMP through our centralised corporate

communications, and to ensure that we have the right mix and focus of channels and media to reach, engage and bring on board our key audiences through our wider work.

Our ultimate aim to raise the profile of the National Park and to create a lasting and personal relationship and commitment between our key audiences and the South Downs National Park. We want this to be a win-win relationship with both the National Park and people benefitting from it.

Objectives

The past year has seen an unprecedented and heartening reconnection with nature. This has led to both increasing opportunities and increasing demand for information about, and engagement with, the National Park from both current and new visitors. This is a huge opportunity for us to inspire and connect people with the National Park that we are keen to grasp.

The following objectives (Figure 2) set a focused blueprint for our communications and engagement work for the next five years. The objectives will be delivered through an annual Communications & Engagement Delivery Plan.

Figure 2: Our Communications and engagement objectives



In our work on raising awareness a key focus for us will be on those in the South East who currently don't know about or use the National Park, with a particular emphasis on underrepresented groups. To be a National Park for all we must represent, share the voices of and welcome everyone to both enjoy and be actively involved in securing its future.

Audiences

To achieve our Communications & Engagement Objectives, we need to communicate and engage with specific audiences to ensure they are aware of the National Park, are enabled to discover and enjoy it and understand how they can care for and support it.

The audiences we want to engage with can broadly be broken down into five key groupings. Each of these groupings contains both current and new audiences, those we have reached and those we have yet to reach:

- **Our communities:** includes our parishes, businesses, farmers and community groups.
- **Our stakeholders:** includes landowners, organisational partners such as NGOs, water companies. Natural England, local authorities, LEPs and businesses etc.
- **Our visitors:** includes visitors who live outside the National Park, residents using their or other parts of the National Park for recreation, recreational user groups etc
- **General public:** includes anyone interested in the National Park and can include people locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. This group also includes those who do not yet know about or engage with the National Park.
- **Policy and decision makers:** includes politicians and civil servants at Defra, MHCLG and other Government bodies and our local MPs etc

It is important to remember that people fall into one or more of these audiences, for example, visitors can also be residents living within our communities.

Each piece of communications and engagement work we do will be guided by the intended audience and only then will we look at what communications and engagement methods we will use. Appendix 2 looks in more detail at our key channels. Now that we know who our audiences are, we need to be clear what are key messages are.

Key messages

Where people and place come together:

The landscapes of the South Downs National Park are living, changing landscapes that have been shaped by people over millennia. Everyone has a role to play in positively shaping the future of the National Park.

The South Downs National Park is a living, dynamic place where vibrant communities combine with rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, and spectacular landscapes.

A diverse and rich tapestry:

The National Park has some of the most iconic views in the UK, but it's more than beautiful views, it's a tapestry of different and internationally-important habitats. Beneath lies a rich history and above it floats the star-filled skies of one of only 16 international Dark Skies Reserve in the world. It has been shaped and enjoyed by many different people, who have each brought a piece to the story of the South Downs. It's this rich tapestry experience that makes the South Downs National Park so special.

A National Park for All:

National Parks were designated for everyone. We want everyone to appreciate, feel connected with and enabled to enjoy nature and the National Park.

Everyone has a role to play in ensuring the future of the National Park and we welcome new voices, new ideas, fresh perspectives and new ways of doing things.

Large parts of society are missing out on enjoying the UK's protected landscapes. As the closest National Park to London and with 2.2 million people within 10km, and with good public transport

access, the South Downs National Park is an ideal landscape to engage people who have yet to connect with nature.

Connecting young people with nature is essential to supporting their health and wellbeing, and to creating the future custodians of the South Downs National Park.

Caring for the National Park:

We all have a role to play in caring for the National Park and securing its future.

75% per cent of the National Park is farmed managed by over 500 landowners, and we have a shared responsibility to care for it and to secure its future.

We are committed to working in partnership with landowners, communities and stakeholders from across the South Downs and beyond to secure the positive and sustainable future of the National Park.

Nature recovery:

Nature is increasingly under pressure and it needs all of our help to recover. The South Downs sits at the heart of nature recovery in the South East. We want the National Park to be a place where wildlife flourishes, habitats are maintained, restored, and expanded, and where everyone can experience nature and wildlife at their best.

Climate change

With its understanding of nature-based solutions to climate change, the National Park Authority has a key role to play to helping to deliver the Government's important agenda on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

We have a range of tools to help influence and deliver actions, including the PMP, Local Plan and People and Nature Network. The Climate Change agenda is broad and resources are limited, so the SDNPA is focussing on the areas where we can have the greatest impact and influence, including strengthened partnership working and community-based initiatives.

Health and wellbeing:

Connecting with nature and green space is vital for mental health and wellbeing. In the wake of the pandemic, the role of the South Downs National Park as a "natural health service", complementing our wonderful NHS, has never been more important.

The NHS identifies five ways to mental health and wellbeing: be active, keep learning, give to others, connect and be mindful. The National Park is a place where all of these can happen.

Everyone should be able to access the South Downs National Park for its health and wellbeing benefits.

At the heart of a thriving rural economy:

Being part of the National Park adds value to and benefits the communities, businesses and landscapes of the South Downs.

We work with businesses and communities across the National Park to support a diverse and sustainable rural economy which is positively linked with the special qualities of the National Park.

South Downs National Park Authority:

The South Downs National Park Authority sits at the heart of efforts to help nature recover and to connect people with nature and the National Park.

We work in partnership to get the best for the National Park.

As the planning authority for the National Park, planning is at the forefront of our efforts to conserve and enhance the National Park and to ensure that everyone can access and enjoy it.

Principles of engagement

Together with our partners we have committed to an ambitious five-year Partnership Management Plan (PMP). This ambitious plan combined with more people than ever wanting to connect with nature, means we must target our finite resources carefully and to best effect.

To do this we will:

- have a tighter focus on the core outcomes and messages enshrined in the PMP;
- have a focused, proactive targeting of those messages to key audiences;
- make greater use of digital channels and less focus on other channels such as physical events;
- invest in developing new and engaging content;
- work even more closely with partners both current and new. In particular, giving voice to those we are not currently successfully representing or reaching.

In order to achieve this, we have identified six core engagement principles that will guide the prioritisation of our communications and engagement work (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Principles of Engagement

Embed equality:	The Glover review of protected landscapes has rightly placed great emphasis on the need for National Parks to be National Parks for All. Our greatest assets are our platform and our voice. To truly be a National Park for All, in addition to targeted interventions and projects with specific groups, we must open our platforms and widen our collective National Park voice so that everyone can see, hear, feel and create their connection with the South Downs National Park. We commit to working with and giving voice to those that we are not yet successfully representing and reaching.
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Informed by the audience:	We will focus on targeted communications designed to meet the needs of our different audiences, and support and build on their connection to the National Park rather than trying to connect everyone in the same way through the same engagement means.
Collaboration:	We are a partnership-based organisation and are committed to working with our partners and creatives, current and new, to find the best communications and engagement solutions. This means knowing when we are best placed to lead and develop new products and when we should forge partnerships to use the products and platforms of others who are already doing it well.
Sustainable:	As a National Park Authority, we are committed to operating as sustainably as possible. In practice, this means digital first. We will give strong focus to our digital and social media activities, and capabilities in recognition that more people than ever are also engaging with us in this way and that it provides an opportunity to bring the National Park to those who have yet to or cannot access and enjoy the National Park.
Flexible and responsive:	We are committed to making better use of emerging technologies and platforms, and to having the capacity and channels to respond quickly and effectively to engagement and communications opportunities and challenges.
Focused and cost effective	With finite resources we will increase our impact through greater focus, improved delivery and stronger targeting. We cannot and should not try to cover everything. This will spread us too thinly and weaken and lessen our impact. This means that at times we will need to say no.

Channels

We use many different channels for our communications and engagement work and these channels change and are added to as new opportunities arise. It is vital that we use our channels with precision, based on chosen objective and audiences. Each channel has its own merits. Guided by our objectives, audience and guiding principles of engagement, we are committed to using our channels to best effect. See Appendix 2 for more details on our current channels.

Measuring success

Progress on our communications & engagement work as set out in this strategy will continue to be reported back to members as part of the annual reporting cycle.

Translating this strategy into delivery will be accomplished through an annual Delivery Plan. This annual Delivery Plan will be agreed by the Senior Management Team (SMT). This Delivery Plan will identify and timetable key pieces of communications and engagement work, including:

- core communications and engagement work such as our digital engagement, events, interpretation, ewnewsletters, parish meetings etc etc;

- communications and engagement work of key projects funded by the Theme Programme Boards;
- planning related communications and engagement;
- internal communications.

It is crucial that this Delivery Plan is flexible enough to accommodate the fast-changing nature of communications and engagement work and so will be reviewed every quarter by the SMT.

We will continue to use a number of means to assess how we are doing including:

- You Gov, visitor, partner and other surveys.
- Citizens' Panel
- Both output and engagement stats from across our channels and activities.
- Project evaluations and recommendations on communications and engagement activities.

Conclusion

This Communications & Engagement Strategy sets out the strategic direction for our centralised communications and engagement work for 2020-25. Its clear objectives, key messages and principles of engagement will help us to prioritise our work so that we can support delivery of the National Park's *Partnership Management Plan*.

Appendix: Our Communications and Engagement Channels

Digital: Social media		
Goals	Approach	Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To bring the South Downs National Park to the broadest audience possible • To engage directly with the broadest audience possible • To inform them of the unique character of the landscape that makes the South Downs a National Park • To enable responsible visits to the National Park • To drive traffic to the website where it makes sense e.g. news stories, trail guides & leaflets, Covid information • To grow our social channels to increase our reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We use social media to connect and communicate with our audience directly and also provide value to help them enjoy their South Downs experience (either virtually or physically) • The audience is exposed to over 5000 messages per day so our goal is to arrest their attention through the use of inspiring images or video • We ‘hijack’ awareness days and hashtags to grow social channels e.g. #MondayMotivation, #WildlifeWednesday, #FridayFeeling • Not all content is suitable for all channels so content has to be optimised • Types of content that are particularly effective are factoids & ‘did you knows.’ These are often ‘shareable’ which increases both reach & acquires new channel followers • Increasingly there is a growing audience inspired by wildlife & nature stories, along with cultural heritage enthusiasts (#HillfortsWednesday & 	<p>Going forward, we will be focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being generous with our channels & offering more channel takeovers e.g. Insta Story takeovers. We’ve done these in the past but we will be more targeted in making overtures to content creators e.g. photographers & younger environmentalists/outdoor enthusiasts • More ‘Live’ content, using the Facebook & Instagram ‘Live’ features. Virtual walks led by rangers have proven to be popular • Providing more dynamic video content & investing more resource in curating the SDNPA YouTube channel to build a community on that platform •

	<p>#FolkloreThursday are popular tags), as to is health & wellbeing-led content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media allows us to have a more casual tone of voice, it can best be summarised as: light-hearted, informative, conversational, occasionally humorous (or attempts to be) and engaging. We are not: corporate, too serious or lecturing (although occasionally we have to be) 	
Digital: website and other		
Goals	Approach	Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide users with relevant information to help them to learn about & explore the National Park • Provide users who are also residents up to date information on the work of the Authority, including the Planning service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The redesign of the website created a new structure that could communicate both the work of the Authority & act as a digital home for the South Downs National Park • The dual navigation & drop down menus are designed to reduce the number of steps a user must take before finding the information they're looking for • Traffic to the website is directed through social media & links to recent press releases, walking & cycling routes, newsletter sign-ups, photography competitions & events 	<p>Going forward, the website will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide relevant information for users • Utilise new photography to ensure the SDNP is reflective of the people who visit the National Park • Be a resource space for ongoing projects that help us to achieve the PMP outcomes. • Creating a digital presence and gateway for SSCP.
Media and PR		
Goals	Approach	Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise broad public awareness about the South Downs National Park, including the work of the Authority and the 10 outcomes of the Partnership Management Plan. • To celebrate and promote the achievements of the National Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content first, so we focus on developing pieces that tell a story, are clear to understand and have wide appeal. • Substantive, trustworthy and impactful – content that is based on fact (ever more important in the days of fake news!) 	<p>Going forward will be focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media that ties to the Public Affairs Strategy and focuses on key strategic moments, including Seven Sisters, Heathlands Reunited evaluation, nature recovery and health and wellbeing.

<p>through our range of initiatives and project work across all directorates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give the South Downs National Park hyper-local, local, regional, national and international profile. • Target some of the key niche audiences, such as farmers, foresters, and under-represented groups. • To protect and enhance the reputation of a publicly-funded organisation and give transparency, prestige and authenticity. • To help deliver PMP and Public Affairs Strategy by influencing decision-makers and policy makers, including Government, MPs, Local Government, parish councils, charities, not-for-profits, developers, agents and business leaders. • To inspire people – to visit, enjoy, learn and care for the National Park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspirational and positive – we want to celebrate the good work of the Authority, bringing the audience with us rather than just talking at them. • Varied – delving into every facet of the Authority’s work, while also focusing on the main themes e.g. nature recovery, farming. • Quality over quantity – not every piece of work needs to be a press release. Optimising impact regionally and nationally. • Content is king – so while over 100 press releases were issued last year, this content can be repurposed for all our channels, including website, social media, newsletters, and publications. • Prepared – having the right answers when difficult questions are posed by media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to build the news agenda for the National Park as we enter the post-pandemic era. • Aiming to reach under-represented groups in urban locations – particularly those who will potentially be more disconnected and disenfranchised following the pandemic. • More user-generated content where appropriate.
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Interpretation		
Goals	Approach	Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of the National Park for visitors using key sites. • Increase the sense of place in the National Park with the incorporation of the Shared Identity into interpretation projects, both SDNPA-led and partner-led. • Work with partners and landowners to manage visitor behaviour through interpretation, including messages around Take the Lead, Scheduled Monuments and Open Access land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our approach to interpretation is led by audience and landscape. What is appropriate for one project is not always appropriate for another, so we work closely with partners and stakeholders to determine the best approach that will target the right audience and deliver the key messages. • Traditional style lecterns have their place and are a valuable way to convey information and stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a continued push towards ‘invisible’ interpretation strategies, such as NFC plaques, that blend in with the landscape and add value to sites without taking away from their beauty. • 2020 has shown the need for increased public understanding of the landscape and its history. Interpretation projects that help to tell these stories while also educating the public about management of habitats for wildlife, the value and meaning of Scheduled Monument sites

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell the stories of the people and landscapes in the National Park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are using NFC tags and QR codes more frequently, recognising that these offer an excellent platform for sharing digital content and films. This is a flexible approach to interpretation, allowing content to be updated when required and connecting with different audiences who might not stop to read a lectern board. Further digital interpretation work is being explored through the use of apps. The In their Footsteps app will launch in May (delayed due to Covid-19) and the application process for an additional tour based in the west has opened, with the tour launch planned for summer 2021. This app offers partners the chance to tell potentially unknown stories about creatives who were inspired by the South Downs, add value to the visitor experience and tap into new audiences. 	<p>and how they can become custodians for the National Park will be a big focus going forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to highlight gateway sites and grow public awareness of the National Park. Working with the Heritage Coast partnership to plan and deliver interpretation that will increase awareness of the area and its value. Logging Shared Identity projects and gaining a better understanding of its use by partners.
Publications		
Goals	Approach	Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise public awareness of the South Downs National Park, it's hidden gems and all the different activities people can discover here. National Park for all - To inspire anyone to learn about, visit and enjoy the National Park To give practical tools, hints and tips for the best way to explore and enjoy the National Park, landscape, wildlife and dark skies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspiring readers – with positive, inclusive and straight forward content Factual and informative. Image led – let the photos do the talking 	<p>Going forward we will be focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring our publications have National Parks for All at their heart. Accessibility

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver the PMP, the Local Plan and other strategic documents in a way that is both attractive and accessible to all 		
Events		
Goals	Approach	Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise awareness of the National Park and its special qualities as a first step of the ladder of stewardship To make a National Park for all, where everyone feels welcome to visit To create a national awareness of the special qualities and the identity of the SDNP To bring the National Park to people in areas outside the boundary especially urban To promote projects being delivered within the PMP To promote positive behavioural norms in visitors to the SDNP To promote specific messages to targeted user groups, such as dog-owners and farmers To establish a two-way dialogue where everyone has a chance to express their views and record their experiences To engage in ways that suit our audiences, especially those that are underrepresented in the visitor profile of the SDNP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will run a range of physical and digital events seeking to inform and engage our audiences in a diverse range of delivery mechanisms We will seek to maintain our links with traditional shows and events but increasingly incorporate digital elements to broaden our reach and the accessibility of our events We will increase the audience participation and the diversity of our presenters in our on-line events to make more inclusive We will continue to target town centres, festivals and multifaith festivals in order to engage with our under-represented groups <p>We will seek out specialist events where we have relevant messages to deliver</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merge our events delivery more seamlessly with our social media presence to appeal more to audiences who do not find us through more traditional family events Seek to give a greater platform to new voices so that our users see a wider demographic range of personalities speaking about their experiences and passions Seek to instil behavioural norms in new visitors through peer influencers
Campaigns		
Goals	Approach	Priorities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a connection between people and the National Park • To create an understanding of how to care for the National Park and to take positive action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use positive social norming behaviour change approach to create a positive community for change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the Lead • Nature Recovery • Fundraising campaigns for the National Park Trust.
Internal Communications		
Goals	Approach	Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making information easily accessible and available to help inform and direct staff to the latest news in all sections of the National Park • Create well informed and inspired custodians of the National Park • Keep morale high and ensure everyone feels part of the Authority family. • Increasing readership of Update and the intranet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get staff to step outside their familiar ways of working to offer wider engagement opportunities • Use technology available to further opportunities and to keep interest and interaction – e.g. creating films for All staff events • Create inspiring content and opportunities for staff to get involved with celebrating their work stories with the whole of the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping the approach fresh to keep interest alive. Continually adapting to the requirements – e.g. moving to virtual events • Ensuring a wide range of staff involvement to keep a good spread of information • Revamp our internal communications channels