

Report to **Policy & Resources Committee**
Date **20 November 2025**
By **Nature-based Solutions Manager**
Title of Report **Foley Estate Whole Estate Plan**
Decision

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to endorse the Foley Estate Whole Estate Plan at Appendix I.

1. Introduction

1.1 In 2015, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) introduced the concept of Whole Estate Plans (WEPs) to encourage open dialogue between land-owning organisations and the SDNPA. The WEPs look to promote collaboration between individual estates and the SDNPA to help achieve the ambitions of both continuously striving for synergy, opportunities and understanding whilst ensuring estates are suitably equipped to meet the challenges they face in the 21st Century. A WEP is a non-statutory plan, which demonstrates the overall position, and aspirations an organisation has, as an Estate. Plans do not have to cover a specific timeframe and may be updated to reflect changes in circumstance or withdrawn if appropriate but are expected to provide a longer-term vision for the future, 10 years or more.

2. Policy Context

2.1 WEPs are a progressive and almost unique approach by a Local Planning Authority (LPA) or National Park Authority (NPA) in the UK as they look to foster good working relationships with key stakeholders and facilitate better understanding of the issues surrounding sustainable rural estate communities – of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They are not focused on or to be limited to planning matters but rather the whole husbandry of the Estate – farming, woodland management, conservation, access provision, cultural heritage etc. This enables the Estate to demonstrate how they contribute to the policies and outcomes identified in the South Downs National Park Authority 2020-2025 Partnership Management Plan and support response to the Defra (2024) Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (31 January 2024).

2.2 The South Downs Local Plan (2019) sets out many of the planning policies to be used in the determination of planning applications in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and recognises the significant influence of the Estates across the SDNP and the impact the management activities of these Estates has in the short, medium and long term. Policy SD 25 p.103 of the SDNPA (2019) Local Plan states, “*positive regard will be had..... where development proposals are part of a WEP that has been endorsed by the National Park Authority and deliver multiple benefits in line with the purposes and special qualities of the National Park*”. The inclusion of a development proposal within a WEP, however, does not guarantee that planning permission will be granted and any proposal will still need to comply with relevant development plan policies. A WEP can also be used to help guide and support funding bids,

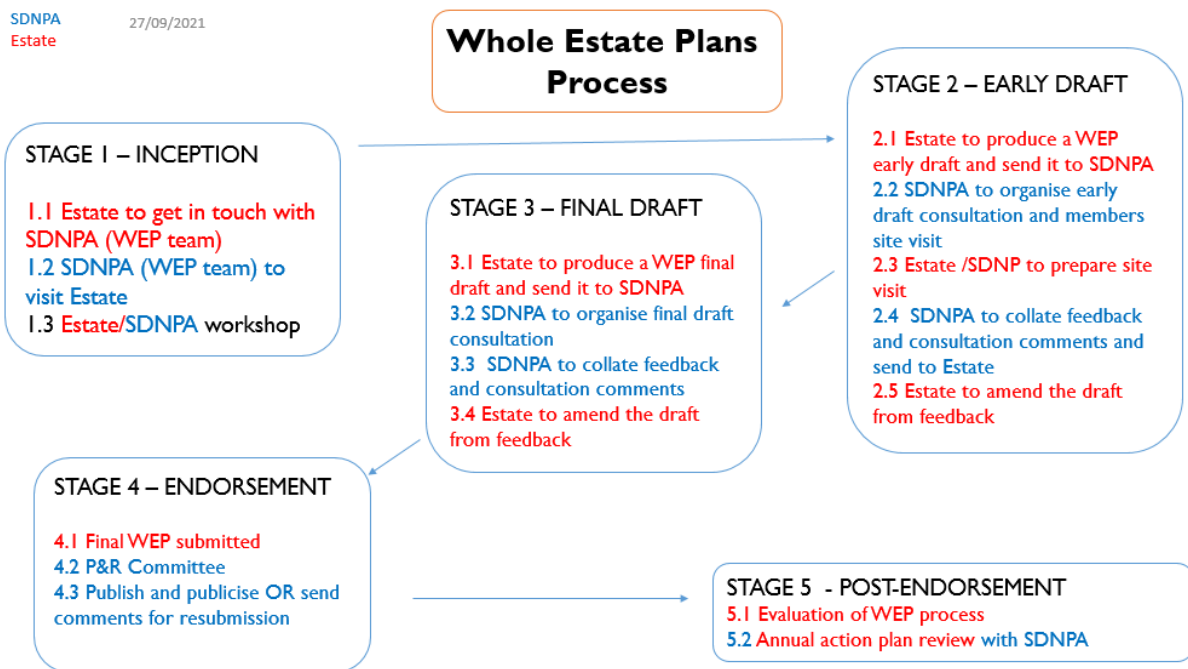
future neighbourhood plan production, agri-environment and forestry schemes and with other Natural Capital projects. Beyond the finished product, the WEP process also provides value in terms of relationship building; between the estate and the SDNPA, as well as the local community.

3. The Whole Estate Plan Process

3.1 Guidance on producing WEPs was published in March 2022 and updated in April 2024 and is available online.

3.2 The process catalogues the various elements of a WEPs journey into five sequential stages allowing easy tracking and clarity for estates on the exact point of the journey they are currently on whilst clearly identifying next steps. Stage 1 is the inception stage and sets the framework for the WEP journey including introducing the process that must be adopted to achieve endorsement. Stage 2 focusses on the early draft, the Member site visit and the first internal SDNPA consultation involving Members and officers. Stage 3 builds on the feedback from the first consultation, which informs the final draft. This stage also contains the second and final internal SDNPA consultation. Stage 4 focuses on the creation of the final version of the WEP informed by the feedback received in the second consultation. This stage also includes the endorsement at P&R Committee. Stage 5 is the post endorsement stage and outlines the requirements of an Estate once the WEP has been successfully endorsed. This stage includes commitment to ongoing monitoring using an online Survey system, which enables both parties to track performance against the action plan.

Figure 1. Below shows the WEP process.

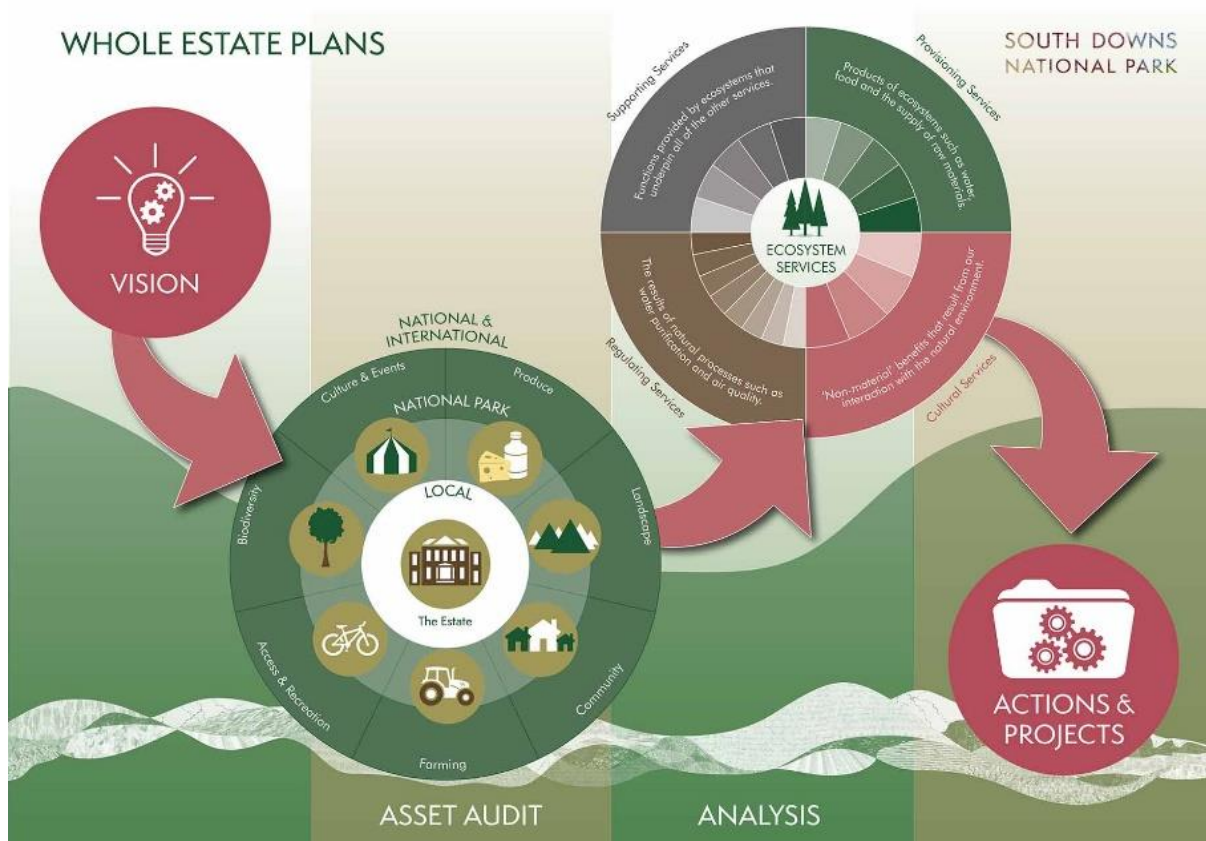


4. Issues for consideration

4.1 A WEP is comprised of four elements.

- A Vision, which highlights the estates priorities.
- An Asset Audit, which provides a complete picture of all the assets of the estate, both physical and non-physical.
- Ecosystem Services and Analysis, helps to identify the benefits obtained from nature, put value to them and build them into decision-making and management.
- An Action Plan is the response to the analysis findings and identifies key actions and projects.

Figure 2. below shows the four elements of a WEP in an infographic.



- 4.2 Officers look at how all these elements relate to each other, i.e. is the Vision a genuine representation of the actions proposed, and are the actions evidenced by the Asset Audit and Ecosystem Services Analysis?
- 4.3 The Foley Estate currently benefits from active collaboration with both the Area Ranger and the Natural Capital Team of the SDNPA. It is recognised as a key hydrological contributor to the River Wey, serving as one of its principal water sources.
- 4.4 The estate includes Weavers Down, which is designated both as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Protection Area (SPA). These designations reflect its ecological significance, particularly in supporting specialist heathland bird species such as the Dartford warbler, woodlark, and nightjar.
- 4.5 Foley Estate first engaged with the WEP process in early Autumn 2024 leading to submission of an early draft in late April 2025. This early draft was consulted on by SDNPA Officers and Members in May 2025 with a Member Site Visit held on 15th May 2025.
- 4.6 The estate submitted its final draft for the second and final consultation in late July 2025. The second consultation took place in August 2025 with feedback collated and shared with the estate in early September 2025.
- 4.7 To ensure the WEP passed efficiently and effectively through the governance structures of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), the Foley Estate WEP progressed through the complete SDNPA process articulated in Item 3 above, to ensure that SDNPA Members and Officers were afforded the opportunities to consider and feedback on the WEP. Officers and Members were consulted on the early draft WEP in late April 2025, during the Member Site Visit held on 15th May 2025 and on the final draft version through the second consultation held in late July into August 2025.
- 4.8 Foley Estate is a 617-acre estate located entirely in the South Downs National Park in Liphook, Hampshire. Foley Estate consists of a principal residence with its own 10 acre walled garden complex, two farms (Foley Farm and Westlands Farm), The Deers Hut pub, Liphook Golf Course, 11 cottages with 40 residents, as well as boasting three public

footpaths, one of which being the Shipwrights Way. Foley Estate is one of the true gateways into the South Downs National Park.

- 4.9 The WEP for the Foley Estate (Appendix 1) covers a period between 2025 to 2040 and beyond.
- 4.10 Throughout the last 12 months, Foley Estate has undergone an extended period of engagement with both the local community and relevant stakeholders. These include Local residents, The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC), Natural England (NE), The National Trust, The Local Councils as well as a wide range of environmental consultants and specialists.
- 4.11 Over the past 12 months, officers from across the SDNPA have had meetings with representatives of Foley Estate to discuss their WEP aspirations, and facilitate, add value and enable the successful drafting of their WEP at various times on its journey. During the early draft consultation (April/May 2025), Member Site Visit (15 May 2025) and final draft consultation (July/August 2025) both Officers and Members were provided with opportunities to comment on the emerging versions of the WEP.
- 4.12 The WEP for the Foley Estate has progressed in accordance with the SDNPA WEP Process and Guidance.
- 4.13 The WEP has been well received by officers across the SDNPA, and officers are encouraged by how comments and issues raised throughout the process have been taken on board and the WEP amended accordingly. Overall, the WEP fits well with the Authority's Partnership Management Plan and supports the delivery of the UK Government Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (2024).
- 4.14 The following provides a summary assessment of each of the four elements that make up the WEP.

Vision

- 4.15 Foley Estate's Vision is that by 2040, Foley will be, *"a model for conscientious land ownership, a place for exploration & education and a haven for wildlife."* This will be achieved through the commitment to delivering four core goals. 1.) To regenerate and transform Foley into a sustainable and financially viable estate, to help us navigate a challenging economic and environmental future. 2.) To protect and enhance the biodiversity within Foley's landscape, bringing unproductive farmland into balance with nature, harnessing new revenue streams. 3.) To create a world class educational space for children to learn about and reconnect with nature. 4.) To create new jobs and opportunities within the South Downs National Park, increasing access and awareness in our magical little corner of Hampshire.

Foley Estate Today (Asset Audit)

- 4.16 The Asset Audit provides a thorough account of all the features, activities and services on the Estate. In the WEP, this section is titled "Foley Estate Today".
- 4.17 It is considered that the Asset Audit provides a comprehensive review of the assets and provides a solid foundation for expanding or developing the projects within the final Chapter of the WEP, 'Chapter 5: Action Plan'.

Ecosystem Services and Analysis

- 4.18 The ecosystems services and analysis sections of the Foley Estate WEP can be found in Chapter 3, titled 'The Challenges we Face' and Chapter 4, titled 'Ecosystems Services'. Within chapter 4, the estate provides a comprehensive ecosystem services analysis that is categorised into four sections: Supporting Services, Regulating Services, Provisioning Services, and Cultural Services. It is evident the estate has conducted a comprehensive and sound analysis of their assets through the presentation of a traditional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis table. The presence of a dedicated Chapter articulating the challenges the estate faces is welcomed. This Chapter offers fascinating, honest insight into the mission laid before Foley Estate. This is articulated in this Chapter where it states, *"Our WEP is not just a vision of what we would like to achieve. It is an attempt to save Foley from a perilous future which is already unfolding in the present day."*

- 4.19 It is considered that Foley Estate have demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of their assets as well as articulating clearly the strengths and challenges facing the estate which inspire the implementation section of the WEP.

The Action Plan

- 4.20 The final chapter in the WEP is The Action Plan. It is described as, “the strategy for fulfilling our vision for the estate.” Each project is aligned to at least one of the three Vision Pillars and supports at least one of the SDNPAs Partnership Management Plan Outcomes. The additional information in the form of dedicated project pages and spotlight pages is welcome and adds great depth to the Chapter.
- 4.21 It is considered that there is a clear link between the Asset Audit, the analysis work outlined in Chapter 3 & 4 and the projects listed in the Action Plan.
- 4.22 For the reasons set out above, the Foley Estate Whole Estate Plan is recommended for endorsement.

5. Options & cost implications

- 5.1 There are no direct cost implications associated with the consideration of the endorsement of the WEP.
- 5.2 If endorsed, the Authority will continue to work with Foley Estate to realise some of the projects identified. The Authority will also support ongoing monitoring using an online Survey system, which enables both parties to track performance against the action plan.

6. Next steps

- 6.1 If the WEP is endorsed, it will be placed on the SDNPA website and officers will be made aware that it is now a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications.

7. Other Implications

Implication	Yes/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No, although applications for grant funds or planning permission may be submitted for consideration relating to actions highlighted within the WEP.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	There are no implications arising from this report. If endorsed, the WEP will be included on the SDNPA website, however update and review of the document is the responsibility of the Estate. If the WEP is amended, it will need to be considered again by Officers and Members.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	N/A
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	Outcome 1: Landscape & Beauty Outcome 2: Increasing Resilience Outcome 3: Habitats and Species Outcome 4: Arts & Heritage Outcome 5: Outstanding Experiences Outcome 6: Lifelong Learning Outcome 7: Health & Wellbeing Outcome 8: Creating Custodians Outcome 9: Great Places to Live

	Outcome 10: Great Places to Work
Links to other projects or partner organisations	N/A
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	Foley Estate, in its WEP, is committed to a sustainability overhaul across the estate. It states, "Our goal would be to cut costs, reduce emissions and potentially generate new revenue".
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	There are no implications arising from this report
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	This decision has no direct equalities implications. This document will be used to inform future decisions by the Authority, which will be subject to their own equalities impact assessments.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	There are no implications arising from this report
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	There are no implications arising from this report
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	There are no implications arising from this report
Are there any Data Protection implications?	There are no implications arising from this report

8. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 8.1 There is the potential for a reputational risk for the SDNPA through failure to endorse the WEP, without substantive reasons, after an Estate has gone through the process of producing a WEP that meets the criteria for endorsement. This risk is mitigated through the committee process and the requirement for the committee to give appropriate reasons for its decisions in public. There is also a risk of WEPs being misunderstood and considered as planning documents only or being interpreted as a 'green light' for development. Both of these risks are mitigated by providing continued support to Estates, case officers and other interested parties and providing guidance on the SDNPA website.

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 Appendices I. Foley Estate Whole Estate Plan 2025

SDNPA Consultees	Countryside Policy Manager; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services.
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	SDNPA Whole Estate Plan Guidance (April 2024) Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - GOV.UK Partnership Management Plan 2020-2025

