

Explanatory Information for Risk Register

Likelihood Descriptor	Risk Scoring Guidance
Almost Certain (5)	The event is expected to occur in most circumstances.
Likely (4)	There is a strong possibility the event will occur.
Possible (3)	The event might occur at some time
Unlikely (2)	Not expected, but a slight possibility
Rare (1)	Highly unlikely. It could happen but probably never will

Severity Descriptor	Risk Scoring Guidance
Insignificant (1)	<p>Insignificant disruption to community services, including transport services and infrastructure.</p> <p>No disruption to service delivery, unlikely to cause complaint or instigate litigation.</p> <p>None or minimal financial burden (less than £5k) which can be resolved at local / department level, minor interruption to income generation, no permanent loss.</p> <p>Insignificant impact on environment.</p> <p>Organisation’s reputation remains intact.</p>
Minor (2)	<p>Minor localised disruption to community services or infrastructure for less than 24 hours.</p> <p>Minor disruption to service delivery, complaint possible, litigation unlikely.</p> <p>Minimal financial burden or disruption to income generation (between £5k - £50k). Can be resolved at line manager / service manager level through usual budgetary measures.</p> <p>Minor impact on environment with no lasting effects.</p> <p>Minimal impact on organisation’s reputation.</p>
Moderate (3)	<p>Localised disruption to infrastructure and community services, damage confined to a specific location or to a number of locations, but requires additional resources.</p> <p>Moderate disruption to service delivery, high potential for complaints, litigation possible, but not certain.</p> <p>Moderate financial burden (between £50k - £250k). Interruption to income generation lasting less than 14 days, majority of income recoverable but at additional cost.</p> <p>Limited impact on environment with short-term or long-term effects.</p> <p>Moderate impact on organisation’s reputation.</p>

Severity Descriptor	Risk Scoring Guidance
Major (4)	<p>Requires support for local responders with external resources, significant damage that impacts on and means possible breakdown of some local community services.</p> <p>Significant disruption to service delivery service closure for 1-7 days, complaints expected, litigation expected.</p> <p>Major financial burden (between £250k - £500k). Can include significant extra clean up and recovery costs.</p> <p>Significant impact on environment with medium to long term effects.</p> <p>Major impact on organisation’s reputation / national adverse publicity.</p>
Catastrophic (5)	<p>Extensive damage to properties and built environment in affected areas. General & widespread displacement of people for prolonged duration. Community unable to function without significant support.</p> <p>Very significant disruption to service delivery service closure for more than 7 days or closure of multiple services, complaints certain, litigation certain.</p> <p>Very significant financial burden (greater than £500k). Extensive clean up and recovery costs.</p> <p>Serious long-term impact on environment and / or permanent change.</p> <p>Catastrophic impact on organisation’s reputation. International adverse publicity.</p>

SDNPA Risk Appetite Statement

The Authority seeks to operate within a relatively wide overall risk range.

One of the Authority’s key cultural values is that of innovation and the Authority seeks and encourages innovative approaches in the delivery of its purposes and duty wherever possible and appropriate. This includes being open to options and activities which may include some risk but are likely to result in better value for money in the delivery of its services. This is underpinned by a strong governance framework which ensures proper consideration of legal risks and delivery of effective decision making, oversight, and performance management.

Some of the Authority’s operations require a cautious approach to ensure a reliable service that engenders public trust and does not unduly risk the Authority’s reputation, for example, in the day-to-day delivery of its statutory planning service. However, the Authority remains open to innovative solutions and approaches which lead to significant benefits for the Authority and the public in the delivery of these services.

The Authority strives to ensure the best use of public funds and, therefore, takes a cautious approach in the general management of its finances whilst remaining alert to opportunities for efficiency savings, better value for money in service delivery, and opportunities for income generation.

The areas of lowest risk appetite for the Authority are in fulfilling its responsibilities to the personal safety and security of people. It is acknowledged that in some areas of delivery, such as at Seven Sisters Country Park, there are risks that are balanced with the delivery of activities and services to the public alongside the conservation and enhancement of nature and the landscape. Nevertheless, at all times the Authority will ensure a tight risk profile in relation to health and safety risks.

**South Downs National Park Authority
Corporate Risk Register**

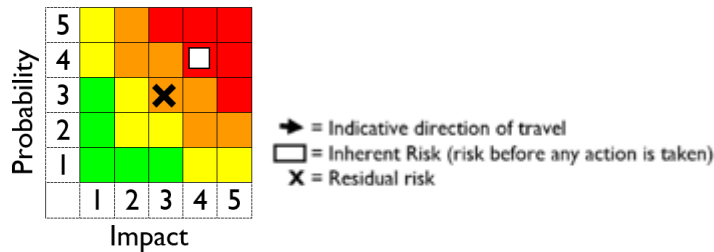


Risk I.1: Staffing

Owner: Siôn McGeever

CP Priority: Supports delivery of all

The grid below highlights that the inherent risk is likely with a Major impact and after mitigations, it is scored as Possible with a Moderate impact. Perceived direction of travel is no change.



Description of impact of risk:

Inability to attract/retain key staff impacts upon the organisation’s service delivery. High staff turnover results in inefficiency across the organisation. Lack of diversity within the organisation impacts ability to deliver on priorities and on reputation. Mental Health issues affect staff performance and delivery.

Mitigations:

1. Pay structure and terms and conditions in place, with new pay award post April 2025.
2. Training and development programme,
3. Staff survey and action plan,
4. PDR policy,
5. Internal policies and procedures in place e.g. (Family friendly, flexible working).
6. Webinars available for all staff related to mental health and homeworking, regular communications through internal communications channels.
7. Mental health first aiders in place, independent counselling and support resources available through UK Healthcare. Regular communication of wellbeing resources to staff and access for staff and Members to wellbeing portal through the ELMS e-learning system.
8. Blended working policies agreed and monitored through OMT.
9. Action plan for improving diversity through recruitment.

Updates:

New Director of Landscape and Operations to join in February. Provision for handover from current Director in place.

New recruitment advertising framework to in place by late 2025.

New probationary guidelines and revised induction process in place to ensure new staff are adequately supported.

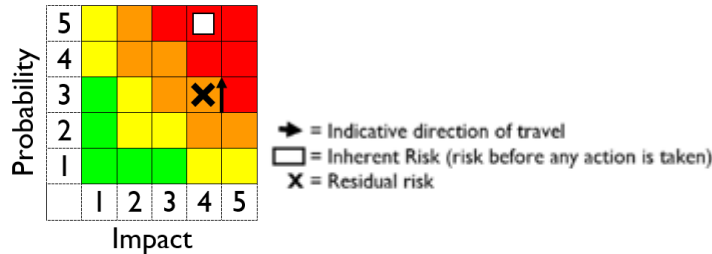
Line Managers guidance to be introduced early 2026 to ensure consistency and support for staff.

Risk 2.1: Finance and Budgets

Owner: Siôn McGeever

CP Priority: Supports delivery of all

The grid below highlights that the inherent risk is Almost Certain with a Major impact and after mitigations it is scored as Possible with a Major impact. Perceived direction of travel is increasing.



Description of impact of risk:

Budgets insufficient due to a failure of the Defra grant to increase in real terms over a number of years, a reduction of the Defra grant or a continuation of the lower revenue baseline from 25/26 arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), or an in-year requirement for savings; failure to match resources and workloads across the organisation; or negative impacts of increased inflation rates or increased employer pension or national insurance contributions on costs. Partnership Management Plan Review or Local Plan Review suffers and SDNPA lacks capacity to properly remunerate staff and/or support other work. Resources not available to deliver on all priorities.

Mitigations:

1. Sufficient headroom within revenue budget and sufficient financial risk reserves to enable any shortfall to be managed in the short term whilst the medium-term budget is adjusted.
2. Ongoing Income Generation activity to provide additional income which supports the activities of the Authority led by Director of Business Development and Growth.
3. Appropriate capitalisation of expenditure to ensure optimum use of revenue and capital resources.
4. Thorough budget planning and profiling process undertaken with budget holders to support tighter financial information for the budget setting process with Members.
5. Effective and early scenario planning through Member workshops to redefine the medium-term financial planning process and approach to Budget setting, including strengthened alignment to the Corporate Plan.
6. Improved monthly revenue and capital budget monitoring undertaken by budget holders and OMT enabling identification of areas of potential underspend, overspend, compensating savings with subsequent action plan.
7. Industry and Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) indices used to model real world inflation implications through the medium-term financial plan.
8. Procurement processes identify issues related to inflation and, where appropriate, changes to specifications etc. are made to manage impacts of inflation.
9. Opportunities for funding and/or private investment into the National Park continued to be explored which could result in potential cost recovery or mitigation for the Authority e.g. S106 and Nature Based Solutions Service.
10. Close liaison with Defra to understand potential impacts of CSR as early as possible.

Updates:

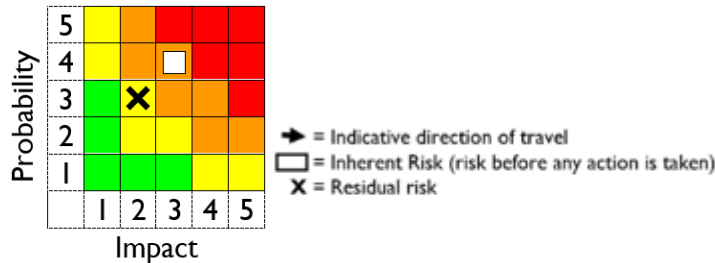
Awaiting outcome of comprehensive spending review to better understand impact on the Authority and future settlement. Members will consider options for the 26-27 budget in workshops in December and January.

Risk 2.2: Income Generation

Owner: James Winkworth

CP Priority: CP3, CP4

The grid below highlights that the inherent risk is likely with a Moderate impact and after mitigations it is scored as Possible with a Minor impact. Perceived direction of travel is No Change



Description of impact of risk:

Insufficient income generation opportunities are identified to support NPA budgets and delivery of priorities. Inability to meet expectations of Government in relation to income generation. Changes in legislation increase or reduce the Authority’s ability to generate income. Insufficient skills /experience “in house” to exploit potential income generating opportunities.

Mitigations:

1. Governance framework for consideration of SDNPA powers in relation to income generation activity in place.
2. Sufficient reserves held to enable recruitment of staff with necessary skill set if required.
3. Director of Business Development and Growth leading the approach to income generation across the Authority.
4. Skilled income generation team operating well and meeting targets.
5. Cross-directorate income generation group supports generation and assessment of opportunities.
6. Ongoing support for South Downs National Park Trust and close working to explore potential commercial model.
7. Nature Based Solutions Service promotes nature recovery on sites in the SDNP and provides the Authority with opportunities for cost recovery in the delivery of the service.
8. Reviewing future workstreams with a view to greater targeting of long-term external grants and other income streams.
9. Income generated through delivery of the Planning Services, including through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements.
10. Opportunities for income generation at Seven Sisters Country Park being delivered for the benefit of the Country Park. Future opportunities being explored form part of the annual operating plan.
11. Advocating for the role of National Parks with central government and other stakeholders.

Updates:

Changes in legislation continue to hold the possibility of increasing or reducing the Authority’s ability to generate income.

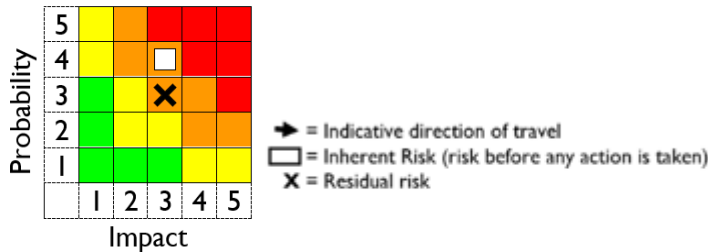
Work ongoing for a potential commercial model for the Trust to increase its income for the National Park.

Risk 3.1: Health and Safety

Owner: Vicky Paterson

CP Priority: Supports delivery of all

The grid below highlights that the inherent risk is Possible with a Major impact and after mitigations it is scored Possible with a Moderate impact. Perceived direction of travel is no change.



Description of impact of risk:

Accident or incident, including bullying, harassment or sexual harassment, involving staff, volunteers, visitors, Members or the public resulting in injury, possibly serious, or death at an SDNPA facility or event. Breach of statutory duties, litigation and cost against the authority.

Mitigations:

1. Services of external H&S consultant retained
2. Internal H&S Officer in place.
3. H&S strategy and responsibilities agreed.
4. H&S elements included in induction programme for staff, Members, and volunteers.
5. H&S Committee operating and receiving regular accident reporting.
6. H&S policy and other supporting policies and guidance (e.g. extreme weather) in place.
7. All staff training on bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment, and safeguarding.
8. All area offices and Seven Sisters Country Park annually audited.
9. Annual report to P&R Committee with recommendations.
10. Members and SLT trained and briefed on H&S responsibilities.
11. All risk assessments reviewed and updated.
12. Dangerous sites process in place to highlight sites that staff may visit in their role which present particular risks to their H&S.
13. Additional H&S related training provided via e-learning, with fire safety and H&S delivered as mandatory courses.
14. IOSH training completed by all H&S Committee reps.
15. Trained first aiders in place
16. Lone working policy agreed by OMT.

Updates:

SLT to attend H&S leadership training once new Director of Landscape and Operations in place.

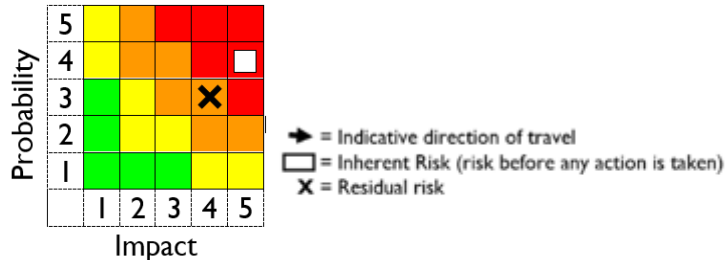
H&S survey sent to all staff in April 2025 and resulting action plan implemented. Positive feedback included that H&S was considered by staff to be a priority across the organisation.

Risk 3.2: Seven Sisters Country Park – Health and Safety

Owner: Tim Slaney

CP Priority: CP3

The grid below highlights that the inherent risk is likely with a catastrophic impact and after mitigations it is scored as Possible with a Major impact. Perceived direction of travel is No Change.



Description of impact of risk:

Accident or incident involving staff, volunteers or members of the public resulting in serious injury, serious illness or death at a Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP). Breach of statutory duties, litigation and cost against the authority. Reputation and financial impacts on the authority

Mitigations:

1. External H&S consultant advice
2. Risk assessments undertaken for high-risk activities (e.g. provision of food).
3. SSCP staff represented on H&S committee
4. H&S responsibilities agreed.
5. H&S elements included in induction programme for staff and volunteers.
6. H&S committee receives regular accident reporting.
7. Site audits undertaken.
8. SSCP issues included in regular reports to P&R Committee.
9. All risk assessments reviewed and updated.
10. Additional site specific H&S related training (e.g. food hygiene).
11. Trained first aiders on site.
12. Park signage in place to support visitor movements and advise on safety issues.
13. Fencing and systems in place to manage livestock on site.
14. Participation in partnership groups (cliff safety partnership and liaison with emergency services).
15. Insurance arrangements in place.
16. Actively pursuing improvements to the road crossing with highways authority.

Updates:

Work ongoing with ESCC for the design of a road crossing and to ensure it is on the Highway Authority's future work programme. Review being undertaken of what is in place to mitigate the risks presented by the road until a crossing is in place.

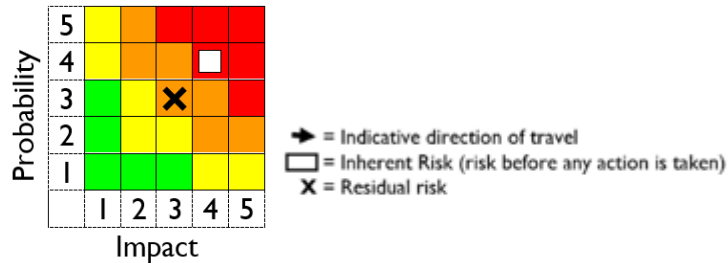
Close working with other local visitor sites and neighbouring landowners to address cliff safety and river crossing issues to improve visitor information and advice.

Risk 4.1: Seven Sisters Country Park – Asset ownership

Owner: Tim Slaney

CP Priority: CP3

The grid below highlights that the inherent risk is likely with a Major impact and after mitigations it is scored as Possible with a Moderate impact. Perceived direction of travel is No Change.



Description of impact of risk:

Damage to or failure to maintain the asset causes environmental damage, legal challenge or dispute with tenants, increased costs, reduction in visitor numbers or income, or damage to SDNPA reputation.

Mitigations:

1. Insurance arrangements in place.
2. Operational risk register monitored by SSCP team.
3. Advice on operations through advisory group including external advisors.
4. Regular survey of river assets.
5. Fencing and systems in place to manage livestock on site.
6. Close working with water level management board and environment agency to fully understand management options in relation to riparian ownership.
7. New Barn cottage renovation underway supporting the long-term plan to prevent degradation of asset.
8. Survey of all assets in the work programme to be undertaken.

Updates:

New Barn cottage renovation almost complete.

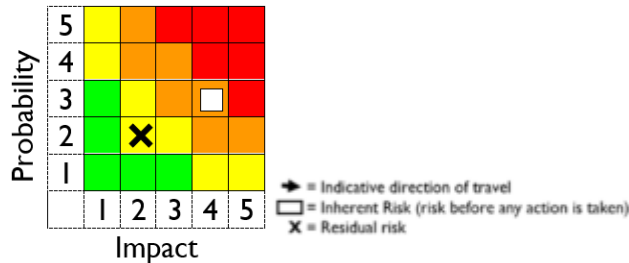
EV chargers being installed on site in the North Car Park. Plans for future improvements to the North Car Park being refined.

Risk 5.1: Business Continuity Planning and Organisational Resilience

Owner: Richard Sandiford

CP Priority: Supports delivery of all

The grid below highlights that the inherent risk is Possible with a Major impact and after mitigations, it is scored as Unlikely with a Minor impact. Perceived direction of travel is No Change.



Description of impact of risk:

Lack of effective organisational business continuity planning and organisational resilience may prevent delivery of key services in the event of a major incident, cyber-attack, or as a result of the loss of key staff.

Mitigations:

1. Business Continuity Plan (BCP) in place and regularly reviewed for Authority and its offices.
2. Business Critical functions identified and planned for.
3. IT Disaster Recovery plans in place and tested annually.
4. Cyber incident response plans in place.
5. Key staff roles identified in BCP and communicated.
6. Documenting of key processes to mitigate points of failure.
7. Specific implications of IT provision addressed through day-to-day IT support functions being provided via outsourced contracts meaning that user support would not be immediately impacted by the departure or absence of the IT Strategy Manager.
8. IT network and key systems delivered externally via contracts.
9. Network Resilience and continuity issues have also been addressed via the IT contracts.
10. BCP for Seven Sisters Country Park in place.

Updates:

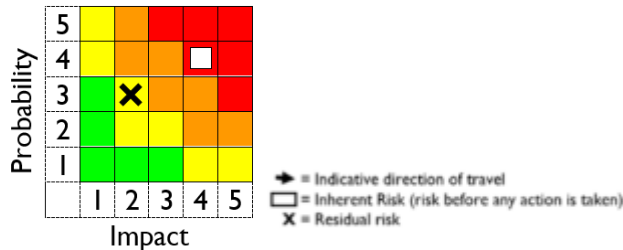
None.

Risk 7.1: Partnership Working and Partnership Management Plan Delivery

Owner: Siôn McGeever

CP Priority: N/A

The grid below highlights that the inherent risk is likely with a Major impact and after mitigations, it is scored as Possible with a Minor impact. Perceived direction of travel is No Change.



Description of impact of risk:

Failure to deliver on the aims and objectives in the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) with partners due to lack of flexible resources and staff time within the SDNPA, unrealistic expectations of partner delivery, or lack of commitment or ability of partners to deliver. This could result in an inability to deliver the PMP and achieve the vision for the SDNP.

Mitigations:

1. Review process for new PMP on track.
2. Extensive engagement programme with partners, stakeholders and the public to inform the aims and objectives in the PMP supports buy-in.
3. PMP Steering Group ensures partners and stakeholders can inform and are integral to the development of the new PMP.
4. New Communications Strategy to be developed alongside new PMP to manage public expectations and setting out key messages for the Authority, stakeholders and partners.
5. Project evaluation and lessons learnt reported to committee and used to inform future practice.
6. Development with the South Downs Trust of longer term and diversified streams of income.
7. The protected landscapes duty is a powerful tool supporting public bodies to take positive action in support of the PMP.

Updates:

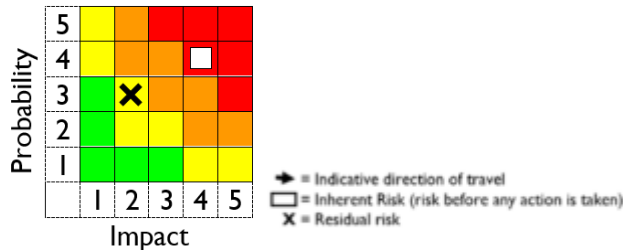
PMP review on track for approval in December 2025.

Risk 7.2: Delivery of 2025/26 Capital Programme and Strategic Projects

Owner: Siôn McGeever

CP Priority: N/A

The grid below highlights that the inherent risk is likely with a Major impact and after mitigations, it is scored as Possible with a Minor impact. Perceived direction of travel is No Change.



Description of impact of risk:

Failure to deliver the capital programme through lack of resources, limited time or insufficient monitoring of capital projects results in having to return capital funding to Defra. Increased focus on capital programme delivery distracts from delivery of strategic projects possibly resulting in delays, inability to meet commitments to partners, and/or potential loss of funding. This could impact negatively on the SDNPA’s reputation and ability to secure project funding.

Mitigations:

1. Revised capital programme for approval at July 2025 NPA meeting.
2. Project pipeline in place to ensure shovel ready projects are in place to support spend of capital funds.
3. New procedures, including monthly monitoring of project delivery and close scrutiny of progress, improve organisational effectiveness to support timely and on budget project delivery.
4. Quarterly reporting of capital programme delivery to P&R Committee.
5. Strategic projects continue to be supported by dedicated staff as required.
6. Biannual report to P&R Committee on strategic project delivery, including lessons learnt to inform future practice.
7. New Director of Business Development and Growth supports close partnership working with the South Downs National Park Trust on project funding and delivery.

Updates:

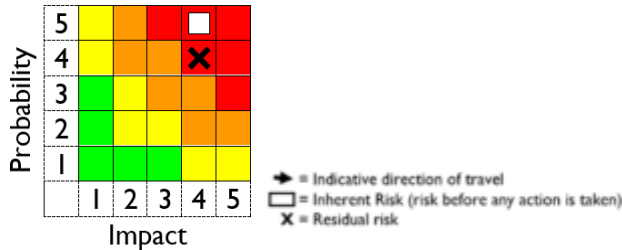
New Director of Landscape and Operations recruited with particular focus on project and performance skills.

Risk 8.1: Devolution in England and Local Government Reorganisation

Owner: James Winkworth

CP Priority: N/A

The grid below highlights that the inherent risk is Almost Certain with a Major impact and after mitigations, it is scored as Likely with a Major impact. Perceived direction of travel is No Change.



Description of impact of risk:

The significant changes that will take place through devolution of power from Whitehall to strategic mayoral authorities and through local government reorganisation have the potential for wide ranging and substantial impacts on the National Park and the National Park Authority. As Hampshire and the Solent, and Sussex and Brighton have been accepted into the government’s devolution priority programme these changes will take place at pace. The risks include:

- Devolution and local government reorganisation may reduce the capacity of local authorities across the SDNP to be involved in other projects or to ability to invest in local assets which could put at risk some of our partnership working. This is likely to be further exacerbated by inclusion in the devolution priority programme meaning a higher level of local authority resources are likely to be focussed on meeting the government’s ambitious timeline.
- It may be challenging to influence the development of devolution and local government reorganisation and where the NPA will sit within the hierarchy of local government within a strategic mayoral authority. As an MHCLG led initiative the NPA’s government department, Defra, is not directly involved in the development of devolution policy which could lead to the NPA being overlooked.
- The potential impact of the proposed local growth plans and mayoral powers on the SDNP and the NPA are currently unknown.
- NPAs not currently included in spatial development strategies risks reduced influence on major infrastructure projects.
- With the move to single-tier (unitary) authorities the hosted planning arrangements (section 101 contracts) are at risk. If all these arrangements were to fall away there would be a substantial impact on the NPA and the Planning Directorate in particular.
- The move to single-tier (unitary) authorities will impact the Membership of the NPA with a lower number of local authorities appointing Members to the NPA.
- The SDNP will sit across two strategic mayoral authorities who may have different priorities and different views on the role of the SDNPA and the NPA.

Mitigations:

1. Monitoring of progress and updates by senior officers and efforts to work closely at senior level between the NPA and other local authorities to ensure the SDNP is considered in discussions and that impacts are clearly understood as proposals are developed.
2. Discussions on Planning S101 contracts with all host authorities.
3. Work with outgoing authorities and early engagement with leaders of new authorities (Mayors, Chairs, and Chief Executives) to understand priorities and identify opportunities for partnership working and future home for various assets and if some could be best managed by the SDNPA.

4. Discussions with Defra, MHCLG, and other stakeholders to cultivate a better understanding of NPAs as local authorities, the impacts of devolution and local government reorganisation, and advocate for the NPA as formal consultees and ensure our voice is heard on key issues.
5. Working with NPE and Defra to influence the development of changing governance arrangements in the NPA.
6. Early consideration of implications for partnership projects and reassessment where expected resources from local authorities may not be available due to capacity.
7. Early-stage workshop held with Members to consider opportunities and risks for the SDNP and the NPA of devolution and local government reorganisation.
8. Work to be undertaken to identify areas the NPA could support incoming mayoral and unitary authorities, particularly in specialist areas of expertise for the NPA.
9. Working to build county-wide environmental partnerships, including with National Landscapes, to strengthen our collective influence with Mayoral and Unitary Authorities.
10. Contingency plans to be developed for particular risk areas where identified.

Updates:

Authority's devolution principles and LGR position agreed.

Efforts underway to ensure the Authority is represented on the appropriate strategic groups in influence the development of the mayoral authorities and how Protected Landscapes are seen by them.

