

Report to **Policy & Resources Committee**
Date **19 Feb 2026**
By **Procurement Manager**
Title of Report **Framework for Ecological Consultation and Services, Centurion Way**

Decision

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Approve the commencement of a procurement process leading to the setting up of a single supplier framework providing ecological consultation and services for Centurion Way, for a period of up to 4 years; and,**
 - 2. Approve delegation of authority to the Chief Executive to award contracts for the above, following a competitive process carried out under the terms of the Procurement Act 2023.**
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I. Brief background on the Centurion Way project (by the Project Manager)

- I.1 Currently, Centurion Way offers approximately 9km of segregated, shared-use pathway, primarily following the former Chichester to Midhurst railway alignment, extending from Chichester into the National Park and terminating at West Dean. In 2015, SDNPA constructed the northern section of this route (Phase 1) which now ends at an upgraded access ramp in West Dean, just short of the southern portal of West Dean Tunnel. Planning consent was granted in 2019 to extend the route from the northern portal of West Dean Tunnel to Cocking Hill (Phase 2), further advancing it into the National Park and connecting with the South Downs Way.
- I.2 **Appendix 1** provides a map outlining both strategic and aspirational routes, such as Centurion Way. **Appendix 2** presents an overview of the entire Centurion Way Extension, detailing each construction section.
- I.3 Four sections (1-4) of the Phase 2 extension route have been completed and opened (1.6km in total), along with 700m of footway improvements in West Dean and a new 660m unsurfaced permissive path. In addition, Singleton Station Site has been restored to serve as a key destination on the route, offering improved access for users, the local community, businesses, and attractions in both West Dean and Singleton.
- I.4 Comprehensive enabling works have been undertaken on additional sections, with substantial ecological and arboricultural surveys underway to facilitate future clearance activities.
- I.5 Phase 2 construction costs are estimated at £3,988,000, with £3,631,000 already secured from SDNP Trust, SDNPA CIL, and SDNPA funds. Expenditure and commitments to date total £1,769,000, covering the completion of Sections 1-4, West Dean Ramp and Footway, Singleton Station Restoration, and significant preliminary work on other sections. This leaves

£1,835,000 in working capital for further construction of Section 5 & 6 in 2026-2027 and Sections 7 & 8 in 2027-2028, completing all but Section 9 (Cocking Link).

2. The need for an Ecological Consultation and Services Framework

- 2.1 For the period between 2026 and 2028, construction plans include an ongoing requirement to complete key ecological surveys and tasks to support construction, habitat mitigation, and planning updates.
- 2.2 Ecological support has been efficiently managed during the Centurion Way extension project using a framework agreement with a single supplier, providing a consistent and cost-effective approach instead of requiring quotes each time ecological support is required. The current framework will end on 30 April 2026. We are therefore seeking approval to commence a procurement process for a new framework agreement for ecological services to support construction plans covering the years 2026-2028. The new framework has an estimated maximum value of £260,000 plus VAT.
- 2.3 Due to the framework value, Committee approval is sought to commence a procurement process for this framework (see Section 4 for information on the procurement process), along with approval for the delegation of authority to the Chief Executive to award the framework contract.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 Centurion Way is recognised as a priority initiative within the SDNPA Corporate Plan 2020-25 and the Authority's Active Travel Network Plan, approved in December 2025. It is also identified as a key project in both the West Sussex County Council Walking and Cycling Strategy and the Sustrans National Cycle Network 20-Year Strategy. The route facilitates safe and sustainable access for both visitors and local residents.

4. Procurement Route

- 4.1 The Services to be procured are above the current GPA threshold for services (£207,720 including VAT) under the Procurement Act 2023. As SDNPA is a contracting authority under the regulations, these services must be subject to a competitive tender exercise. SDNPA's Contract Standing Orders also require us to seek at least five tenders for a contract of this value.
- 4.2 We propose to run an open tender process for this requirement. The previous procurement exercise attracted a strong and diverse pool of ecological consultancy suppliers, demonstrating that the market is healthy and competitive. An open tender will ensure all interested parties have the opportunity to bid and will allow suppliers to demonstrate how they can deliver this project as sustainably as possible, particularly given the ecological sensitivities, completing individual call-offs to time and provide value for money.

5. Options & cost implications

- 5.1 An alternative option would be to procure a smaller-scale framework covering only part of the route, at a lower contract value. However, this approach would require multiple stop-start procurement processes as we move through different sections of the project. This would create unnecessary administrative burden for both the Authority and bidders, increasing time, effort and cost on all sides. We do not consider this approach to be efficient or cost-effective, nor does it support a smooth and consistent delivery of the project.

6. Next steps

- 6.1 With Committee approval, the next steps will be to issue a tender notice on the government's Find A Tender portal and publish the Invitation to Tender on SDNPA's e-procurement portal, week commencing 23 February 2026. Evaluation will take place with the issue of assessment summaries (and commencement of standstill period) by 5 May, and commencement of contract with the chosen supplier on 18 May 2026.

7. Other implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	SDNPA has sufficient resources in place, both in term of staff qualified to undertake the procurement exercise, and revenue budget to meet the costs of the on-going contract
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The competitive tender process is aimed at delivering value for money.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	PMP Outcome 5: Outstanding Experiences, in particular 5.2, improve accessibility, through increasing family friendly paths.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	The sections of Centurion Way covered by this framework are on land belonging to the National Trust.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	We expect bids to include solutions on how they will contribute to our own climate objectives and ways in which they reduce their own carbon emissions.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	Social value may improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. The new framework will be above the relevant GPA Threshold and therefore evaluation of Social Value will be included at a 10% weighting, using criteria designed to ensure that proposed outcomes are achievable and proportionate to the contract. KPIs will be set with the successful bidder to ensure the social value outcomes are delivered during the contract.
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes. The procurement exercise and the terms of the subsequent contract will meet the terms of the Equality Act.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	No.
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	No, all Due diligence will take place during evaluation.
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	No, all Due diligence will take place during evaluation.
Are there any Data Protection implications?	No, all Due diligence will take place during evaluation.

8. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Commercial Risk: The price objectives are not achieved up front or costs arise during the term of the awarded contract	2	4	An outcome-based specification will be used for suppliers to develop their costed proposals against.
Technical Risk: Inability to specify the desired outcomes or suppliers in the market being unable to deliver to the specification.	1	4	We are confident, from previous procurements carried out for this requirement, that we are able to specify the outcomes needed, and that there are sufficient suppliers in the market to deliver the outcomes required.
Performance Risk: The supplier fails to deliver the required outcomes over the course of the framework, resulting in delays to the delivery of the path construction works programme.	2	4	Regular framework monitoring as specified in the framework agreement, will be used to monitor performance over the term of the framework. Appropriate remedies will be included in the terms and conditions.
Contractual Risk: Unable to remedy the shortcomings in the contractors' performance without severely damaging the contract and unable to avoid relying on the contracted supplier as the contract develops.	2	4	Proactive contract management should minimise performance issues, with the support of SDNPA's Legal Team who can assist with contractual issues if they arise.
Legal Risk: In public procurement there is a legal risk where a procurement is found unsound in law.	2	3	This Procurement is a public contract under the Procurement Act 2023 and therefore subject to legal challenge. Trained procurement staff and our legal team will ensure compliance with the legislation.

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Appendices:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cycling and Walking Strategic Routes map2. Centurion Way Extension map
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive; Director of Landscape and Operations; Director of Placemaking; Chief Finance Officer; Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer; Legal Services; Head of Finance and Corporate Strategy.
External Consultees	None

