

Report to	<b>Planning Committee</b>
Date	<b>9 April 2026</b>
By	<b>Director of Placemaking</b>
Local Authority	<b>Winchester City Council</b>
Application Number	<b>SDNP/25/04953/CND</b>
Applicant	<b>Boomtown Festival Ltd and Matterley Farming</b>
Application	<b>Variation of Condition 1 and 2 of SDNP/24/05303/FUL to extend the 1 year permission by 5 years to 2030.</b>
Address	<b>Matterley Farm, Alresford Road, Ovington, Winchester, Hampshire, SO24 0HU.</b>

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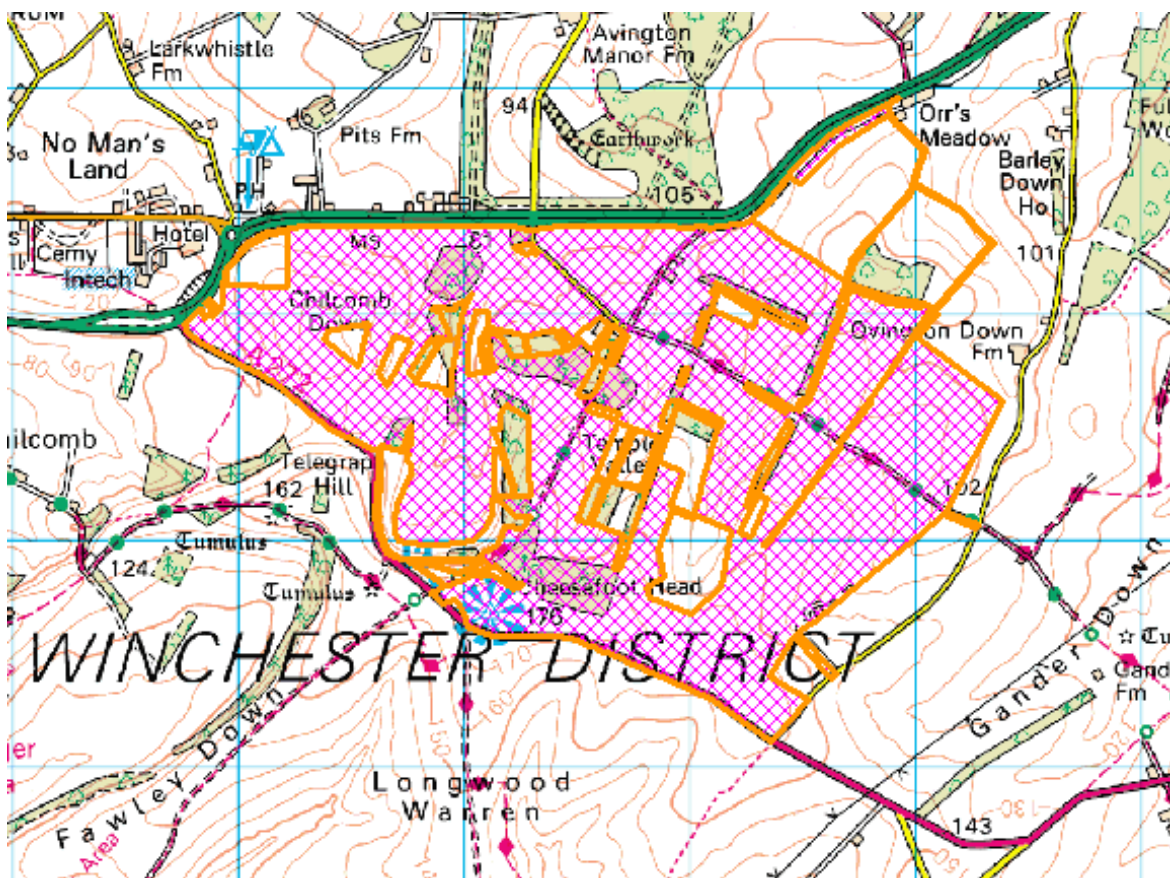
**Recommendation:**

- I. That permission be granted to vary condition 1 and 2 of permission reference SDNP/24/05303/FUL (which would grant temporary planning approval for 5 years) subject to:**
  - I. A Section 106 Agreement, the final form of which is delegated to the Director of Placemaking, in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee to secure:**
    - **A Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Management Plan (BLEMMP) securing benefits in relation to onsite Biodiversity Net Gain, Habitat Management and Monitoring, a fee of £41,000 to monitor on-site Biodiversity Net Gain, the landscape and ecology of the application site; and the purchase of offsite Biodiversity Gain Units/statutory credits;**
    - **Retention of all the improvements and obligations secured as part of Planning Application SDNP/24/05303/FUL and through the Section 106 Agreement dated 27 June 2025;**
    - **An updated Wastewater Strategy (from the strategy secured through the June 2025 planning agreement) together with monitoring regime and evidence ensuring scheme achieves nutrient neutrality;**
  - II. The conditions set out in Section 9 which may be amended by the Director of Placemaking in consultation with the Chair to accommodate any necessary minor changes;**
- 2. That the Committee confirm in reaching their decision that they have taken into account:**
  - **The environmental information as required by the Town and Country**

**Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017;**

- **All matters referred to in the Director of Placemaking’s report including comments received from statutory consultees and other interested parties, and**
  - **All other material considerations**
3. **That authority be delegated to the Director of Placemaking to refuse the application with appropriate reasons if the agreement is not completed or sufficient progress has not been made in securing the agreement within 2 months of the 9 April Planning Committee meeting.**
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**Site Location Map**



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## Executive Summary

A temporary approval was granted in 2025 allowing one music festival (for up to 75,999 people) to be held on the Matterley Estate. The Temporary approval was for a limited period expiring on 31 December 2025, so allowing only one event to take place. The applicant submitted the current application in December 2025 (prior to the expiration of the temporary 1-year approval) under S73 to vary Conditions 1 & 2 of the earlier consent to allow permission to hold one music festival in any calendar year until 2030. The application maintains the previously increased attendance numbers to 75,999. The application, as with the earlier application, has been accompanied by an Environmental Statement, given the need to address Nitrate/Phosphate Neutrality means that an Environmental Impact Assessment was required. As with the earlier application, the current application also includes the retention of the existing wooden structures in association with the festival and includes a Parameter Plan indicating specific areas within the site having specific uses and activities and details of maximum heights of key components.

The application is considered to be Major for the purposes of Paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy SD3 and therefore there must be exceptional circumstances why the application should be approved and where it can be demonstrated it is in the public interest. As stated in the NPPF the consideration of the application should therefore include an assessment of a number of criteria. It is considered that the proposals meet these tests having regard to all the circumstances.

The main issues for consideration in respect of the application to increase the duration to 2030 are:

- The impact of the proposals on the landscape character of the area.
- The impact of the proposals on the ecology of the application site, given the submitted ecological evidence.
- The provision of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) both on-site and off-site.
- The impact on the Purposes of the Park (with regard to the above matters).
- Nitrate/Phosphate Neutrality.
- The impact on tranquillity and light pollution.
- The impact on the highway network.

The application requires a balance of considerations in relation to impacts upon tranquillity, ecology and biodiversity, vehicular activity and highway considerations, light pollution and landscape impact with the temporary nature of the event, the enjoyment and understanding of the National Park, the cultural and economic benefits to the area and the environmental benefits which could be secured in the long term, were the application to vary the conditions to be approved.

This needs to be considered against the backdrop of the reason for the recent temporary approval given in 2025 (which was for one year). That was to allow the impact of the number of attendees (75,999) on the amenity of the area and the qualities of the National Park to be reviewed.

The applicants had been hampered in being able to fully collate a detailed baseline from which to assess the overall impacts on the festival over a prolonged period when they submitted the 2024 planning application, due the cancellation of the festivals in both 2020 and 2021 due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. The applicants have since made efforts ensuring meaningful surveys are undertaken regularly to assess the impacts or otherwise of the festivals and this is an ongoing process. The applicants, in acknowledging this have only sought a further temporary permission (to 2030) to allow a further period for the Authority to review the impact of the festival on ecological and landscape interests.

The site continues to fall within the areas affected by the matter of nitrate and phosphate neutrality. Consideration must be given to whether Nitrate/Phosphate Neutrality can be achieved.

Officers have scrutinised the Ecological evidence submitted with the Environmental Assessment and

it is felt there is sufficient clarity to be confident in allowing an increase in numbers to continue on this particular issue, but with the proviso that the permission remains temporary and comprehensive ecological work and surveys continue to form part of conditions and a legal agreement should approval be granted.

Officers have considered, in discussions with the applicant and the landowner, that a Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Management Plan (BLEMMP) could provide benefits, such as to result in long term enhancements, whilst acknowledging the Festival clearly has short term adverse impacts in a number of ways such as landscape, noise, tranquillity and increased traffic.

A concern of members when resolving to grant temporary approval for one year was the lack of detail about what might be incorporated in a BLEMMP to give them the comfort that the proposal would be acceptable.

The current application is supported by a draft BLEMMP setting out mitigations, enhancements and the provision of a policy compliant Biodiversity Net Gain provision (consisting of both on-site and off-site elements). Officers consider the proposals covered in the draft BLEMMP to be acceptable subject to being secured as part of any approval.

The applicant has put forward a solution to achieve nitrate/phosphate neutrality which would form part of a S106 agreement, in the event that members are minded to approve the application. The solution is considered to be acceptable. Natural England have raised no objection on this particular matter.

The application is placed before the Committee because it is a major application, due to previous committee consideration and due to the number of representations received.

## **I. Site Description**

- I.1 The Matterley Estate is approximately 5 kilometres to the north-east of Winchester and is largely accessed via the A31, which divides the two sections of the holding. The estate extends to the north of Winchester Road (A31) to include Hampage Wood and Bushy Close woodland and southwards toward the junction with the A272 including Chilcomb Down. The estate is bounded to the south by the A272 and runs eastwards just beyond Cheesefoot Head. To the east is Rodfield Lane. The northern parcels of land beyond the A31 Hampage Woods do not form part of the red outline of this application. The red outline of the application site differs from some of the earliest applications for the Estate in that whilst access to Rodfield Lane and some land to the eastern part of the Estate beyond the Motocross Track now forms part of the site, there are effectively areas excluded from the outline within the Estate (partly in order to be protected for ecological reasons during the festival).
- I.2 The site includes numerous key characteristics of the wider landscape character area including: the distinctive rounded coomb of the Devil's Punchbowl (Matterley Bowl) which is a striking landmark landscape feature with areas of species rich unimproved chalk grassland on its steep sloping sides; Cheesefoot Head and its long reaching panoramic views – which is one of the South Downs National Park's identified viewpoints; the distinctive hill top beech clump at Cheesefoot Head; and branching dry valley.
- I.3 The estate continues to farm both a dairy unit, an arable enterprise and also a commercial shoot. There are a number of activities that occur alongside the farming activity, including an area set aside to explore hydrocarbons (which generates HGV movements daily to remove oil and water), Permission to hold two motocross events a year (in Matterley Basin) and tank driving experience days. The music festival has largely been concentrated in the natural amphitheatre known as 'Matterley Bowl', but several venues have occupied adjacent fields and woodland areas (Temple Valley, Chilcomb Down) with associated infrastructure for car parking and camping.
- I.4 The South Downs Way (SDW) runs through the application site, being accessed to the immediate northwest of the Cheesefoot Head Car Park and going in a north easterly

direction across the Estate until turning towards the southeast (and Rodfield Lane) by the main group of agricultural buildings which are located to just north of the centre of the site.

- 1.5 The site is at its highest to the south at the top of Cheesefoot Head with the levels dropping significantly to the northwest of here into the bowl. The levels through the site from Cheesefoot Head drop along the South Downs Way gently towards the main agricultural buildings and beyond until shortly rising again before reaching the A31.
- 1.6 The site has a number of wooded areas, most notably to the immediate east of the Bowl and to the south of the main agricultural buildings.
- 1.7 The land to the west of Rodfield Lane and northeast of Cheesefoot Head is known as Matterley Basin and is where the Motocross events have historically taken place. Land to the east of the agricultural buildings has also been used on occasions for 'tank driving event days' (for which a lawful development certificate was approved).
- 1.8 A number of residential estate properties exist within the site. Beyond the site boundary are a number of scattered residential properties, some along the A31 on the northern side of the road close to the roundabout near the Winchester Science Centre building and also on the southern side of the road in an area known as Orrs Meadow. A small number of properties are located along Rodfield Lane. No residential properties are located along the A272 near the southern boundary of the site.
- 1.9 The site is situated in the East Winchester Open Downs, and often allows expansive open views, including from popular elevated Cheesefoot Head viewpoint. The Matterley Bowl is clearly visible from the A272 given the elevated nature of the road.

## 2. Relevant Planning History

### 2.1 History in relation to Use of land (Festivals/etc.):

- Certificate of Lawful Use for vehicle driving and storage of ancillary parking and structures – Withdrawn – 4 February 2014
- SDNP/14/00302/LDE – All non-agricultural related leisure uses including hosting of music festivals and concerts, tank driving, off road vehicle driving, sports events and a steam fair, along with all parking and associated activities with said uses – Refused – 10 June 2015
- SDNP/15/06484/FUL – Change of use of land from agriculture to mixed agriculture and holding of one music festival event and one sports endurance event in any calendar year (Retention of wooden structures within woodland associated with festival use.) – Temporary Permission for a limited period expiring on 31 December 2019 – Granted - 3 November 2016
- SDNP/17/02979/LDE – Use of land for a mixed use for agriculture and the driving of tanks and other military tracked vehicles, and the operation of construction plant and vehicles, for corporate/team building/activity days/experiences between the months of March and October, with the said vehicles stored on the land all year round. The construction of a purpose-built driving track (for tracked vehicles); the construction of an area of hardstanding and the permanent siting of an ancillary mobile catering van and awning, toilet unit and storage container, and the erection of a hospitality marquee (between March and October) – Approved – 23 February 2018
- SDNP/18/00939/CND – Variation of Conditions 2, 9, 10 and 11 on planning consent SDNP/15/06486/FUL (relating to an increase in attendees to 65,000, extension of duration of festival by one day to including opening on Wednesday, and small increases in relation to noise levels) – Temporary permission for a period expiring on 31 December 2019 – Approved – 6 July 2018
- SDNP/18/00994/FUL – Retention of modification to an existing access adjoining the A31

– Temporary Permission for a limited period expiring on 31 December 2019 – Approved – 11 May 2018

- SDNP/18/01017/FUL – Construction of 14.6m diameter water reservoir and associated plant at the westernmost corner of the Matterley Estate including retention of existing control box – Withdrawn – 23 April 2017
- SDNP/18/01309/FUL – Retention of the existing overflow parking and coach pad at the westernmost corner of the Matterley Estate to be used solely in connection with arrivals and departures during the Boomtown Festival. – Refused – 18 June 2018
- SDNP/18/06249/FUL – Change of use of land from agriculture to mixed agriculture and holding of one music festival event and one sports endurance event in any calendar year including retention of wooden structures within woodland and minor alterations to existing access on A31, both associated with festival use – Temporary Permission for a limited period expiring on 31 December 2024 – Approved – 17 December 2019. (This permission allowed up to 64,999 attendees for the music festival)
- SDNP/19/06160/CND – Variation of Condition 2 of Planning Consent  
SDNP/18/06249/FUL – Withdrawn – 7 May 2020
- SDNP/21/00290/FUL - A change of use of land from agriculture to mixed agriculture and holding of one music festival event for a number of attendees not exceeding 75,999 (plus 1,000 attendees on the Sunday for local residents) in any calendar year including retention of wooden structures within woodland and minor alterations to existing access on A31, both associated with festival use. Storage containers (storage use associated with music event) on site throughout rest of the year – Withdrawn – 5 December 2022
- SDNP/22/01333/CND –Variation of condition 2 relating to planning approval SDNP/18/06249/FUL for an extension to setting up and dismantling period from 9 to 14 weeks – Withdrawn – 12 April 2022
- SDNP/24/05303/FUL - Change of use of land from agriculture to mixed agriculture and holding of one music festival event to occur once a calendar year – Temporary Approval given for one year (allowing one festival in 2025) expiring on 31 December 2025 – 30 June 2025. (The application had been submitted requesting a temporary permission for 5 years but members resolved to only grant permission for one year)

2.2 In addition, there has been a long history in relation to the use of **Matterley Basin** for Motocross events. This dates back to an approval gained on appeal in March 2010 for two events per year. There have been subsequent temporary approvals for the events to be held earlier in the year and some temporary amendments to other conditions. At present, those temporary approvals have expired, and the permanent permission reverts to the conditions set on the original appeal decision.

2.3 There has also been a history of approvals in relation to **Avington Wellsite**, which is located within the site, close to Matterley Basin. The most recent approval was granted on appeal for the retention of the wellsite and existing surface and sub-surface infrastructure for a further period of five years in order to allow for further appraisal of oil and gas (SDNP/20/01255/CM). Appeal allowed on 10 December 2021 for a temporary period of five years (expiring in December of this year).

### 3. Proposal

3.1 This application seeks the variation of 2no conditions of the most recent approval (2025) to allow the festival to continue on an annual basis until 2030 (for the next five years). The 2025 permission allows for a limit of 75,999 attendees for the music event (plus 1,000 local residents on Sunday) which would include 63,000 ticket holders (plus 1,000 on Sunday) (In line with the numbers approved on the recent 1 year approval). The 2025 permission also

secures retention of the wooden structures currently located in the woods within the Estate. The 2025 permission also allows for a set up period before the event of up to five weeks and a period of three weeks for taking down subsequent to the event. The event itself would be five days – open from Wednesday to Monday with entertainment ceasing at Sunday night and the campsites closing on Monday. It is proposed that all of these requirements would remain the same. It should be noted that whilst the applicant seeks variation of Conditions 1 & 2, other conditions within the 2025 approval were worded purely on the basis of being for a one-year permission so minor changes are also required to Conditions 3 & 7.

- 3.2 The temporary approvals in 2016 and 2019 allowed for the use of the site for one music festival and one sports endurance event, however the recent 2025 approval and the current proposal only seeks use of the site for one music festival. It is important to note that the decision in 2025 (and also 2019) was subject to a S106 Agreement, which secured improvements to the South Downs Way, protection and enhancements to the SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), and a footpath from the Cheesefoot Head Car Park to the South Downs Way to the immediate west. Most importantly, the Agreement in 2019 secured the implementation of a Landscape Environmental Management Plan (LEMP), which included a number of ecological, landscape and environmental benefits across the Estate. With the 2025 approval the applicant entered into a Section 106 agreement securing similar benefits in relation to the 2019 approval but in a more holistic and manageable document securing ecological mitigation and enhancement measures titled as a Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Management Plan (BLEMMP). The final document for the 2025 permission could not secure provision of statutory BNG given it was only for a one-year permission.
- 3.3 The existing application makes provision within the submitted draft BLEMMP for statutory and policy compliant Biodiversity Net Gain, the details of which are explained and considered later in the report.
- 3.4 The submitted draft BLEMMP makes provision for a number of ecological mitigation and landscape enhancement measures which include the following:-
- Creation of a 1.75ha meadow on-site.
  - The addition of three no barn owl boxes (alongside the retention of the 23 owl, bat and bird boxes already installed as part of the 1-year permission).
  - Hedgerow management to improve ecological connectivity.
  - Commitment to annual independent ecological surveys.
  - Management Plans, including wildlife protection zones to protect habitats.
  - Extension of the woodland management plan to 2030.
- 3.5 This application does secure statutory and policy compliant BNG provision by way of the creation of the meadow on-site (as explained above) and by purchasing off-site credits. The aspiration is for those credits to be purchased from a habitat bank being finalised elsewhere in the Estate on the northern side of the A31. However, in the absence of this being available within the timescales, appropriate credits would be purchased from elsewhere and the applicant would need to provide confirmation of appropriate credits, in line with the legislative requirements.
- 3.6 The 2019 and 2025 permission provided for a 'soft opening' on Wednesdays to allow a limited number of attendees to access the site. Minor amendments were also sought in relation to the noise levels. In addition, the use of an area as a coach pad by the A272/A31 with reseeded taking place after each festival continues to form part of the current approval. This arrangement also forms part of this application.

3.7 The application is also accompanied by an Environmental Statement in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended). Further details are set out in Sections 6 and 7 of the report.

#### 4. Consultations

##### 4.1 Access and Rights of Way: Comments.

- During a site inspection for recent event observed that security staff attempted to restrict access to the Rights of Way prior to temporary closure coming into force. Highlights disconnect between the event management plan and the briefings of ground staff. Essential stewarding teams are correctly briefed on the status of Rights of Way.
- Extant permission included an informative note encouraging the applicant to consider the preparation of an active travel assessment with actions for future events. Applicant has failed to submit the required assessment, stating it is not warranted given the temporary nature of the event and rural location of the site.
- To address the operational issue observed in 2025 and secure the strategy identified in the informative, request condition for an active travel and wayfinding strategy, to include active travel improvements & SDW management.

##### 4.2 Archaeology Winchester City Council (WCC): No objection.

- No additional archaeological concerns.

##### 4.3 Beauworth Parish Meeting: No comments received.

##### 4.4 Bramdean & Hinton Ampner Parish Council – No comments received.

##### 4.5 Cheriton Parish Council: Objection.

- **Invalid Section 73 Application** – Government Guidance on “flexible options for planning permissions” includes statement “As a section 73 application cannot be used to vary the time limit for implementation, this condition must remain unchanged from the original permission.” In the Annex to the document it is made clear that the expiry date of a successful S73 Application will be “as the original permission”. This application is invalid because it seeks to amend the expiry date by five years which is not permissible. The applicants should submit a full application.
- **Why a S73 Application is not appropriate** – The applicants submitted a similar S73 application in 2019 to increase the attendance by 11,000 for each of the 5 years (by 55,000 additional people). SDNP informed the applicants that a S73 amendment was inappropriate and it was withdrawn). This application would result in 76,000 people. (7 times more additional people than in the failed 2019 application). Given the inappropriate 2019 application for 55,000 additional people, it should regard the current S73 application for 7 times as many additional people to be even more inappropriate. The proposals are for major development and SDNP and Local Plan states “will be refused except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest”. It is a misnomer to describe the proposals as “minor” and the S73 should be refused, being an inappropriate use of a S73 application.
- **Misuse of Temporary permission** – National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states “it is rarely justifiable to grant a second period of temporary permission”. SDNPA granted a first period of temporary permission in 2016. When a second application for permanent permission was submitted it was apparent no annual reports had been submitted to the Authority. In the absence, the Director assured the Committee that a 2nd period of temporary permission was justified. In 2024 an application for a further 5 years was submitted, and members granted only a one-year permission. One reason why Cheriton PC and others objected to the application was because it was in contravention of the NPPG guidance on use of temporary permissions. The Case Officer attempted to

answer this by stating changing circumstances would enable the Authority to better understand the impacts at the higher attendance levels. This application is for the same levels and so this “reason” is no longer valid. The other reason was that it is common for festivals of this nature to be subject to repeated temporary permissions due to their fluid nature and time limited impact. The case officer was subsequently asked to name other music festivals subject to repeated temporary permissions. The examples given by the case officer were ones which he had since learned have permanent permissions. The statement in the report was therefore wrong. If this application were approved it would be the 4th period of temporary permission, ignoring the NPPG advice.

- **Misleading Claims about Economic Benefits** – Claims made are not independently researched. The amount claimed as on-site expenditure does not benefit the SDNP economy as most of the recipients are not businesses based in the Park. No mention of adverse effects on local businesses both within and outside the Park. A camping business has to close because of noise complaints. Claimed economic benefits are disingenuous.
- **Non-Compliance with Local Plan Policies, Partnership Management Plan (PMP) and NPPF** – Noncompliant with Policy SD3 and NPPF (Major Development). Should be an assessment of cost and scope for developing elsewhere outside the Park. Other sites like Laverstoke Park Farm should be explored.
- Non-complaint with Policy SD6 & SD7. The policies state proposals will only be permitted where they conserve and enhance key views and relative tranquillity, respectively.
- Policy SD6 hardly mentioned in previous committee report and Cheriton comments and Photo’s overlooked. Cheriton in an area of intermediate tranquillity. Amplified music causes harm to relative tranquillity over a wide area of the Park. Previous report suggested that the stewardship of the land conserves relative tranquillity but did not explain how nor whether tranquillity would be enhanced.
- Does not comply with Objective 1.2 of PMP. No evidence that economic viability of Farm depends on income from the organisers of the Festival.
- Does not comply with Objective 5.2 of PMP (Dark Sky Reserve). Negatively affects quality of dark skies in a large area of Hampshire.
- Does not comply with Planning Principle 1. This can only be achieved by refusing the application.
- Does not comply with Planning Principle 10. Amplified noise until 4.00a.m negatively impacts relative tranquillity for local residents. Key views are not safeguarded for at least 9 weeks during the summer.
- **Subsequent Additional Representations** – Independent Ecological Review confirms only 1.19% of BNG being provided on-site. Seems shortfall will be made up by purchasing credits off-site. If bought outside of the Park, would be inconsistent with claim to support the National Park. If officers recommend approval, there must be reliable evidence that credits have been purchased within SDNP.
- Ecological review contains no comments about failure of applicant to establish a robust ecological baseline prior to 2024.
- Response from SDNPA Rights of way Officer highlighted that some people were prevented from accessing the SDW prior to its temporary closure in 2025. Council is aware that SDNP officers walked the diversion route in August 2025 and noted incorrect/misleading signage in place. Findings exposed poor management practices by applicants and a disdain for treatment of walkers/hikers.
- Committee Report should provide information of where representees live in relation to

site. Previous report stated 163 letters of support with no data on how many live within the Park. Most respondents do not live in the NP and most simply didn't mention material planning considerations.

- **Comments on legal note from applicants:**

- Validity of a S73 Application: Parish Council now accepts that S73 is a valid type of application. Noted however that legal note did not cite case law so assumed this point has not been adjudicated by courts.
- Repeated use of temporary permissions: Officer report on previous application considered there were changing circumstances requiring further temporary permission (increased number of attendees, removal of sports endurance event, need to gather further ecological data). Officer also stated it is common for festivals of this nature to be subject to repeated temporary permissions, given their fluid nature and time limited impact. Changing circumstances to which the May 2025 report referred no longer apply as the S73 application is the same site, same number of attendees, same operational factors and sports endurance event has already been removed. Subsequent to Committee in May 2025 case officer confirmed that reference to other music festivals having repeated temporary permissions was incorrect as there are none. Conclusions of Parish Council are that there is neither a trial run, nor changing circumstances to justify another period of temporary permission.

**Case Officer Comment:** The applicants previously applied for a temporary 5-year approval, however members were not minded to approve for five years given that there was insufficient evidence before them about benefits accrued through the BLEMMMP. This application essentially has changed circumstances in that the applicant has provided a detailed draft BLEMMMP to allow the Authority to consider the benefits/mitigation etc that could be accrued over a 5-year period and therefore consideration of a temporary permission is considered acceptable (and further allows evidence to be gathered on the impact or otherwise of the festival).

- BNG: Legal note confirms it is likely off-site units would be purchased elsewhere within the SDNP. Constitutes a huge risk for the Authority. Could not be certain that environmental damage inflicted in this part of the Park would be compensated by benefits elsewhere in the Park. Understood that there is no legal requirement that units must be purchased within the Park. Suggested that the applicants could use a similar approach and avoid purchasing all of the units elsewhere within the Park.

**Case Officer Comment:** The matter of BNG is considered elsewhere within the report, however it should be noted that, the applicants have a duty to purchase "appropriate" off-site units/statutory credits that relate to the impacts of the proposal they are applying for and this would be subject to scrutiny by the Authority.

4.6 **Conservation Officer (SDNPA):** No comments on this application.

4.7 **Drainage (WCC):** No comments received.

4.8 **Ecology - Hampshire County Council (HCC):** Informal Comments through ongoing dialogue with case officer and applicant.

- **Case Officer Comment:** There has been ongoing liaison between parties and the final outcome on remaining matters is set out below.
- Submitted technical note on grassland and flora: general picture shows a reduction and can suggest a negative impact. Conclusion that these are non-consequential changes in species composition is not very reliable. Query about quadrat selection.

(Applicant response: Numbers were based on professional judgement at time of the survey. Agreed it is too early to draw robust conclusions and only repeat year on year

sets of data will evidence this. Monitoring process will focus on spotting trends early so impact avoidance, mitigation and compensation can be adapted appropriately)

**Case Officer Response:** Ecologist further response states that there is a requirement for a more stringent monitoring and review process, separate from the BNG Process. Suggests securing an updated Technical Note annually for the duration of the 5-year permission, building on the existing one submitted and submitted to the LPA no later than three months from the date of each year’s monitoring visit. Case Officer currently liaising with Applicant on this matter and will be covered in amended wording in the BLEMMMP or by way of a suitable condition. Members to be updated.

- Reduction in habitat condition due to trampling has not been included in metric. This was agreed due to 1 year permission, but with a 5-year permission this impact would be annual. Given the short recovery period until the festival happens again, how can conservation grazing, reseeding, scarifying help as most species will again be affected during the flowering season?

(Applicant response: No evidence since 2009 that damage is cumulative. Further evidenced by EPR surveys to date. A 2026 monitoring survey will take place in May to add to the data set that exists.)

**Case Officer comment:** This has been noted by the Ecologist. Accepted that the ongoing surveys will provide a clearer picture of impact or otherwise, hence the importance of a temporary permission.

- Butterfly and Moth report refers to sections where highest numbers were recorded and were quite rich but maps do not show these sections. Report lacks comparison/assessment made between these parcels and the level of impact as a result of the festival and mitigation is broad in form of scrub reduction to increase light levels to grasslands.

(Applicant response: As this is an annual survey, a comparison assessment will be undertaken in the next report.)

**Case Officer Comment:** Ecologist confirms that provided annual surveys are carried out and the results are such that a robust comparison can be made in order to assess impacts and enable remedial actions, then that’s acceptable. It is considered the BLEMMMP can address this issue in line with Ecologists aspirations.

- Is there plan showing location of where black out material will be installed onto Heras fencing to reduce light spill into sensitive ecological receptors?

(Applicant response: The Event Management Plan submitted every year details various mitigation measures that have been agreed by EPR and SD officers previously).

4.9 **Environment Agency:** No objection but re-iterate concerns previously raised on earlier application (outlined below).

- Query regarding whether any grey water would still be directed to ground via soakaway
- Query regarding whether, with regard to the composting toilets, there could still be discharges to the ground.
- While these issues remain outstanding, suggest condition requiring a scheme to dispose of wastewater and foul water be submitted prior to commencement.

4.10 **Environmental Health:** No objection subject to conditions

- Comments remain the same as the previous application (to strengthen control of very low frequency to further protect the amenity of residents living in the Park, the SDNPA add condition 5 of the extant permission to any new consent bringing the benefit of introducing extra control not previously covered by WCC licence conditions).

- The WCC licence requires a number of other noise management controls and see no reason to duplicate those conditions.
- 4.11 **Esso Petroleum:** No comments received.
- 4.12 **Fire and Rescue:** Comments.
- Comments made mainly in relation to Standard advice – No conditions suggested
- 4.13 **Health & Safety Executive:** No comments received.
- 4.14 **Highways Authority:** No objection.
- The Highways Authority is involved in annual discussion and reviews of The Event Traffic Management Plan (ETMP). The extension of planning permission would not result in less frequent reviews of the ETMP, which would remain an annual requirement.
  - The Highways Authority is satisfied that, in the event that the application is approved, it would still retain its existing and necessary level of oversight regarding all highway matters pertaining to the festival.
  - Wish to draw applicant's attention to an issue concerning passenger transport for the festival, for the applicant's future consideration concerning congestion at Winchester Railway Station that arises from number of shuttle buses waiting to pick up/drop off festival visitors. Request applicant considers using alternative parking facilities to hold shuttle buses until they are needed or discuss with the Traffic Management Team the possibility of creating a temporary parking lane on nearby road for the buses to wait in.
- 4.15 **National Highways:** No objection.
- 4.16 **Itchen Stoke and Ovington Parish Council:** Support Application.
- 4.17 **Itchen Valley Parish Council:** Object.
- The proposal to purchase habitat units should be the subject of a condition that the habitat units be used to enhance the environment of the local area within the Park.
- 4.18 **Landscape:** Informal comments through ongoing dialogue with case officer and applicant.
- Case Officer Comment:** Ongoing liaison over queries as can be seen below: No further Comments from Landscape Officer in response to latest Applicant comments.
- 5Km study area was set out by applicant and agreed at Coving. Now includes a 3km Study area and little evidence to demonstrate why or to prove effects beyond 3km are minimal. Suggest application aligns with scoping evidence.
- (Applicants Response: Study area agreed in July 2024 and previous application is the same. Study area for this proposal is the same as previous application. Only difference is that the red line evolved during pre-application discussions and omitted areas of land which are not part of the festival. Study area remains unchanged).
- Red boundary line breaches SSSI at several different locations.
- (Applicant response: Festival has been designed to avoid areas of high importance for invertebrates such as butterflies. Out of bounds areas include habitats of importance for butterflies, the majority of calcareous grasslands, SSSI and other pockets within the Estate. Deliberately excluded from the red line boundary of the site and this remains the same for this proposal).
- Case Officer response:** Landscape Officer still has concerns that SSSI conflict is not resolved. Case officer content that SSSI is not breached in the plans.
- Concern about grassland restoration and likely success due to it being far from existing cattle handling and grassland of any quality. It is proposed within an immediate context

of arable production and reduces its benefits because soils will be high in nutrients, grassland will be isolated and susceptible to fertiliser/herbicide use.

(Applicant response: Should grazing prove impractical desired outcomes are achievable using an alternative mowing regime. Both options are described in the draft BLEMMMP and discussed at length. The draft BLEMMMP deliberately has options to ensure the proposal can be delivered, mindful that this is a working farm. Soil testing will be taking place to determine unforeseen circumstances, challenges and impracticalities).

- Skylark plots appear to be located within area of grassland potentially managed by cutting during the bird breeding season.

(Applicant response: Location of skylark plots will be reviewed annually, as the location is also dependent on farming practices. The meadow itself, once established will provide skylark with enhanced foraging opportunities).

- Unclear what the added value is of the woodland proposals. Site has a woodland management plan and so will already be undertaking a series of interventions.

(Applicant Response: Notable differences between WMP and enhancements within the BLEMMMP include control and removal of invasive non-native species, thinning of canopy to improve light penetration to benefit the scrub layer, planting of new native trees in WMP. The draft BLEMMMP specifies examples of suitable species and has a focus on benefits for biodiversity. WMP does not include a requirement for retention of dead wood or log pile creation, as written into the BLEMMMP. The draft BLEMMMP considers protection of nesting birds during vegetation removal.)

- Small amount of hedgerow work is proposed as an enhancement. Suggest identifying important hedgerows using the regs to then provide enhancements that go beyond current requirements.

(Applicant response: Hedgerows meet criteria within Regulations. BNG management of the buffer is devised with biodiversity in mind and not purely to maintain green cover, as is the aim with the Regs. Quality and habitat condition of the Hedgerows will therefore be greater under BNG Prescriptions than under the Regs alone)

- Not sure as to how many log piles will be provided (Applicant response: Log piles is not specified. In relation to species -specific enhancement, there are to be at least two log piles created and this is detailed in the draft BLEMMMP)
- Grazing regime proposed in draft BLEMMMP requires amendments. Monitoring strategy is incomplete compared to baseline surveys.
- Topics to be covered by condition: BLEMMMP, Soil Survey evidence; planting and specifications.

4.19 **Local Lead Flood Authority:** No objection.

4.20 **NHS – South East Hampshire CCG:** No comments received.

4.21 **Natural England:** No objection subject to appropriate mitigation being secured.

- Summary - Without appropriate mitigation the application would damage or destroy the interest features for which Cheesefoot Head SSSI has been notified. The following mitigation measures are required (Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecology Mitigation & Management Plan (BLEMMMP) approved by the Ecologist/Biodiversity Officer. Advise that an appropriate planning condition or obligation is attached to any permission to secure these measures.
- Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) – Note that the shadow HRA has been produced by the applicant. It is responsibility of LPA to produce the HRA. Comments on the shadow HRA submitted by the applicant are that the assessment concludes the

proposals can be screened out from further stages of assessment because significant effects are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination. On the basis of the information provided, Natural England concurs with this view.

- Welcome the submission of the draft BLEMPP. Provided the works are carried out in accordance with the details of the BLEMPP, Natural England (NE) is content with the measures set out to minimise environmental impacts upon designated sites.
- Nutrient Neutrality – The Shadow HRA states that wastewater will be removed from site and dealt with outside the River Itchen SAC and Solent SPA and SAC Catchment, therefore avoiding negative impacts on water quality of the Habitats site. NE is of the view that if this measure is implemented, it will be effective and reliable in preventing harmful effects on the Habitats Site for the duration of the proposed development. Advise a condition or Obligation be attached to a permission to secure these measures.
- SSSI Consent – The applicant has NE consent to carry out operations described in their notice attached to the Consent 13 July 2023.
- Protected Landscapes There are no landscape issues which, based on the information received, necessitates NE involvement.
- Protected Species – Refer to standing advice.
- Local Sites and priority habitats and species – LPA should consider impacts on any local wildlife or geodiversity site. May also be opportunities to enhance local sites and improve their connectivity to help nature’s recovery.

4.22 **Owslebury Parish Council:** Objects.

- On grounds of public safety, particularly in the light of previous fatalities associated with the event.
- Need to be satisfied that organisers can demonstrate the festival is being operated in a safe manner and effective measures are in place to protect participants and staff.

4.23 **Southern Water:** No comments.

4.24 **Tree Officer (WCC):** No comments received.

4.25 **Twyford Parish Council:** No comments received.

4.26 **Tichborne Parish Council:** Comments.

- The Parish Council sincerely hopes that there is a proper consideration of the impacts that the festival will have on natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

**Further Representation received making following points:-**

- Reason given for temporary permission is to allow impact of the festival event on the amenities of the area and the special qualities and enjoyment of the National Park to be reviewed.
- Appears no such review has ever been undertaken by SDNPA in almost 10 years. Reasons given in previous reports has been due to pandemic and continual increase in numbers. Permissions should not have been kept given if they prevented review being undertaken. Further increase of numbers prevents completion of review being made.
- How realistic is it to expect the SDNPA to carry out any such review during a further temporary permission, if it was to be given? NPPG states that successive temporary permissions should be avoided. Accordingly do not consider that a further temporary permission should be granted.
- Appears SDNPA is relying on applicant to provide information to be used for the

review. Consider SDNPA should gather this information and carry out the review due the applicant being in a conflict-of-interest position.

- **Case Officer Comment:** Officers have always explained with successive applications why there is a need for a temporary permission to gather appropriate evidence of the impact (be it positive or otherwise) of the festivals. This has in part been due to poor evidence at the outset in terms of ecological surveys, the pandemic and, on occasion, an increase in numbers. More recently the evidence base has been more robust and continues to build up an understanding of the impact of the festival on the site and surrounding area. It is considered that a further 5-year temporary approval at the attendance figures proposed will allow the Authority to have a robust evidence base from which to assess future application(s) and their acceptability or otherwise for a permanent application.
- The query concerning the need for impartial reporting and review is noted, however it should be acknowledged that the Authority robustly scrutinises ongoing surveys and reports and consults with necessary specialists to consider whether the submitted information is providing the information needed to assess the impacts. It is therefore considered the necessary framework is in place to ensure impact is given full consideration. It should also be noted that the submitted Ecological Information submitted by the applicant was subject to an independent review by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (details of which have been available on the public access system for interested parties to view).

#### 4.27 **Dark Skies:** Comments.

- Previous response still relevant. “To summarise.....the event is likely to create a significant adverse effect which conflicts with aims of dark sky protection within the National Park. Whilst every effort should be made to ensure that relevant lighting uses dark sky lighting principles to minimise sky glow, glare and spill, the nature of theatrical lighting will create temporary reductions in sky quality. However, given the distance to the core, limited duration and the time of year it is unlikely to threaten the average core values. This is consistent with previous consultations and communications with the developers lighting team and is a realistic solution given the scope of the event. The approach taken is sensible and reflects the complexity of the lighting against the availability of standards. Consequently every effort should be made to minimise the impact of the lighting.”
- The change of use for this purpose will continue to create a significant adverse effect which conflicts with the aims of dark sky protection within the National Park.
- There has been effort to minimise the impact of lighting with relevance to appropriate luminaires. Calculations show that there will be adverse impacts for receptors in light trespass, sky glow and glare. While the effect is temporary, the lighting report shows that although the impact is low, the proposal would not meet the requirements for obtrusive lighting within ILP GN01.
- The Environmental Lighting Report shows that the proposals will produce 30% upward light which is outside the EI environmental zone.
- It is inherently difficult to ensure a EI dark sky compliant music festival and this has been noted in previous responses. Although efforts have been made to constrain light to a minimum during the operation and construction phases, there still remains a significant residual impact which conflicts with South Downs Policy.
- The time and temporary nature of the proposal does mitigate the impact and is unlikely to significantly impact the long-term sky quality of the core. However, as the maintenance of the Dark Sky Reserve requires the avoidance of threats, the proposal

will conflict with this aim. As such the proposals will be visible in the surrounding landscape and temporarily reduce sky quality, both in terms of overhead measurements and general experience of darkness.

- Given the multi-purpose lighting required for this proposal, it is still important to ensure quality lighting where it is appropriate and possible. All lighting for construction and general floodlighting should be installed to avoid upward light, glare and be 3000k. This may be difficult to achieve with mobile towers, but mitigations should be considered for all lighting.
- In summary, while the design shows regard for dark skies within the design, the proposal will create significant adverse impacts on dark skies and not be compliant with ILP guidelines. While these are temporary in use there will be no lasting impact on the long-term measurement of sky quality.

## 5. Representations

### 5.1 Letters of Support from 62 Respondents received

#### Purposes of the Park

- First purpose has been placed at the heart of the schemes design and operation.
- Demonstrates how a carefully managed event can fulfil the Park's duty to foster social and economic well-being of local communities.
- Sound, policy-compliant and well aligned with purposes and duties of the Park.
- Actively contributes to Park purposes beyond conservation. Website encourages audience to explore the Park's qualities and educational signage is in place around the site.

#### Landscape

- Applicants are great stewards of the land.
- The natural setting of the Festival is the star of the show. Have stayed in the Park since due to love for the location.
- Full site deconstructed within 3 weeks of the event, ensuring Estate is returned to agricultural use and countering concerns about long term soil compaction.

#### Transport

- Strong emphasis on traffic control. Coordinate to minimise congestion. Managed well with lots of communication. Use of advance signage, diversion routes and presence of stewards allow local workers and residents to plan accordingly. Approved access points and comprehensive management plan in place.
- Noisy traffic on arrival and leaving but happy it takes place.
- Working locally, never been a problem with traffic.
- Well-coordinated operation due to proactive engagement with transport providers.

#### Noise and Light

- Care taken in soundproofing and conducting through sound checks.
- Measures to ensure festival does not result in permanent erosion of Park's tranquillity.
- Ecological lighting review performed annually to minimise light disturbance to nocturnal species and protect Dark Sky status.
- Boomtown runs at lower sound levels than other festivals.

### Cultural Heritage

- Application recognises that cultural heritage is not solely historic but can include contemporary cultural expression.
- Letter of support from local show promoter and sound engineer. Partnership with Boomtown allows local artists to take their next step by performing at Boomtown.
- Plays a vital role in promoting cultural diversity, creativity and community engagement.

### Local Economy & Community Benefits

- Willingness to engage with the local community and act on views of neighbours. Much effort in planning and reflection on successes and failures afterwards.
- University conference events team provide accommodation for event staff. Generates consistent occupancy and income for the University. Provides measurable economic benefit to local accommodation providers.
- Organisers support local causes. Notably donating to Winchester Hospice, local parish charities, education projects with local schools' early years education, Trees for the Downs project etc.
- Giant Tree Charity would not be possible without the lessons learnt at the South Downs.
- Provision of Sunday tickets for local residents. A friendly feel with huge welcome from young people. Safe environment.
- Educational in making young people aware of environmental impact.
- Personally helped with anxiety and mental health challenges. Offered a voluntary role and was supported by the organisers.
- A major regional economic engine aligning with SDNP local economic wellbeing duty. Festival generates £42 million boost to UK economy with £36 million concentrated in Winchester, Hampshire and the South Downs Region. Up to 12,350 workers employed.
- Positive impact on local primary school in Cheriton through Community Grant programme, supporting Early Years setting. Enabled enhanced learning spaces and resources for youngest pupils. Wider value of festival. Employment opportunities, supporting local businesses, contributing to cultural vibrancy of the region. From an education perspective, encouraging to see a large scale event engaging with themes of sustainability, creativity and community responsibility.
- Boomtown Liaison Officer has been a pivotal part in overhaul of pre-school garden space.

### Ecology/Biodiversity Net Gain

- Application robustly prepared, environmental effects properly assessed and clear, enforceable mitigation and management measures embedded throughout the proposal.
- Sensitive ecological areas are excluded from access entirely, mature vegetation is retained and protected, and long term landscape and biodiversity enhancement measures are committed to. Measures represent active stewardship and enhancement of landscape.
- Biodiversity work on site including the establishment of a wildflower meadow provides a positive example of BNG.
- Reassured by temporary and reversible nature of the development. For the majority of the year, the land remains in agricultural use.

- Impressed by the draft BLEMP with commitment to 10% BNG, creation of wildflower meadows and hedgerow enhancement. 5 year permissions is essential for these initiatives to succeed.
- Proposal involves active protection of calcareous grassland, woodland pockets and species rich habitats, provision of barn owl boxes, bat boxes and skylark plots.
- Wastewater actively managed and transported to outside of the Solent Catchment.
- Habitat protection initiatives, 7-year habitat commitment, 30-year BNG management, tree planting in the South Downs. Species specific mitigation, event specific protection measures, wildlife boxes.

#### Sustainability

- Sustainability commitments, including reduced emissions, circular waste initiatives, responsible water management and innovation in energy use.
- Sad to see litter left but organisers have managed to reduce that considerably.
- Recent festival much better in time to clear the site up.
- Proposals for treatment of wastewater rather than allow it to soak through the aquifer is welcome.
- Hydro Stage powered entirely by hydrogen.
- Waste transferred from on-site toilets into fertiliser that could be returned to land use.

#### Other

- Festival supports diversification of Matterley Estate
- 5-year approval should be minimum.
- Pattern of short-term consents may risk becoming unnecessarily protracted creating avoidable costs for the applicant and the Authority, without necessarily delivering additional environmental protection or regulatory benefit.
- A more proportionate long-term approach could be considered.
- Despite numbers never feels overcrowded.
- Crosses generational divide with attendees young and old.
- Continuation of a temporary well-managed diversion of the SDW reflects a balanced approach between public access and event management.
- 24-hour event control centre impressive.
- OT House commissioned to produce promo content including “a love letter to the South Downs National Park”.
- Projects such as “Access All Areas” highlight commitment to inclusion and accessibility.

## 5.2 **Letters of objection from 18 Respondents received**

#### Purposes of Park & Policy

- Goes against principles for looking after the South Downs. Does not conserve or enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.
- Failure to meet the purposes of the Park (Active Duty – LURA 2023). Recent case law and DEFRA Guidance confirm this is a higher bar than before. Application does not demonstrate how the festival would further either purpose. Documents omit any assessment of this duty.

- Application of the Sandford Principle – Conservation must take priority over public enjoyment.
- Partnership Management Plan contains no provision for development of this nature.
- Doesn't comply with several policies of the Local Plan.
- Has applicant convinced Members that the event can only be held on this site? Has evidence been provided of alternative sites outside the Park which have been explored and discounted?
- **Case Officer Comment:** The matter of tests in relation to major development is considered in Section 7 of the report.
- Contrary to Policy SD3 – Should be an assessment of cost of, and scope for, holding the festival elsewhere outside the SDNP.
- Application refused in December 2022 because it had not been demonstrated that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on ecological, landscape or biodiversity interests of the Park. Nor had it been demonstrated that the proposals were in the public interest or that there were exceptional circumstances, given that evidence concerning any potential adverse effect on the environment and landscape had not been forthcoming over a meaningful period.
- **Case Officer Comment:** This application was not refused. The application was withdrawn by the applicant.
- Doesn't comply with SD6, SD7 and SD8.

#### Landscape

- Festival destroys key views at Cheesefoot Head contrary to Policy SD6.
- Mess left over at the end of the Festival is an eyesore taking weeks to clear.
- Walkers appalled that they had to undertake a considerable detour and unable to view Cheesefoot Head in its natural state.

#### Procedural Queries

- Described as a Minor Material Amendment but effect would be to permit what the SDNPA describes as major development for 5 years which is not a minor matter. S73 is a type of application used for example to amend number or size of windows in the plans of a dwelling previously approved.
- Government guidance states that a S73 application cannot be used to vary the time limit for implementation.
- Breach of NPPG in that approval would mean 15 years of consecutive temporary permissions. NPPG states even two consecutive periods should be "rare". Applicant now seeks a fourth temporary approval.
- Is a further period of temporary permission appropriate. What will be different in 5 years time? What needs to happen for the Committee to make a final decision as to whether the development is appropriate for the Park?
- No annual report has been submitted as required.
- **Case Officer Comment:** Procedural Queries are addressed in Section 7 of the Report.

#### Ecology/Biodiversity Net Gain

- There should be at least 10% BNG but applicants are offering 89.61 habitat units

purchased off-site, none of which benefits the National Park in compensation for all of the environmental damage over the last 10 years. Only on-site BNG is a wildflower field of 1.77ha, some additional hedging and a few bird boxes.

- Important that the off-site BNG credits must be purchased within the SDNP Area and preferably in the Hampshire part of the SDNP. Compensation offer must be applied locally to the wildlife damage caused.
- Event is seriously damaging to the local bird population and other wildlife.
- Analysis of Independent data submitted with previous application by objector compared numbers of four species within the festival area to numbers in adjacent farmland and in all cases the festival area numbers performed badly in comparison with surrounding farmland.
- Surveys also undertaken by objector confirmed higher skylark population on adjoining land by 7:1. Numbers have got worse in last year.
- Since Committee in May 2025 pleased to have had constructive discussions with Boomtown. EPR have now established a baseline and conducting a full suite of appropriate surveys and publishing their results. They should be made to continue these surveys if permission approved.
- Can accept the habitat creation and improvement offers outlined in the draft BLEMMP but could go further by creating ponds along the SDW. Addition of 1.77ha of neutral grassland and enhancing 1.62km of hedgerow is welcomed. Continuation of skylark plots is good.
- Draft BLEMMP is thorough and professionally produced but highlights issues that demonstrate the site's unsuitability.
- Long term soil compaction is incompatible with habitat recovery.
- Habitat improvements are small, fragmented and insufficient to offset the scale of the impact.
- Creation of isolated islands of biodiversity fails to deliver meaningful ecological connectivity.
- Historical environmental reporting has been incomplete or absent. Mitigation should be assessed against long term degradation, not a 2023 baseline. BLEMMP should be peer reviewed, (e.g. by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust).
- Noise and disturbance caused over 8-10 weeks cannot conserve and enhance wildlife and fauna.
- Putting 75,000 people in a relatively small area where loud music is played until late and lasers used cannot conserve or enhance wildlife and fauna.
- **Case Officer Comment:** The matter of BNG is considered elsewhere in the report, but in short, the applicant is proposing a mixture of onsite and offsite provision which will accord with Policy S9 and the appropriate BNG legislation.

#### Noise & Air pollution/Tranquillity/Dark Skies

- Amplified music causes harm to residents living in area of intermediate tranquillity.
- Amplified music from open air stages beyond midnight until 04.00 cause harm to tranquillity. Does not enhance relative tranquillity and contrary to Policy SD7.
- Number of listed buildings in surrounding villages in which measures such as double glazing are not allowed. Their impact on noise significant.

- Should be made to cease amplified music at midnight or earlier (11pm).
- Use of laser driven illumination is totally in conflict with the Dark Skies Policy.
- Music is even heard from 8.5 miles away.
- Apart from the times when events are held, this is a tranquil area but noise from Boomtown plus strobe lighting spoil this.
- **Case Officer comment:** No objection has been raised by the Environmental Health Team subject to a condition.

#### Traffic & Transport/Highways

- Chaos caused to road users by severe congestion on Wednesday, Thursday and worse on Monday.

#### Crime & Disorder

- WCC confirmed they would be keeping a careful eye on the festival with people in the crowd looking for drug dealers. Subsequent press detailing offences and who had been arrested. Reputation as a drug fuelled festival.
- Is the applicant doing enough to ensure the Festival is run safely and does not impact local health services by the disproportionate number of attendees from the Festival site?
- **Case Officer Comment:** The matter of Crime and Disorder is addressed by the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) that meets regularly. No comments have been received from the Police in relation to the current application. Officers do not consider that a refusal could be sustained in relation to the concerns raised above.

#### Economic Benefit

- Unsupported evidence of economic benefits which accrue to local communities. No mention made of dis-benefits to local business owing to chaos caused by traffic congestion on Wednesday, Thursday and Monday. False and exaggerated claims about economic benefits.
- Examples of disbenefits to local camping site which has to close over the Festival. Also understood that several hospitality venues do not accept bookings because of noise nuisance and traffic congestion.
- Applicants claim large amounts of economic benefit but the source of the figures is the “applicants” and secondary research carried out in 2015. 2015 research still considered to be flawed (based on 591 interviews based on how much they had spent. Average was then calculated and grossed up).
- 2015 research also revealed 169 on-site traders of which only 9 were Hampshire based, and only 4 Winchester based. Non identified as SDNP based. No evidence on latest application to the contrary.
- Off-site expenditure claimed unlikely to have benefited local businesses within SDNP.
- Authority must have reliable up-to-date evidence about economic benefits to understand whether it is meeting its statutory duty to seek to foster the economic and social-wellbeing of local communities.
- Boomtown donates only a small amount of revenue to charity in comparison to Glastonbury.
- Economic report cannot give an estimate of benefit to those living and working in SDNP. Extremely vague and general wording in report. *“Based on the application of suitable regional multipliers, it is estimated that £36.2 million of the total could be concentrated within*

*the local and sub-regional economies of Winchester, Hampshire and the SDNP and wider region*". Ignoring what the multipliers might be, the statement does not say who makes this estimate and merely states that £36.2 million "could" "Be concentrated" in a rather large and undefined area that includes Winchester and the SDNP. Does not give comfort as to what economic benefit there may be to the SDNP and those living/working there.

- General countrywide statistics about economic value of creative arts in the country.
- No evidence as to how many paid jobs are taken up by locals.
- Independent consultant should be commissioned by SDNPA.

Other issues

- Too easy for a 1-year lease to become a 5-year lease and then a permanent lease.
- Earlier temporary permission was to enable a better assessment of the impact of the project upon environment/traffic/household and natural. Such an assessment must be independent of the applicant and must look at impacts on settlements in-situ, not relying on extrapolated measurements taken on site by the applicants' advisers.

**6. Planning Policy**

6.1 Relevant Sections of National Planning Policy Framework:

- NPPF02 – Achieving sustainable development
- NPPF06 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- NPPF09 – Promoting sustainable transport
- NPPF15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- NPPF16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

6.2 Government policy relating to National Parks is set out in English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 and the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024). The Circular and NPPF confirm that National Parks have the highest status of protection. The NPPF states at paragraph 189 that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in national parks and that the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations and should be given great weight in National Parks. It states *"the scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."*

6.3 Major development

Paragraph 190 of the NPPF also outlines that "permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated"

6.4 Footnote 67 to paragraph 190 provides further clarification; “For the purposes of paragraphs 190 and 191, whether a proposal is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined”.

6.5 Having assessed the application and considered relevant case law, the scheme is **considered to be major development** for the purposes of paragraph 190 of the NPPF and its footnote (no.67). This is considered in more details later in the report.

Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended)

6.6 This application is supported by an Environmental Statement as the proposals fall within the definition set out in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

6.7 As set out in the above-mentioned regulations and the ‘Planning Practice Guidance’ which accompanies the National Planning Policy Framework, there are specific arrangements for considering and determining planning applications, which have been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This includes the adequacy of the information provided, consultation, publicity, and informing the public of the decision and the main reasons for it. The Local Planning Authority should take into account the information in the Environmental Statement, the responses to consultation and any other relevant information when determining the application. Further assessment of the submitted Environmental Statement is made in Section 7 of this report.

The New South Downs Local Plan

6.8 The First Publication (Regulation 18 Consultation) of the New South Downs Local Plan took place in 2025, with future consultation planned to take place in Summer of 2026. Currently, the New South Downs Local Plan does not carry weight in decision making. As it progresses through the adoption process, it will gain more weight for the purposes of decision making.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

6.9 The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Hampshire was published on 8 December 2025 and is a material consideration, especially where the development plan pre-dates the publication of an LNRS. For the purpose of determining planning applications, the LNRS provides guidance on biodiversity priorities and measures to be incorporated into development proposals. This proposal accords with the LNRS through the landscaping and ecological mitigation proposed.

6.10 Most relevant Policies of Adopted South Downs Local Plan (2014-2033) (A full list of relevant policies can be found in Appendix I)

- Core Policy SD1 - Sustainable Development
- Core Policy SD3 - Major Development
- Strategic Policy SD4 - Landscape Character
- Strategic Policy SD7 - Relative Tranquillity
- Strategic Policy SD8 - Dark Night Skies
- Strategic Policy SD9 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Strategic Policy SD19 - Transport and Accessibility
- Development Management Policy SD54 - Pollution and Air Quality

6.11 The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan 2026-2031

- 6.12 The Environment Act 1995 requires National Parks to produce a Management Plan setting out strategic management objectives to deliver the National Park Purposes and Duty. National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) states that Management Plans “contribute to setting the strategic context for development” and “are material considerations in making decisions on individual planning applications.”
- 6.13 This document was adopted by the National Park Authority on 9 December 2025. The Plan sets out a Vision, Outcomes, Policies and a Delivery Framework for the National Park over the next five years. Relevant Aims include;
- Aim 1 – Nature Recovery
  - Aim 2 – Climate Change
  - Aim 6 – Cultural Heritage
  - Aim 7 Rural Economy
- 6.14 Other Relevant Policy Documents (including SPDs and TANs)
- Biodiversity Net Gain TAN
  - Dark Skies TAN
  - Ecosystems Services Statement TAN
  - Habitats Assessment Regulations TAN

## **7. Planning Assessment**

### Background – Major Development

- 7.1 This application is considered to be major development for the purposes of Paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework, by virtue of the scale and type of event which is proposed and the proposed number of people that would be attending the event.
- 7.2 Paragraph 190 confirms that permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. It then provides a list of criteria that should form part of consideration of major applications.
- 7.3 It is considered, as with the original temporary approval and the most recent approval, that there are a number of public interests pertinent to this proposal with regard to compliance with Policy SD3 and Paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Firstly, the conservation and enhancement of the National Park is the SDNPA’s primary obligation. This is a matter of balance given the temporary nature of the proposal in any year. It is acknowledged that there may be some impact on the conservation and enhancement of the National Park. This has to be considered in light of many impacts being temporary and the applicant is prepared to carry out and secure works and landscape management which would continue to have a more permanent positive impact on the conservation and enhancement of the National Park. Such ongoing benefits for the landscape, natural beauty and wildlife of the Estate and the Park could all be secured again should permission be forthcoming. The applicant has submitted a draft Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Management Plan (BLEMMP) which would secure benefits above and beyond that already achieved by the landowner’s stewardship of the land in question.
- 7.4 Notwithstanding, it must be noted that the Authority has taken an approach with the recent applications by granting temporary permissions to allow a greater evidence base to be collated to greater understand the level of impact the festivals have on the landscape, ecology and wildlife of the area. Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the cancellation of two festivals during the period of the temporary permission between December 2019 and December 2024, the applicant has only been able to provide a limited

amount of ecological data. Therefore, the full extent (or even presence) of any impact under the numbers previously permitted, has not yet been fully evidenced as desired. However, it must also be noted that it has been evidenced through the monitoring of the LEMP secured in 2019 that conservation and enhancement of the Park has been achieved through actions secured by way of a Section 106 Agreement. Recent survey work undertaken by the applicants Ecologists provides reassurance moving forward.

- 7.5 **Given all the above, whilst there remains a need to continue to build up a greater evidence base to assess the impact or otherwise on the landscape and ecological interests, it is considered that the Conservation and Enhancement of the Park was met by the previous permission. It must be acknowledged however that the need for a greater ecological and landscape evidence base is such that only a temporary permission for five years could be supported.**
- 7.6 It should also be recognised that a key matter is in relation to the second purpose of the Park specifically relating to the opportunity provided for a significant number of diverse people to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park. Since the earlier permissions, the festival organisers have erected information boards during the event, which explain the importance of the SSSI with some additional information about the wider Park. In addition, as part of the Event Management Plans there has been a requirement for the festival organisers to provide opportunities for meeting this purpose of the Park, which has occurred.
- 7.7 Another consideration is, in meeting the purposes of the park, the duty to meet a socio-economic need of communities within this part of the National Park. This is discussed in more detail elsewhere in the report; however, for sake of completeness it is important to note that there are clearly economic benefits that accrue in the locality during the holding of such events.
- 7.8 Further, in assessing the public interest and any exceptional circumstances, applications should include an assessment of the following:-  
The Need for the Development, including in terms of national considerations and the impact of refusing or approving it on the local economy.
- 7.9 The Matterley Estate has been holding a number of events for some years now. Notwithstanding some early issues, the organisation of the events continue to be fine-tuned and are the subject of event management plans which are scrutinised in some detail under the licence agreements by Winchester City Council and by the Safety Advisory Group which meets regularly. In addition, it has been a requirement of the temporary permissions to provide an annual event management plan for scrutiny by National Park officers.
- 7.10 Boomtown music festival is of economic benefit to the farm and how it operates year in, year out. Whilst the application has been submitted by the Festival organiser and the farm, it is clear that use of the land for the festival also benefits the owner of the Estate in their ongoing stewardship of the land. The need for some form of development is also acknowledged, given the nature of the farming enterprise. There is arguably some economic benefit to Winchester and the surrounding local areas (including those within the National Park). Whilst the extent of the economic benefit has been questioned it is nonetheless clear that it does bring some economic benefits to the region.
- 7.11 In addition it is acknowledged that the events provide recreational opportunities for a wide cross section of the community, regionally and nationally. They bring people into the National Park that otherwise may not have visited with the potential for return trips and an increase in understanding and enjoyment of the Park. In particular, the proposal allows for a demographic of younger people to access the Park and is an opportunity for them to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park.

- 7.12 Given these considerations it is considered that there is arguably a need for this development in order to contribute to the stewardship of the land and its contribution to the wider landscape, natural beauty and wildlife.
- The cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way;
- 7.13 Musical events have been organised for some time at Matterley. Some activities have been specifically drawn to the location because of the topography of the land, natural beauty of the area and because it brings something different than other festival events/locations. In addition, it is noted that the site has close links to the strategic highways network and the City of Winchester and the coastal cities of Southampton and Portsmouth which assists as far as a suitable location is concerned. Added to this it is important to note that the earlier applications were, and continue to be submitted as a diversification scheme to assist with the agricultural activities that take place all year. In this respect that need could not be met elsewhere and have the same benefits outside the National Park. The events assist in allowing the farm to be managed in the way it is rather than a more arable focussed approach, which could arguably be to the detriment of the landscape. Specifically only about 50% of the farm is used for arable purposes with the remainder used for grassland, woodland and game plots.
- 7.14 Whilst the need could perhaps be met in another way, by the applicant operating within his permitted development rights, it is clear that the application has been submitted in order to allow a meaningful form of diversification to continue. Controls of the nature proposed through this application would not apply if the applicant was to rely solely on his permitted development rights.
- 7.15 Having regard to this element of the assessment it is considered on balance that there are exceptional circumstances to justify the development, and developing elsewhere or meeting the need in the other way would have less merit in terms of public benefits.
- Any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.
- 7.16 The report sets out below, the effects on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities which are inherently part of the consideration of whether the amended scheme may be acceptable. Whilst there is still some need for greater ecological evidence to understand the impact, be it adverse, negligible or neutral on ecology and wildlife interests, it is clear that there are some short-term temporary effects on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities as evidenced in the submitted ES and other documents. How these impacts will be mitigated are set out in a Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Management Plan and secured via S.106.
- 7.17 Policy SD3 also requires that development proposals should be as sustainable as possible, and in this respect, there are a number of initiatives that the current organisers undertake.
- 7.18 **Given the above it is considered, on balance, that exceptional circumstances exist and it is within the public interest to approve the development and the proposal would therefore comply with Policy SD3 of the Local Plan and Paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework.**
- Environmental Impact Assessment
- 7.19 The Application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES), in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (as amended). This describes the 'Environmental Impact Assessment', assessing the potential environmental effects of the development during the set-up, operation and take down (beneficial or adverse), the degree of impact and mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or offset negative impacts. The issues covered are: biodiversity, landscape and visual, lighting, noise, socio-economics and Human Health; and Transport and access. (Some of these issues are

discussed further in the report). The statement concludes that, overall, the design of the proposed development, including the build and break periods, has taken into account the potential environmental effects and where necessary, mitigation measures form an integral part of the scheme. This is to ensure that the environment is suitably protected and any impacts from the proposed development are minimised as far as possible.

Principle of development

- 7.20 The matter of compliance with the Purposes and duty of the Park and Local Plan Policies have been considered in some detail over the course of earlier applications for events on the application site. The assessment against the previous applications still has some relevance however, it is important to measure the proposals against the policies within the Local Plan.
- 7.21 Policy SD1 relates to Sustainable Development and the Purposes of the Park and considering cumulative impacts of development. It confirms that permission will be refused where the development fails to conserve the landscape, natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park, unless the benefits outweigh the great weight to be attached to those interests and there is substantial compliance with the other policies in the plan.
- 7.22 The balance in relation to the purposes remains relevant as it did when earlier temporary approvals were given. The question remains as to whether the short-term impact for such events, is outweighed by long-term benefits that could be accrued for landscape, natural beauty and wildlife together with its contribution to Purpose 2, having regard to the duty. The most recent temporary approval secured some benefits as part of a BLEMMP, however the benefits accrued had to necessarily be limited, given that only a one-year permission was issued. It has also over time been appreciated by Members that the absence of a 'steady state' of ecological data arising from festivals means that the long-term impacts cannot be fully ascertained. So a careful approach of a temporary permission has, to date, been and continues to be considered appropriate. In addition, the most recent temporary one year Approval, is the only Festival undertaken at the attendance levels of 75,999. Whilst data already accrued is helpful a further temporary approval over a 5-year period would enable a wider evidence base.
- 7.23 Policy SD2 has the aspiration of ensuring proposals have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services. The securing of a fresh land management strategy would embrace and address a number of matters to achieve some positive impacts. It is considered that with such a document and actions secured the proposal would accord with Policy SD2.
- 7.24 Policy SD3 relates to major development. This matter has already been addressed above.
- 7.25 Policy SD4 relates to Landscape Character. This confirms that proposals will only be permitted where they conserve and enhance landscape character. The matter of Impact on Landscape is considered further in the report. Policy SD6 refers to safeguarding views. This will be addressed in the section of Landscape impact.
- 7.26 Policy SD7 relates to Relative Tranquillity. It is appreciated that the proposals do not conserve or enhance relative tranquillity for the duration of the events (or arguably during set up and take-down). Notwithstanding, it is clear that the stewardship of the land by the owner for the remainder of the year serves to conserve the tranquillity of the area. The consideration therefore is whether the temporary impact on tranquillity and balancing that with all the other benefits and disbenefits, would, on its own be a reason for refusal. In this instance, given the controls available, the limited nature of disturbance and the impacts and benefits outlined in the report which could be accrued, the disturbance is, even with the additional numbers, acceptable.
- 7.27 Policy SD9 relates to Biodiversity and Geodiversity and specifically requires that proposals should identify and incorporate opportunities for net gains in biodiversity. This is considered and addressed later in the report.

- 7.28 Policy SD11 relates to Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows. In particular, the policy confirms that buffers will be required between the development and ancient woodland or veteran trees. It also confirms that proposals which affect trees and woodland must be informed by a full site survey. In the Ecology section of the report, this is considered further.
- 7.29 Policy SD16 relates to Archaeology. The County Archaeologist has confirmed that they have no objection.
- 7.30 Policy SD17 refers to Protection of the Water Environment. This is considered in the report, with special consideration to the matter of nitrate/phosphate neutrality.
- 7.31 Policies relating to Traffic, Parking, walking and cycling (SD19-SD22) are considered in relation to highway impact elsewhere in the report.
- 7.32 Policy SD23 relates to Sustainable Tourism and mentions visitor attractions. In particular, it confirms that such schemes will be permitted where they provide opportunities for visitors to increase their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities. This has always been part of the balance in meeting the purposes and the proposal is considered to be compliant with the policy in this regard. Whilst the policy also mentions that development proposals will not detract from the experience of visitors or affect the character of the area, this has to be seen in the context of short-term impact balanced with long-term stewardship and enhancement of the environment of the area. Outside the settlement policy boundaries (as this site is), proposals should positively contribute to the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park and be closely associated with other established attractions, including rights of way networks and part of farm diversification schemes. It must be added that the proposals are inherently associated with the rights of way network and are part of a farm diversification scheme, in that the use for such events enables the applicant to continue to farm and manage their land for the remainder of the year.
- 7.33 Policy SD25 (3) mentions that proposals within rural estates and large farms will have positive regard when considering where the scheme delivers multiple benefits in line with the purposes and the special qualities of the Park and in regard to Eco-system services. The proposal is considered to comply with Policy SD25 in this respect and this is discussed more in the section on Eco-system services.
- 7.34 Policy SD40 relates to farm diversification and confirms that diversification plans should be submitted demonstrating that the proposal would contribute to the first purpose of the Park by providing long term benefit to the farming business, remain subsidiary to the farming activity in physical scale and income stream and not cause severance or disruption to the holding. The proposal, whilst submitted by the festival organiser clearly is inextricably linked to farm diversification activity. Whilst there is no formal plan, there is no disruption to the agricultural holding and the proposal is considered subsidiary in terms of its use and overall impact, and contributes to a long-term benefit to the farming enterprise.
- 7.35 Policy SD54 relates to Pollution and Air Quality and this is considered later in the report.
- 7.36 A concern has been raised that the applicant, in their submission have failed to acknowledge the strengthened duty under Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to seek to further the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes. Whilst the acknowledgement of the strengthened duty is not explicit in the submission, it is considered that subject to an acceptable Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Management Plan the proposal is capable of furthering the purposes of the Park, which meets the revised duty.
- General consideration in relation to review of temporary approval on amenities and special qualities of the Park
- 7.37 It is important to note that the current application technically requires Members to evaluate whether there is sufficient information to give them assurances that the Purposes of the

Park are fulfilled in approving permission for the use of land for one music festival per year on a temporary basis until 2030 at the proposed increased numbers. The applicants acknowledge the need to gather more ecological and landscape data and thus have applied for temporary permission for five years at the attendance levels proposed.

- 7.38 Officers have had regard to advice from external consultees involved in the Safety Advisory Group. It is clear that there have been some ongoing logistical issues over time, which appear to have been fine-tuned as the event has progressed, with matters such as traffic and access/egress becoming much smoother over the years.
- 7.39 The lack of detailed ecological reports, as required by the temporary approval, over the intervening period was regrettable but arguably unavoidable. It is encouraging that further information and surveys have and continue to be undertaken since resumption of the festival and that is evidenced by the information submitted as part of this application in the Environmental Statement. Given this, it is considered that the proposed temporary permission, at the attendance levels proposed could be supported, whilst also allowing the applicant and landowner to continue to collate further ecological evidence during the lifetime of any permission granted.
- 7.40 Finally, it must also be acknowledged that the Authority has had to assess the ongoing impact on amenities against a changing landscape in relation to the nature of the event over the years, with changing numbers of attendees, opening days and noise levels. This adds to the consideration that it should be a temporary permission.
- 7.41 The remaining material considerations are considered to be as follows:-
- The impact on the landscape character of the area
  - The impact in terms of noise pollution and light pollution
  - The impact on the Highway Network
  - Economic Considerations
  - Ecology and Biodiversity (including BNG), including Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations
  - Crime & Disorder
  - Archaeology
  - Footpaths/Public Rights of Way
  - Other issues raised in representations

Landscape

- 7.42 The Landscape Officer provided queries to the case officer to seek clarity from the applicants. These relate specifically to the mitigation and enhancement measures outlined in the draft BLEMMP. There was some initial concern about specific elements within the draft BLEMMP and the degree of additionality that they provide above and beyond the requirements for the Estate owner to achieve through existing legislation. Further information has been submitted by the applicant in response to the queries and resulted in no further comments from the Landscape Officer. It is considered that the benefits set out in the draft BLEMMP will result in the landscape of the site being conserved and enhanced over the permission period.
- 7.43 It is acknowledged that there are a number of short-term negative effects as a result of the Festival, such as tranquillity, views and visual amenity, Dark Skies' land use and subsequent change in character and experiential qualities of the landscape for RoW users. It has been acknowledged in previous applications that there is a short term adverse impact in these respects.

- 7.44 It is clear that a Music Festival has at the very least short-term impact on the Landscape (and does not safeguard important views for short periods around the time of the Festival). It is apparent however that the land generally recovers reasonably well after the events and is well managed for the remainder of the year.
- 7.45 The use of the area at the A31/A272 for a coach pad for the temporary period for the festival continues to be acceptable in the event that it is purely for a limited period and is re-seeded after every event. With ongoing adequate and robust conditions, it is considered this arrangement could certainly continue, were members minded to approve the application.
- 7.46 The retention of structures within the woodland areas are considered to be acceptable in terms of landscape impact.
- 7.47 In overall landscape terms, it is considered that any further approval needs to have the assurance that long term benefits in terms of land management can be secured. This has been the case with the previous LEMP and progress was made with actions within the recent draft BLEMMP. There is certainly sense in continuing to have a holistic approach which addresses the matter of Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement in one document (BLEMMP) as agreed previously by the Landscape Officer and the Ecologist. Such a document seeks to talk across a number of elements required for the balance to ensure that the overall proposals conserve and enhance the Park.
- 7.48 The applicant submitted a draft Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Management Plan with the application pulling together the landscape management measures required to ensure the scheme delivers an overall enhancement, in accordance with Purpose I. Whilst final details of these measures are being discussed, officers are confident that the BLEMMP can be secured via a S.106 Agreement. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with policies SD1, SD4, SD5 and SD25, and the National Park's Purposes.

Noise and light Pollution

- 7.49 Environmental Health continue to monitor the Festival and no objection has been raised with regard to pollution, subject to appropriate conditions. Environmental Health would necessarily be consulted on the submitted Event Management Plan secured by condition, were the application to be approved. Officers do not consider that additional conditions are required in relation to Noise beyond that imposed in the 2025 permission.
- 7.50 It is considered that the issues of light pollution could be monitored and managed by way of the Event Management Plan (as they have been for previous temporary approvals), were the application to be approved.
- 7.51 As with the previous recent approval, it is noted that Cheriton Parish Council provided details of a report in relation to Tranquillity. It has already been acknowledged that there are short term impacts on the tranquillity of the area and this is not denied. It is however considered that appropriate measures within the BLEMMP would serve to conserve the tranquillity across the Estate for the remainder of the year.

Highway Network

- 7.52 Highways England have raised no objection to the proposals.
- 7.53 The Highways Authority have raised no objection to the proposals.
- 7.54 The evolving nature of the Festival is such that Highways and Traffic management issues may need to be adapted over time, however this would always be subject to scrutiny by the necessary bodies as part of the Event Management Plan.

Economic considerations

- 7.55 The economic benefits of the events were highlighted on the previous applications. It is recognised that the full extent or otherwise of the benefits that such events bring to the local economy and that of the National Park are always going to be difficult to fully quantify.

It is, however, considered that economic benefits do accrue in some form. It should also be noted that the concerns raised by residents in relation to businesses being able to function across the road network during the festival has arguably been improved by the more recent staggered opening of the festival thus preventing a more intensive amount of activity as had existed on the Thursday of the festival.

- 7.56 It is noted that a number of representations suggested that the Authority undertake an independent assessment of the Economic benefits or otherwise of the proposals by the use of an independent consultant. It is not considered that this is necessary when it is clear that there is economic benefit gained by the presence of the festival, albeit that it may not be as great as stated by some.

Ecology and Biodiversity, including Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations

- 7.57 The County Ecologist provided significant comments on the previous application and provided some queries in relation to the latest draft BLEMMP. The commentary on the dialogue can be found in the Consultation section of the report. Officers are currently liaising with the applicants to ensure the need for surveying as highlighted by the Ecologist is encompassed in any approval, be it by the BLEMMP or by way of condition. Members will be updated accordingly. The Ecologist has considered there to be benefits in having a holistic document and officers consider the document is able to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the Park from an ecological perspective, subject to minor changes as requested by the Authority's ecologist. The comments of Natural England are also noted who raise no objection.
- 7.58 As mentioned earlier in the report, the most recent temporary one-year Approval is the only Festival undertaken at the attendance levels of 75,999. Whilst this data is helpful a further temporary approval over a 5 year period would enable a wider evidence base.
- 7.59 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (Habitats Regulations) places a duty on planning authorities when determining applications that may affect international sites to determine the potential for likely significant effects. Where proposals are likely (without mitigation) to have significant effects on international sites, the planning authority is required to undertake an appropriate assessment in order to ascertain that there would not be adverse impacts on the integrity of the international site, and whether the proposal demonstrates that impacts would be avoided or adequately mitigated against. Accordingly, Policy SD9 requires that development likely to result in a significant impact upon an international habitats site is subject to an Appropriate Assessment pursuant to the requirements of the habitats Regulations.
- 7.60 In the case of this proposal, an Appropriate Assessment is required for the potential significant effects on:
- River Itchen Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and
  - Solent Coast Special Protection Areas (SPAs)
- 7.61 The proposals have been supported by a Foul Water & Nutrient Neutrality Technical Note by the applicant's consultant (Glanville), and a report by EPR "Information for Habitats Regulation Assessment."
- 7.62 The Solent Marine and River Itchen International sites are known to be vulnerable to nutrient enrichment from elevated levels of nitrogen and phosphorous respectively.
- 7.63 It is recognised that a large contribution of nutrient inputs is from agricultural sources such as fertiliser run off; however, a small but notable contribution comes from human wastewater outputs.

- 7.64 Natural England advises that a likely significant effect from development that increases these nutrients in the Solent or Itchen catchments cannot be ruled out. This applies to all types of overnight accommodation, including tourism attractions and overnight accommodation.
- 7.65 For such development proposals, Natural England advise that a nutrient neutral approach is one which “enables decisions makers to assess and quantify mitigation requirements of new developments. It allows new developments to be approved with no net increase in nutrient loading within the catchments of the affected habitats site. Where properly applied, Natural England considers that nutrient neutrality is an acceptable means of counterbalancing nutrient impacts from development to demonstrate no adverse effect on the integrity of habitats sites”. Natural England has prepared a methodology setting out how this can be achieved. The conclusion of the screening under the HRA is that the proposal could lead to likely significant effects, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
- 7.66 Currently the assessment shows an overall increase in nutrients being discharged as a result of the proposed development prior to any mitigation/offsetting. The submitted statement confirms that wastewater from the Festival will be removed from the catchment area by transporting it to Basingstoke Sewage Treatment Works, which discharges to a different catchment not subject to nutrient neutrality requirements. The principle of changing the location to one not within a catchment subject to nutrient neutrality is an adequate response and does constitute an acceptable solution. The Authority has undertaken a Habitats Regulations Assessment, the conclusions of which are that the adverse effects on the integrity of the relevant international sites can be ruled out (subject to an appropriate Legal Agreement to secure the above).
- 7.67 As a final point in relation to ecology, it is noted that the festival organisers have always ensured the SSSI surrounding the bowl is adequately protected during the set-up, take down and operation of the festival. This includes an elevated walkway across the SSSI, so as to protect it. In addition, the festival provides information by way of interpretation boards explaining to attendees about the importance of the SSSI and the need for it to be fenced off during the festivals. Officers are content that the proposed increase in numbers, subject to suitable conditions, would not have an adverse impact on the SSSI, given these and other measures described and secured through the SI06.

Eco-system Services/Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.68 In line with Policy SD2 the proposals would need to have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services. The application is statutorily required to demonstrate a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain. SD9 also requires proposals to identify and incorporate net gains for biodiversity.
- 7.69 The applicants submitted an Eco-systems Services statement with the application, setting out Actions to achieve an overall positive impact. These actions included (but are in no way exhaustive):-
- Measures to ensure impacts to groundwater through pollution events does not occur as a result of the events.
  - Protection of the SSSI.
  - Grassland management to reduce nutrient levels in the soil.
  - Management of all hedgerows and treelines and woodlands.
  - Safeguarding of woodland habitats.
  - Creation of new habitat on site by way of new bat boxes and bird boxes.
  - Retention of existing linear habitats to maintain habitat connectivity.
  - A Sustainability policy in place at the Festival.

- Sustainable travel initiatives.
- Sustainable use of materials.
- Resource efficiency management plan.
- Reduction in levels of pollution at the festival.
- Water conservation.

7.70 Many of these initiatives and actions are commendable and some form part of the draft BLEMP, as they did in the 2025 approval. Given this it is considered that the actions would have an overall positive impact compliance with Policy SD2 has been achieved.

7.71 Similarly, it is considered that the proposals can demonstrate, with a secured S106 Agreement, biodiversity net gain as required by legislation and Policy SD9. The applicant has confirmed compliance with Policy SD9 by the provision of a wildflower meadow on-site together with the purchase of off-site units. The aspiration is for the off-site units to be purchased from a habitat bank elsewhere on the Matterley Estate outside of the red line of the application proposal. In the event that such units are unavailable for purchase in the timescale to approve the application, appropriate units will be purchased from elsewhere but would be scrutinised before approval by the Authority to ensure the units were appropriate to the necessary biodiversity for the application site.

Crime & Disorder

7.72 No objections have been raised by the Emergency Services to the current proposals.

Archaeology

7.73 The Authority's archaeologist raises no additional archaeological concerns in terms of the time extension. The archaeological conditions (Archaeological Management Plan and Written Scheme of Investigation) recommended at the time of the previous application SDNP/24/05303/FUL were not applied to the 1-year temporary permission because the conditions excluded the 2025 festival.

7.74 The applicant has since clarified that no digging or earth works take place during the site construction, the festival itself or decommissioning. Whilst there are some limited earth works to form the compacted surface of the coach pad; these are shallow and are unlikely to have any impact on below ground archaeology. It is therefore considered that the imposition of archaeological conditions is not necessary.

Footpaths/Rights of Way/Access

7.75 The Rights of Way Officer has expressed some concern that construction staff have not been properly instructed about access across the SDW. This has been fed back to the applicants who have reassured that this will not happen this year. And they will undertake detailed training and instruction with such staff. In relation to the adequacy or otherwise of signage for the diversion route, The S106 monitoring officer has agreed to assist in advising as the signage is put in place this year to ensure it is fit for purpose.

7.76 It is accepted that the experience for users of the SDW is affected during the diversion; however, it is arguable that some of the benefits secured by way of the LEMP provide benefits for the experience of far greater numbers using the footpath for the remainder of the year.

7.77 The ongoing comments made about the provision of an Active Travel Assessment are noted. Whilst there could clearly be benefits with regard to provision of routes from Winchester to the site, it is not considered reasonable to demand such works for what is essentially a temporary approval. Whilst not considered to be a matter that would justify refusal of the application, an informative is added to the recommendation encouraging the applicant to consider preparing an assessment and actions for future festivals.

Other issues raised in representations.

- 7.78 The representations from Parish Councils and other interested parties have been significant and detailed. This section seeks to address the salient points raised in those representations, which have not been addressed elsewhere in the report.
- 7.79 Concern has been raised that the Authority cannot consider the application under S73. There is no statutory limit on the degree of change permission to conditions under s73, but the change must only relate to the conditions and not to the operative part of the permission. The government guidance states that planning permission cannot be granted under S73 to extend the time limit within which a development must be **started**. It goes on to say that the S73 cannot be used to vary the time limit for implementation. Whilst it is understandable as to how confusion will have occurred, the S73 application seeks to vary condition as to when the proposals should cease, which is therefore within the allowances of what can be considered under S73.
- 7.80 Some representations have raised concern about any potential further temporary approval being at odds with National Planning Policy Guidance. As mentioned in the recent report for the one-year approval, the guidance confirms that *“it will rarely be justifiable to grant a second temporary permission (except in cases where changing circumstances provide a clear rationale, such as temporary classrooms and other school facilities). Further permissions can normally be granted permanently or refused if there is a clear justification for doing so.”* In this particular case, it is considered that there are changing circumstances with the proposed increase of number of attendees only having been experienced for one festival. A further temporary period enables the Authority to gather ecological data to better understand the impacts or otherwise of the festivals at that increased capacity. It is also common for music festivals of this nature to be subject to repeated temporary permissions, given their fluid nature and time limited impact. There are examples where Festivals have been granted ongoing temporary approvals such as Boardmasters and Glastonbury. Whilst they may well now have permanent approvals, there was clearly a rationale for ongoing temporary approvals for some considerable period before the permanent grant of permission.
- 7.81 A concern has been raised about whether the charity work, donations or support for local charities and Parishes by the festival Organisers is a material planning consideration. The Authority must have regard to whether the purposes of the Park are fulfilled in the proposals. When carrying out the purposes the Authority has duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities within the National Park. In this respect, whilst one must acknowledge there may be benefits to the wellbeing of local communities this is not something that is captured within Planning Policy or indeed could be “secured” by the Planning Authority. It is just an element of work that the applicant has chosen to and appears to continue to do. It is arguable that the festival and its associated activities/social undertakings, in themselves contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of Communities, but in itself it should be given limited weight in the overall balance of considerations.
- 7.82 A request has been made that addresses or locations of people who have made representations should be made known, arguing that a significant number of representations were submitted by people who do not live within the Park. Irrespective of whether the representations have been received from addresses within or outside of the Park, it is clearly the relevance of the detail within the representation that is important and whether it is a material consideration and it is the detail that is addressed in the report as opposed to a commentary on the demographics of the responses. One would also suggest that the National Park is for all and every representation is worthy of consideration, if it relates to material considerations
- 7.83 Since the submission of the 2019 application a further four festivals have occurred and the ecological data continues to be provided. Officers consider that, on the evidence of the

submitted details within the application form, reports and Environmental Statement, that the proposals would overall conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the park.

## **8. Conclusion**

8.1 In summary, officers are confident that, with the securing of significant enhancement and mitigation in relation to Landscape, Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain, the proposals would conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Park. This is notwithstanding the short-term impacts in relation to noise, light pollution and landscape specifically during the operation of the festival. The temporary permission for a further five years would allow the Authority to continue to collect a meaningful set of ecological data to fully understand the impacts of the Festival on such interests.

8.2 It is considered that the recommendation to approve for a further temporary period (to 2030) meets the Statutory Purposes of the Park and in doing so meets the Duty under S245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

8.3 A suitable requirement of a S106 Agreement securing the scheme for removal of wastewater from the site and an appropriate monitoring regime is also proposed in relation to the impact on the integrity of International sites specifically with regard to Nutrient Neutrality.

## **9. Reason for Recommendation and Conditions**

### **Recommendation**

- I. That permission be granted to vary condition 1 and 2 of permission reference SDNP/24/05303/FUL (which would grant temporary planning approval for 5 years) subject to:
  - I. A Section 106 Agreement, the final form of which is delegated to the Director of Placemaking, in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee to secure:
    - A Biodiversity Net Gain, Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Management Plan (BLEMMP) securing benefits in relation to onsite Biodiversity Net Gain, Habitat Management and Monitoring, a fee of £41,000 to monitor on-site Biodiversity Net Gain, the landscape and ecology of the application site; and the purchase of offsite Biodiversity Gain Units/statutory credits;
    - Retention of all the improvements and obligations secured as part of Planning Application SDNP/24/05303/FUL and through the Section 106 Agreement dated 27 June 2025;
    - An updated Wastewater Strategy (from the strategy secured through the June 2025 planning agreement) together with monitoring regime and evidence ensuring scheme achieves nutrient neutrality;
  - II. The conditions set out in Section 9 which may be amended by the Director of Placemaking in consultation with the Chair to accommodate any necessary minor changes;
2. That the Committee confirm in reaching their decision that they have taken into account:
  - The environmental information as required by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017;
  - All matters referred to in the Director of Placemaking's report including comments received from statutory consultees and other interested parties, and
  - All other material considerations

3. That authority be delegated to the Director of Placemaking to refuse the application with appropriate reasons if the agreement is not completed or sufficient progress has not been made in securing the agreement within 2 months of the 9 April Planning Committee meeting.

**10. Subject to the following conditions:**

1. The permission hereby granted shall be for a limited period expiring on 31 December 2030.

Reason: To allow the impact of the event as currently proposed on the amenities of the area and the special qualities and enjoyment of the South Downs National Park to be reviewed.

2. The use of the site hereby approved shall be restricted to:

One major music festival operating between a Wednesday and a Monday for a maximum of five consecutive periods of 24 hours a day and limited to 75,999 attendees in total and an additional 1,000 attendees on the Sunday for local residents and shall only take place between 1 May and 15 October in any calendar year. Any work required in terms of setting up and dismantling infrastructure required for the event shall not exceed 9 weeks in total.

Reason: To protect the amenities, special qualities and landscape character of the South Downs National Park.

3. No event shall take place unless a comprehensive Event Management Plan (EMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The EMP shall be submitted at least 60 days prior to the proposed event start date and shall include, though not be restricted to a Traffic Management Plan, details of measures for ensuring public health and safety, details of lighting, measures to avoid site contamination, the protection of biodiversity and the restoration of the site following use. The approved event shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved EMP.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory planning of events, to safeguard the amenities, character and appearance and biodiversity of the area.

4. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking or reenacting that Order with or without modification) no development falling within the Schedule 2, Part 4 Class B of the Order shall be carried out without the prior written approval of the South Downs National Park Authority:

Reason: To ensure the Landscape character of the area is conserved.

5. Between the hours of 1000 and 2300 noise levels from the music festival event shall not exceed 55dB LAeq, (15 mins) and between the hours of 2300 and 0400 noise levels shall not exceed 45dB LAeq (15 mins).
  - Noise levels from music in the octave band frequency ranges with a centre frequency of 31.5Hz, 63Hz and 125Hz shall not exceed
  - Wednesday - Regulated entertainment on Wednesday shall be inaudible at the monitoring locations.
  - Thursday - 65dB Leq (15mins) between 1000 and 0000
  - Friday and Saturday - 65dB Leq (15mins) between 1000 and 2100; 68dB Leq (15mins) between 2100 and 2300; and 65 dB Leq (15mins) between 2300 and 0400
  - Sunday - 65dB Leq (15mins) between 1000 and 0000

All noise levels from music shall be measured as above in free field conditions and in the absence of significant local noise sources at location to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority no later than 28 days in advance of the event.

Reason: In order to protect the amenity of the surrounding area in accordance with the NPPF and Policy SD54 of the Adopted South Downs Local Plan (2019).

6. The use of land authorised by this permission shall only be carried out within land outlined in red on the approved site location plan. No activities or use in connection with the approved events shall be carried out on land outside of the red outline on the site location plan.

Reason: In order to protect the amenity of the surrounding area.

7. The proposed temporary coach pad shall be formed no earlier than 4 weeks before the music festival each year. The land shall subsequently be reseeded to form grass land within three weeks of the close of each music festival. Details of the layout of the Temporary Coach pad shall be forwarded to the Local Planning Authority at least two months before each music festival for approval. The Coach Pad shall only be formed in compliance with the approved layout details.

Reason: In order to protect the amenity of the surrounding area.

8. No festival related use of the access shall start on site until the lines of sight of 2.4 metres by 215.0 metres have been provided in accordance with the approved plans (24637002-STR-HGN-100-DR-D-00101 Rev P0). The lines of sight splays shown on the approved plans shall be kept free of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metre in height above the adjacent carriageway and shall be subsequently maintained so thereafter.

Reason - To provide satisfactory access and in the interests of highway safety.

### **Informatives**

1. The applicant is encouraged to consider the preparation of an Active Travel Assessment with actions for future events after 2025. The applicant is encouraged to make contact with the Rights of Way and Access Officer at the South Downs who will be able to provide advice on producing such assessments.
2. The applicant is encouraged to consider the preparation of an Active Travel Assessment with actions for future events after 2025. The applicant is encouraged to make contact with the Rights of Way and Access Officer at the South Downs who will be able to provide advice on producing such assessments.
3. This application is subject to a Section 106 Agreement.

### **TIM SLANEY**

#### **Director of Placemaking**

#### **South Downs National Park Authority**

Contact Officer: Rob Ainslie

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Appendices: Appendix I - Information concerning consideration of applications

before committee

SDNPA Consultees:

Director of Placemaking, Legal Services

Background Documents:

[SDNP/25/04953/CND | Variation of Condition 1 and 2 of SDNP/24/05303/FUL to extend the 1 year permission by 5 years to 2030. | Matterley Farm Alresford Road Ovington Hampshire SO24 0HU](#)

[South Downs National Park Local Plan 2019](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework](#)

[Supplementary Planning Documents and TANs](#)

[Partnership Management Plan 2026-31 - South Downs National Park Authority](#)