

Report to **South Downs National Park Authority Meeting**  
Date **20 March 2026**  
By **Head of People and Place**  
Title of Report **South Downs Corporate Plan 2026 -2031**  
**Decision**

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**Recommendation: Committee is recommended to:**

- 1. Approve the Corporate Plan 2026-2031 at Appendix I**
  - 2. Delegate authority to make any minor or factual changes and the final design of the Corporate Plan to the Director of Landscape and Operations in consultation with the Chair of the National Park Authority.**
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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Corporate Plan 2026-2031. National Park Authorities use corporate or business plans to translate high-level statutory purposes into organisational actions show how staff, budgets and services align with those purposes. In addition, the plan sets how the Authority, as an organisation, will deliver its contribution to the aims and targets in the Partnership Management Plan (PMP).
- 1.2. At its meeting on 09 December 2025 the National Park Authority approved the South Downs Partnership Management Plan (PMP) for 2026-31. This Corporate Plan sets out how the Authority, as an organisation, will deliver its contributions to the aims and targets in the PMP.
- 1.3. The Policy and Resource Committee recommended that the NPA approve the Corporate Plan 2026-2031 at its meeting on 19 February 2026.

**2. Policy Context**

- 2.1. There is no explicit legislative requirement for a National Park Authority to produce a corporate or business plan. However, under section 66 of the Environment Act 1995, National Park Authorities are required to prepare a National Park Management Plan. Corporate or business plans are commonly produced as non-statutory documents to demonstrate how the Authority will deliver its statutory purposes and meet public accountability and funding expectations. It links strategy to staff work programmes and budgets.
- 2.2. National Park Authorities receive public funding via Defra. Corporate plans are expected by Defra as part of good governance; used to support funding agreements and performance reporting and scrutinised by auditors, and the public.

**3. How the plan was developed**

- 3.1. The corporate plan has been developed using a theory of change methodology. A theory of change approach to strategic planning is a structured way of setting strategy by clearly

articulating how an organisation’s activities are expected to lead to its desired long-term outcomes and impact. A theory of change approach helps move beyond activity-based planning to impact-led strategy, strengthening strategic clarity, stakeholder buy-in and accountability to beneficiaries, funders and regulators.

- 3.2. The development of the Corporate Plan 2026–31 has followed a structured and collaborative process designed to ensure strong alignment with the emerging Partnership Management Plan (PMP), national policy requirements, and the Authority’s budget and resource framework. The plan has been developed iteratively, with successive drafts refined through input from internal teams, Strategy Leads, and corporate functions such as HR, Finance, and Planning. Senior Managers have reviewed and agreed changes at each stage of the process.
- 3.3. The process has included engagement with Members and senior leadership through a series of workshops. These meetings have allowed Members to test priorities, understand the dependencies between the PMP and the Corporate Plan, and consider resourcing and delivery implications. Feedback from these sessions, as well as insights gathered from the broader PMP consultation and evidence review, has informed the refinement of targets, measures and priorities within the Plan. This approach has ensured that the Plan is both strategically robust and operationally deliverable. The Corporate Plan is at **Appendix I**.
- 3.4. The Corporate Plan will be underpinned by clear methodologies that define how each target will be measured and provide references to the data sources and baseline information used. Where appropriate, progress against Corporate Plan targets will be presented through dashboard components illustrating performance, including percentage completion and trend data. For targets involving the establishment or delivery of projects, contributions from those projects will be allocated to the relevant nature, climate, people, or place target. Reporting will also incorporate narrative storytelling to bring the data to life, provide meaningful context, and illustrate the impact of the work.
- 3.5. To ensure accountability and transparency, delivery of the Corporate Plan will be externally evaluated over five years. An expert contractor will review our evaluation framework, independently verify results against targets, collect data, analyse findings, and prepare annual progress reports. Additional evaluations will occur at year three (2029) and year five (2031), with the contractor designing these assessments to measure impact and outcomes. Data collection may go beyond the methods in the Corporate Plan if needed for a thorough review.

**4. Options & cost implications**

- 4.1. There has been a lot of staff time at different levels in the organisation allocated to meetings to develop the Corporate Plan. The Communications and Engagement Team and Performance and Projects Team will also allocate time to refining drafts and design options for the plan. Total staff time is estimated to be up to a maximum of 330 hours. There are also costs for design of the Corporate Plan this is covered in the existing team budgets and is likely to be approximately £4,000. The likely cost of a contract for external evaluation of the Corporate Plan will be between £25 – 30,000 over five years.

**5. Next steps**

- 5.1. Following NPA approval, officers will work with the Communications and Engagement Team to finalise the design and prepare the Plan for publication and implementation at the start of the new financial year.

**6. Other implications**

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No

Implication	Yes*/No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	The Corporate Plan identifies organisational priorities and targets for the next 5 years. It also informs resource allocation including the budget which allocates the resources to.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The Corporate Plan itself does not raise an issue of value for money. However, the projects that the organisation funds are assessed for value for money when they are approved. In addition, projects are evaluated individually for value for money when they finish. Any work that is carried out which requires procurement is subject to the procedure for assessing value for money which is part of that process.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	The Corporate Plan sets out how the SDNPA will deliver the PMP outcomes as such it contributes to all PMP outcomes to some extent.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	The Corporate Plan relates to the work of the Authority and its staff. Much of the work of the SDNPA is done in collaboration with partners. Much of the work of the SDNPA directly supports that collaboration through facilitation of networks and grant schemes with key partners. Most projects led by the SDNPA are delivered in conjunction with partners.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	The Corporate Plan is one of the main strategic mechanisms to support action for climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Authority's operations. It will incorporate the relevant actions from the existing climate change action plan. The climate change targets will drive the need for relevant action.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	<p>Specific benefits are listed below:</p> <p><b>Support for young people:</b> Reduces barriers for underrepresented groups, including those from low-income backgrounds and rural communities, by offering youth programmes and work experience opportunities that build skills and confidence.</p> <p><b>Improved travel and access:</b> Enhances accessibility for disabled people, older adults, and those without private transport through better active travel routes and inclusive infrastructure.</p> <p><b>Inclusive visitor experience:</b> Raises awareness of the National Park's International Dark Sky Reserve status, fostering a more welcoming environment for diverse visitors.</p> <p><b>Affordable, accessible housing:</b> Supports housing affordability for young people, disabled residents, seasonal workers, and lower-income households, preventing displacement and promoting local community sustainability.</p> <p><b>Integrated accessibility in housing:</b> Ensures new housing designs consider accessibility, strengthening equalities and</p>

<b>Implication</b>	<b>Yes*/No</b>
	inclusion within the National Park.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None specifically related to the development of the Corporate Plan. Staff adhere to all relevant policies in delivering their job roles.
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None specific to the production of the Corporate Plan.

## **7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Misalignment with the final PMP or national policy	2	3	Maintain close alignment through scheduled organisational and Member meetings
The Corporate Plan may contain commitments beyond available MTFS resources or team capacity.	3	4	Align drafting of the corporate plan with MTFS development; continue resource planning through senior management; highlight unfunded pressures early for Member decisions; adjust priorities where necessary
Cross-team dependencies or workload pressures could hinder delivery of new priorities, reducing impact in early years of the Plan	3	4	Confirm ownership of actions through team plans and PDRs; prioritise deliverables to reflect realistic capacity; use regular performance review to monitor progress and escalate issues.
Proposed local government reorganisation within the region may lead to changes in partner structures, decision-making processes, strategic priorities or funding arrangements. This could disrupt established relationships, delay joint workstreams, or require the Authority to adapt its delivery models, governance interactions, or resource planning.	3	4	The Authority will continue to monitor developments closely through regular engagement with local authorities, Defra, and regional networks. Forward planning assumptions will be reviewed as further information emerges, with scenario planning used to identify potential impacts on governance, partnership arrangements, and shared programmes. Clear communication channels will be maintained with Members and partners to ensure readiness for any transitional arrangements. Any changes to responsibilities or funding structures will be brought to Senior Managers and

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
			Members promptly for decision-making and resource alignment.
Expectations of Members, partners or public not met	3	3	Provide clear explanations for inclusions/exclusions; ensure transparency in decision-making; finalise a strong communications and design approach following NPA approval.

**ANNE REHILL**

**Head of People and Place**

**South Downs National Park Authority**

Contact Officer: Anne Rehill  
 Tel: 01730 819271  
 Email: [anne.rehill@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:anne.rehill@southdowns.gov.uk)  
 Appendices: I. Draft Corporate Plan  
 SDNPA Consultees: Chief Executive; Director of Landscape and Operations; Director of Placemaking; Chief Finance Officer; Head of Governance & Monitoring Officer; Legal Services; Operational Management Team.  
 External Consultees: None  
 Background Documents: Corporate plan recommendation February 2026  
[Corporate Plan approval March 2025](#)  
[Corporate Plan Report to P&R Committee](#)

