



South Downs National Park Authority and Natural England Accord

Purpose of the Accord

This Accord between Natural England and the South Downs National Park Authority sets out a basis to achieve shared outcomes for the South Downs through joint working.

This is an early statement of intent, developed in the preparatory year of the South Downs National Park Authority. As the Authority, with Natural England and other partners, develops and delivers the South Downs National Park Management Plan, this Accord will in turn develop in to a more detailed action plan as required.

This Accord includes early statements on:

- Working in partnership for the South Downs National Park
- A shared vision
- Potential Areas for Future Joint Working

Working in Partnership for the South Downs National Park

The South Downs National Park was created on 31 March 2010 and the South Downs National Park Authority on 1st April 2010. The National Park Authority will become fully operational on 1st April 2011.

In advance of the National Park being created, Natural England had a key statutory role to take forward the designation process and support the establishment of the new Authority. Natural England will continue to fulfil its statutory role with regard to the appointment process for new National Members to the National Park Authority as vacancies arise.

Looking ahead, the roles and relationship of Natural England and South Downs National Park Authority will develop primarily through the National Park Management Plan process over the coming years. The aim of this Accord is to articulate how Natural England and the South Downs National Park Authority can work together now to:

- Maximise the opportunities for the South Downs and the people that live, work and visit the area
- Avoid the duplication of effort and ensure value for money through targeted, effective and efficient, collaborative policy-making and local delivery

To achieve this Natural England will bring:

- National capacity, influence and expertise on policy and evidence,
- Learning and good practice across protected landscapes,
- Expertise to deliver environmental and sustainable land management, backed by agri-environment resources
- Formal involvement in the selection of the National Park Authority Members appointed by the Secretary of State.
- Leadership in the delivery of Government objectives relevant to the natural environment
- Resources and national support for the South Downs Way National Trail, subject to funding and the current NE re-organisation.

To achieve this the South Downs National Park Authority will bring and develop its capacity to:

- Provide strategic leadership across the South Downs, bringing together key agencies and organisations as well as stakeholders including land managers and local communities to develop and deliver shared outcomes that meet National Park purposes,
- Develop policy and make informed decisions based on a sound knowledge and understanding of the South Downs,
- Engage and deliver on the ground with land owners, land managers, farmers, local communities, voluntary groups, businesses and visitors
- Promote opportunities and shape solutions with community groups and businesses that deliver social and economic benefits for the communities of the South Downs within the framework of environmental conservation and enhancement

Both organisations commit to working in partnership to develop and deliver the South Downs National Park Management Plan with a wide range of partners and stakeholders in order to achieve tangible benefits for the South Downs and the people that live, work and enjoy the area.

In delivering these actions, both organisations have regard to the following principles:

- We will always consider opportunities for co-operation and joint working
- At all levels across our operations, we will look for ways to improve outcomes and provide public value by working together and in partnership with others
- In any joint projects, we will demonstrate the public benefits of our relationship through joint communications
- We will ensure that in all our activities, both organisations are aware of and have full regard for each other's statutory duties
- We will work to ensure that high quality data is gathered and made available to ourselves and partners, to inform the decisions taken for the environment
- We will share training and workshops for National Park Authority and Natural England staff where appropriate
- We will both respond promptly to each other's consultations, and attend and actively participate in workshops organised by the other organisation as appropriate
- We will actively work together to develop and deliver the South Downs National Park Management Plan
- We will actively work together to encourage the engagement of wider stakeholders and communities in the development and delivery of the South Downs National Park Management Plan and ensure that the views of external stakeholders and communities are respected and taken in to account in our work

SDNPA and NE liaison will include:

- Key Members and senior officers of the SDNPA meeting with NE Board Members, senior SDNPA relationship manager and/or relevant Director as appropriate but ideally at least once a year and more frequently in the first 2 years of the National Park's existence
- NE's SDNPA relationship manager and relevant SDNPA senior officers will meet on a regular basis/as needed
- Officers within both organisations will meet to discuss specific work areas regularly as appropriate

To reduce carbon emissions associated with travelling to meeting and time spent travelling, Members and officers will always consider the need for face-to-face meetings alongside other communication options e.g. audio, video and web conferencing.

A Shared Vision for the South Downs National Park

Natural England and the South Downs National Park Authority commit to developing a shared vision and outcomes for the South Downs National Park, with other partners, through the development of the National Park Management Plan.

Pending the development of a shared vision for the South Downs, this Accord draws on the Vision set out in the Government's Circular for all English National Parks and the Broads published in 2010 (please refer to the overarching vision in [Accord Annex 1](#), page 5) and the Guiding Principles adopted by the SDNPA in May 2010 ([Accord Annex 2](#), page 6) following extensive local engagement.

South Downs National Park Management Plan

The South Downs National Park Authority is charged with producing a South Downs National Park Management Plan by 2014 at the very latest. This will be an important Plan for the South Downs as it will inform the work of the Authority and others in the longer-term as well as the Authority's Local Development Framework.

The process used to develop the Plan provides an opportunity for all those with an interest in the South Downs to develop a shared sense of purpose and agreed priorities, combining resources to deliver for the National Park.

The South Downs National Park Authority is committed to developing engagement mechanisms that offer as many people as possible the chance to have their say and help shape a future that delivers for the South Downs National Park - the landscape, wildlife, heritage - and the people that live, work and enjoy the area.

The success of the Plan will very much depend on the involvement and the support of the many people and organisations that live, work and enjoy the South Downs, therefore:

- The South Downs National Park Authority recognises that Natural England is a key strategic and delivery partner to actively engage with in the development and delivery of the South Downs National Park Management Plan
- Natural England commits to working in partnership with the Authority and other partners and stakeholders in the development and delivery of the South Downs National Park Management Plan

Potential Areas For Future Joint Working

These will be developed through the South Downs National Park Management Plan and are likely to include:.

1. Landscape

- National Character Review
- Land Use Planning
- Ecosystem services
- Landscape restoration
- Climate change

2. Biodiversity

- Biodiversity Action Plan targets
- Integrated Biodiversity Delivery Area
- Statutory designated sites

3. Cultural Heritage

- Scheduled, non-scheduled ancient monuments and historic buildings, working in conjunction with English Heritage

4. Understanding of the special qualities of the South Downs

- Educational access

5. Access and Recreation

- Health and wellbeing
- Improving the rights of way and open access network
- South Downs Way National Trail

6. Rural Economy

- Agri-environment scheme targeting and delivery
- Advice on land management

7. Local Communities

- Village and town plans, local landscape character assessments and local distinctiveness

Until the South Downs National Park Management Plan is adopted, the Initial NE-SDNPA Action Plan ([Accord Annex 3](#), page 8) provides a framework for the most immediate areas requiring action by the end of March 2011.

Accord Annex 1

English National Parks and the Broads

UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 (Extract)

Vision for the English National Parks and Broads

By 2030, English National Parks and the Broads will be places where:

- *There are thriving, living, working landscapes notable for their natural beauty and cultural heritage. They inspire visitors and local communities to live within environmental limits and to tackle climate change. The wide-range of services they provide (from clean water to sustainable food) are in good condition and valued by society.*
- *Sustainable development can be seen in action. The communities of the Parks take an active part in decisions about their future. They are known for having been pivotal in the transformation to a low carbon society and sustainable living. Renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, low carbon transport and travel and healthy, prosperous communities have long been the norm.*
- *Wildlife flourishes and habitats are maintained, restored and expanded and linked effectively to other ecological networks. Woodland cover has increased and all woodlands are sustainably managed, with the right trees in the right places. Landscapes and habitats are managed to create resilience and enable adaptation.*
- *Everyone can discover the rich variety of England's natural and historic environment, and have the chance to value them as places for escape, adventure, enjoyment, inspiration and reflection, and a source of national pride and identity. They will be recognised as fundamental to our prosperity and well being.*

Accord Annex 2



Guiding Principles 2010/11

Aspirations for the Park

Overarching statement:

The South Downs National Park is a protected, working, special landscape that is loved, enjoyed and respected by local communities, visitors and the Nation.

The South Downs is loved and protected for its special qualities – its beautiful and diverse landscapes of ancient woodlands, heathland, rivers, iconic cliffs and coast: the rolling chalk Downlands, and the Western Weald – supporting a network of unique and internationally important wildlife.

Its distinctive towns and villages and the wealth of archaeology, history, both cultural and military, and agricultural traditions are valued and celebrated, telling a story of how people have shaped the South Downs.

All people feel welcome and benefit from being able to enjoy the South Downs National Park– to experience a sense of space and awe – to get away from it all. People are proud of the South Downs National Park and there is a widespread understanding of and respect for the South Downs National Park as a special place.

People enjoy living and working in the vibrant and distinctive towns and villages of the South Downs and have a good understanding of the relationships and interdependencies between town and countryside. There is a thriving, dynamic economy that is sympathetic and responsive to the character of the area.

Everyone is working together for the benefit of the South Downs National Park to find solutions that meet the needs of the landscape, wildlife, people and businesses both now and in the future. Local people, businesses, visitors, farmers, land owners and managers, public and voluntary sector agencies and bodies are actively working in partnership together with the National Park Authority to meet local aspirations and the purposes of the National Park

The South Downs National Park not only remains an area of special beauty in the highly pressured environment of the southeast of England but takes on the challenges of sustainable living in the 21st century, especially the impacts of climate and population change.

The Role of the South Downs National Park Authority is to:

- Champion the South Downs National Park with inspiring, strategic leadership and priorities that carry wide support
- Bring people together, acting as a coordinator for partners and community groups, to engage, inspire and achieve more for the South Downs through combined action.
- Influence policy-making and the decisions at local, regional and national levels, acting as a voice for the South Downs National Park and a source of knowledge and expertise
- Deliver flagship projects, drawing down external funding and filling the gaps that others cannot fill and are too important to be left.
- Engage directly with local residents, farmers, land owners, land managers and visitors to understand their priorities and to provide advice or support in helping achieve our shared aspirations for the South Downs.
- Encourage volunteering to support National Park purposes and help strengthen communities
- Build effective partnerships to tackle the challenges facing the South Downs National Park, including climate change, demographic change and development pressures

The Culture of the South Downs National Park Authority

- Valuing partnerships and the contribution that other people and organisations can make towards National Park purposes
- Respecting local people and visitors
- Releasing the potential of communities and other organisations
- Acting with integrity and local & national accountability
 - Listening, engaging and responding
 - Open and transparent
 - Evidence based
 - Inspiring, enterprising and innovative
- Delivering value for money and effectiveness
- Striving for best practice and excellence in all we do

Accord Annex 3: NE and SDNPA Action Plan to 31st March 2011

Work Areas	Action	Target/Outputs
Land Use Planning Aim: to ensure consistent, high quality advice is provided to planning applicants in the most efficient way by NE and SDNPA.	Develop new SDNPA/NE Planning Protocol for when the SDNPA takes up its full planning powers in April 2011	<p>Work to the principles of the existing SDNPA/NE Planning Protocol to March 2011.</p> <p>New Planning Protocol adopted for when the SDNPA takes up its full planning powers in April 2011</p>
South Downs Way National Trail Aim: to agree across partners (NE, SDNPA, Local Authorities) roles, responsibilities, improvements and funding for the National Trail over a 2-3 year period.	Through the SD Way Partnership, agree funding arrangements and delivery plan for next operational year, including NE and SDNPA contribution.	Initial Partnership Plan with Highways Authorities, NE and SDNPA by March 2011.
Agri-environment scheme delivery Aim: to agree roles and responsibilities to maximise the draw down and quality of agri-environment scheme delivery in the South Downs.	Agreed interim outcome and delivery approach, with partners (e.g. Environmental Stewardship Delivery Group) for targeting expenditure, through HLS and other agri-environment schemes (recognising this needs to be within the scheme rules and Defra priorities).	Agreed SDNPA and NE Protocol for targeting and delivery of agri-environment schemes by March 2011
National Character Area Review Aim: to identify and agree with a wide group of stakeholders, including local communities, the distinctive characteristics of the South Downs to inform priorities and decision-making in the National Park Management Plan (SDNPMP)	NE to develop South Downs Character Area descriptions, SDNPA to develop further with stakeholders through the SDNPMP process	<p>National Character Area descriptions for the South Downs agreed by NE/main stakeholders by January 2011</p> <p>SDNPA to develop landscape character approach through SDNPMP process from January 2011 onwards.</p>