

Whole Estate Plans Guidance
South Downs National Park Authority
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STATUS OF THIS DOCUMENT

Please note that this document is not a formal South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) policy document. It is provided in good faith to assist those seeking to prepare Whole Estate Plans (WEP). It should not be published in any format without the express permission of SDNPA.

Use of the term ‘estates’ throughout this document, will also be taken to include large farm holdings, schools / institutions, businesses, conservation organisations, Local Authorities and organisations owning land generally in excess of 400 acres, with multiple diverse activities and employing or having residents in excess of 30 people.

Comments or queries regarding this document should be sent to:

WEPS@southdowns.gov.uk

Further information and a copy of the WEPs endorsed to date are on our website:

www.southdowns.gov.uk/whole-estate-plans

INTRODUCTION

The South Downs National Park (SDNP) is a 1600 sq. km culturally rich, diverse, dynamic but complex mosaic, which includes significant areas of privately and publicly owned and farmed landscape. It is the most heavily populated National Park in the UK with over 117,000 residents. The SDNP Economy is the largest of all English National Parks (NPs) contributing to 40% of NPs total employment and 37% of the total NP turnover. With over 8000 businesses, the SDNP Economy also boasts the most densely populated NP in terms of business, employing over 55,000 people.

With over 70% of the SDNP used as farmland the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) manage their landscape by proxy¹ (Glover, 2019) meaning successful landscape management is fully dependent on collaborative working. The support of the estates and farms is therefore fundamental to the success of the National Park.

In 2015, SDNPA introduced the concept of Whole Estate Plans (WEPs) to encourage open dialogue between land-owning organisations and the NPA. The WEP process is designed to consider landholdings in their entirety and set out actions for their holistic management, promoting the path of sustainability and addressing the challenges of that journey.

WEPs look to promote collaboration between individual estates and the SDNPA to help achieve the ambitions of both continuously striving for synergy, opportunities and understanding whilst ensuring estates are suitably equipped to meet the challenges they face in 21st century land management.

It is expected that estates in the South Downs will carefully consider actions relating to climate change, nature recovery and health and well-being of society.

This document aims to provide clear and concise guidance to those thinking about creating a WEP for their estate or for those who are in the process of writing a WEP.

¹ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. (DEFRA). (2019c). Julian Glover. Landscapes Review. Final Report.

1. WHOLE ESTATE PLANS: THE CONCEPT

It is widely accepted that the reason for this landscape achieving its designation as a protected landscape in 2010 is a direct result of the commitment, dedication and best practice of land management approaches adopted by the plethora of landowners, be it; farmers, conservation charities, schools, businesses, public organisations and institutions that reside in the SDNP. Within this guidance, these landowners will be collectively referred to as estates.

Estates across the NP have a vital role to play in the conservation and enhancement of the landscape, the development of a sustainable rural economy, contributing to thriving rural communities, providing crucial access and managing its ecosystem services. It is acknowledged that supporting the estates is fundamental to the conservation and enhancement of this landscape and the future success of the NP. As the SDNP includes significant areas of privately owned and farmed landscape, the need for collaboration and partnership working is paramount for NPAs to ensure successful landscape management practices are upheld. WEPs were introduced, as a concept, by the SDNPA in recognition of this fact with the principle purpose to promote collaboration between individual estates and the National Park Authority (NPA) to help achieve the ambitions of both.

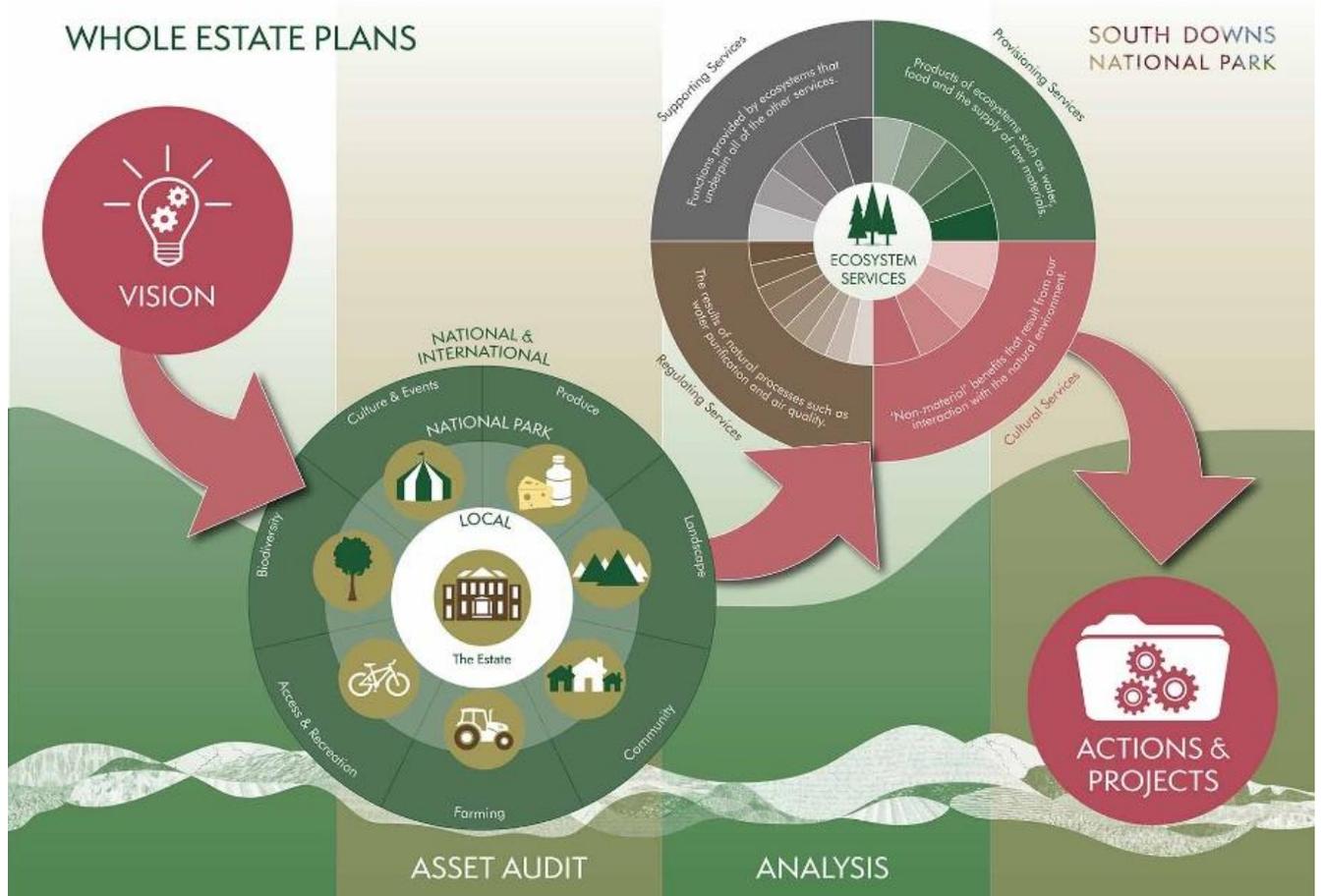
WEPs are designed to support organisations, which are generally large landholdings that include complex commercial, social and environmental activities.

This could mean schools, conservation organisations, Local Authorities and other institutions, as well as estates, businesses and large farm holdings. It is clear the physical attributes of an organisation that wishes to prepare a WEP will vary enormously. Although it is the intention of the NPA to not discourage any organisation who can demonstrate practical reasons for the preparation of a WEP, for reference, it is generally expected that WEPs will be of most use to estates that:

- include land holdings in excess of 400 acres
- have multiple diverse activities
- employ or have residents in excess of 30 people.

The format for all WEPs should always be framed around four key elements:

- Vision
- Asset Audit
- Ecosystem Services Analysis
- Action Plan



Through the process of preparing a WEP, the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is required along with identifying proactive solutions that support the estate and contribute to the Purposes and Duty of the National Park.

A WEP is a non-statutory plan that sets out the overall position and aspirations of the estate. There is no prescribed time period a WEP should cover. We are aware estates and institutions often work to longer timescales than others. To enable long-term thinking WEP's should look at least 10 years ahead and ideally further. Post endorsement, WEPs should be considered to be fluid, working documents that can and should be updated over time to reflect changes in circumstance or strategic direction.

WEPs can also be presented for endorsement by the NPA and if successful will enable future development proposals to be given positive regard in determining planning applications on the estate. This may enable developments not normally considered acceptable in countryside locations to be permitted, as they can be seen in the context of the long-term plans of an entire estate.

Although endorsed WEPs will be displayed on the SDNPA website, they remain the property of the estate's themselves and estates will be under no obligation by the SDNPA to implement their Action Plans.

Over the course of this document we seek to explain what each section should include why we are asking for this information, and who is best placed to prepare it. This document will also set out the iterative step-by-step journey a WEP, under development, must take if the estate holds aspirations for the WEP to be endorsed by the SDNPA.

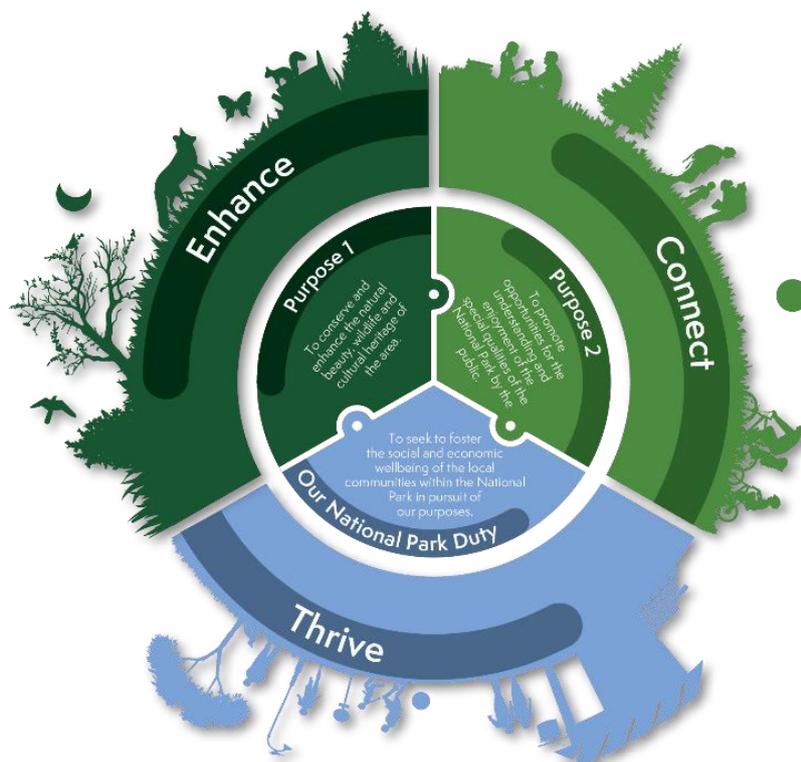
2. THE PLANS AND POLICIES OF THE SDNPA

There are a number of key drivers in the form of both national and local policies.

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949² (HM Government, 1949) Section 5 A&B (1) sets out two National Park purposes. These can be seen in the illustration below.

Section 11A (1) of the 1949 Act³ effectively places a “*duty to foster and maintain vibrant, healthy and productive living communities*” on NPAs (DEFRA, 2010, p.18). The key policy guidance for NPAs is provided by the **DEFRA (2010). National Parks and the Broads. UK Government Vision and Circular 2010**⁴. Paragraphs 72 and 74 of the DEFRA (2010) were directly informed by the findings contained within the Taylor Report (2008)⁵. Taylor (2008) suggests, “*creating and maintaining strong rural economies is critical to supporting sustainable and vibrant rural communities with important social, economic, employment and environmental benefits*” (Taylor, 2008, p.122).

The purposes and duty of a National Park



This is reflected in the shared Vision for the South Downs National Park (2050), contained within the SDNPA (2020) Partnership Management Plan (PMP), where it is stated:

² [UK Government. \(1949\). National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.](#)

³ [UK Government. \(1949\). National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.](#)

⁴ [DEFRA. \(2010\). National Parks and the Broads. UK Government Vision and Circular 2010.](#)

⁵ [Taylor Report. \(2008\). Living Working Countryside: The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing.](#)

By 2050 in the South Downs National Park

The iconic English lowland landscapes and heritage will have been conserved and greatly enhanced. These inspirational and distinctive places, where people live, work, farm and relax, are adapting well to the impacts of climate change and other pressures.

People will understand, value, and look after the vital natural services that the National Park provides. Large areas of high-quality and well-managed habitat will form a network supporting wildlife throughout the landscape.

Opportunities will exist for everyone to discover, enjoy, understand and value the National Park and its special qualities. The relationship between people and landscape will enhance their lives and inspire them to become actively involved in caring for it and using its resources more responsibly.

Its special qualities will underpin the economic and social wellbeing of the communities in and around it, which will be more self-sustaining and empowered to shape their own future. Its villages and market towns will be thriving centres for residents, visitors and businesses and supporting the wider rural community.

Successful farming, forestry, tourism and other business activities within the National Park will actively contribute to, and derive economic benefit from, its unique identity and special qualities.

WEPs are an important tool, not only demonstrating to estates that the SDNPA acknowledges the positive contribution they have made and continue to make to the SDNP, but also acting as a vehicle for the SDNPA to build deep rooted relationships with estates that will in time allow the SDNPA to enable, facilitate and add value to existing estates activity for mutual benefits in the future. Partnership working is at the core of the work undertaken by the SDNPA. This is acknowledged in the SDNPA (2020) PMP that sets out 10 clear outcome objectives in pursuit of the Purposes and Duty.

SDNPA (2020) Partnership Management Plan

The ⁶SDNPA (2020) Partnership Management Plan (PMP) sets out the overarching five-year strategy for the management of the SDNP explaining how the SDNPA and its partners will work to secure a positive future for the SDNP. Please find a link [here](#) to the SDNPA (2020) PMP.

The SDNPA (2020) PMP is generally regarded as the single most important policy document for the NP and consists of a vision, key themes and outcomes which set where we would like to get to by 2050. It identifies specific projects and programmes of work, which will drive progress and improve the condition of the special qualities of the National Park. These can only be achieved by many landowners, businesses, organisations and individuals working together. The aspiration is that the production of WEPs will both enable estates to identify ways in which they can support the NP, but also areas where through facilitation the SDNPA can assist in developing collaborative working for the benefit of the estate and NP as a whole.

The SDNPA (2020) PMP sets out ten Outcomes that the SDNPA and its partners aspire to achieve by 2050.

- [Outcome 1](#): Landscape and Natural Beauty
- [Outcome 2](#): Increasing Resilience

⁶ [SDNPA \(2020\) Partnership Management Plan 2020-2025](#)

- [Outcome 3](#): Habitats and Species
- [Outcome 4](#): Arts and Heritage
- [Outcome 5](#): Outstanding Experiences
- [Outcome 6](#): Lifelong Learning
- [Outcome 7](#): Health and Wellbeing
- [Outcome 8](#): Creating Custodians
- [Outcome 9](#): Great Places to Live
- [Outcome 10](#): Great Places to Work

It is crucial that when preparing WEPs, estates continually link back to these (2020) PMP Outcomes as a measure of whether activities or proposals will have a positive impact towards the Vision for 2050.

This approach reflects the overarching objective of all WEPs, which is to be a holistic document capturing the spirit and productivity of individual estates, not just a planning document.

South Downs National Park Authority Local Plan (2019)

The South Downs Local Plan⁷ sets out many of the planning policies to be used in the determination of planning applications in the NP and recognises the significant influence of the estates and farms across the NP and the impact the management activities of these estates has in the short, medium and long term. We also recognise the challenges faced by those who own and operate these estates to both manage the land and maintain some of the most significant cultural and heritage assets within the SDNP. Policy SD25 p.103 of the SDNPA (2019) Local Plan states, “*positive regard will be had..... where development proposals are part of a WEP that has been endorsed by the National Park Authority and deliver multiple benefits in line with the purposes and special qualities of the National Park*”. This provides a mechanism through which a balance can be struck between these elements.

However, this can only be done within an informed context, which clearly sets out the longer-term role of a development proposal within the overall ambition of the organisation and its contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the NP, its special qualities and the ecosystem services it provides. For this reason, the NPA supports WEPs as a vehicle for understanding this context.

The Climate Change Agenda & Nature Recovery.

HM Government (2018) A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment

The Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan⁸ makes clear that moving forward in a post-Brexit world, there will be a focus on enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment, supported by the idea of ‘public goods for public money’. This is built on the foundations of Natural Capital, which is also the basis for the Partnership Management Plan and Local Plan.

⁷ [South Downs National Park Authority \(2019\) Local Plan](#)

⁸ [HM Government \(2018\) A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#)

The SDNPA (2016) Climate Change Adaptation Plan

The SDNPA has a key role in meeting the challenges and opportunities climate change may present. The SDNPA (2016) Climate Change Adaptation Report⁹ sets out how the SDNPA along with its partners will utilise their convened powers to achieve the required co-ordinated and shared action.

SUMMARY: How WEPs fit into the SDNPA Policy Framework

- WEPs are a tool for delivering the outcomes identified in the PMP
- WEPs are supported by policies in the Local Plan
- In considering development proposals outside of settlement boundaries within rural estates and large farms, positive regard will be had when proposals are part of a WEP that has been endorsed by the NPA.
- WEPs can co-ordinate action in response to meeting the challenge of climate change and nature recovery.

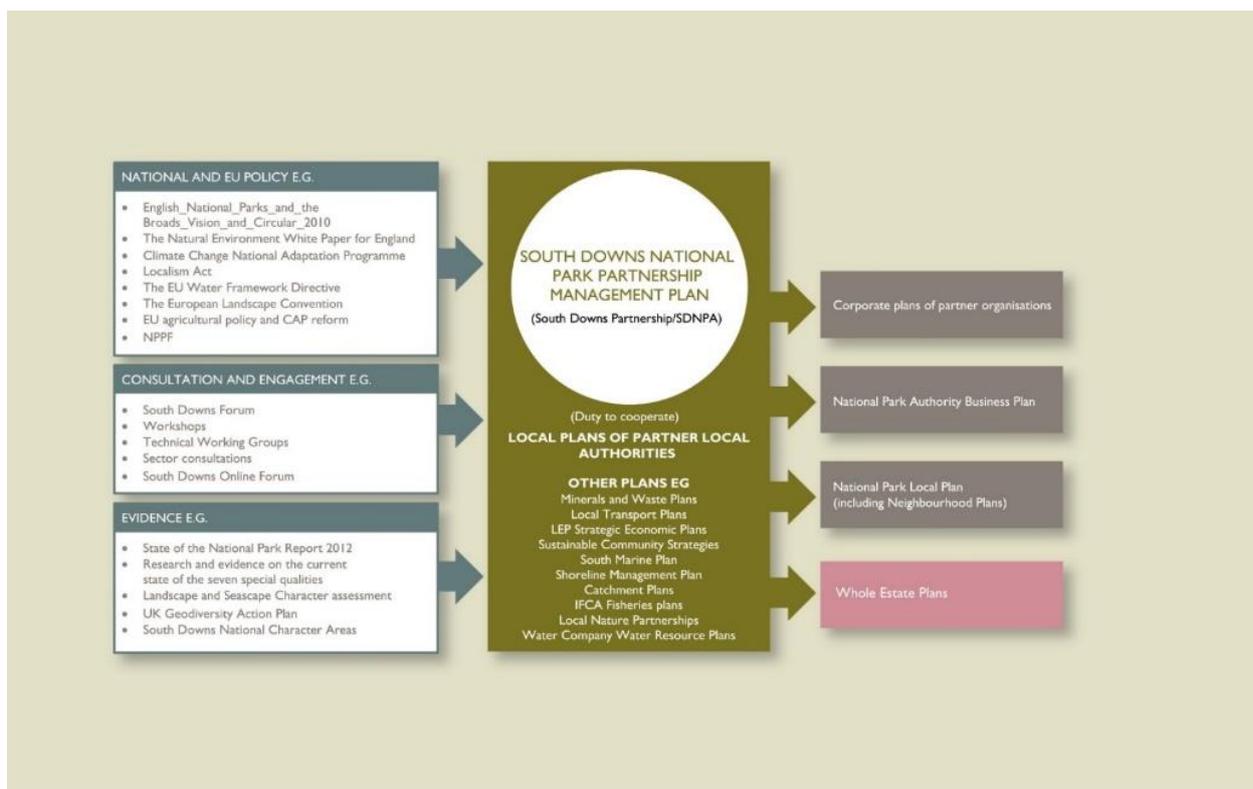


Figure 1: Where a WEP fits into National Park Policy and Plans

⁹ [SDNPA \(2016\) Climate Change Adaptation Report](#)

3. PRODUCING A WEP

The typical and indeed encouraged framework for any WEP is broken into four key elements; The Vision, The Asset Audit, The Ecosystem Services & Analysis and the Action Plan. Although not explicitly prescribed in the WEP process, public participation is strongly encouraged.

The timeframe for which a WEP is created and endorsed is solely the responsibility of the estate. It is important to acknowledge, for those estates seeking endorsement for their WEPs, the SDNPA limits the number of member site visits (See Stage 2 of the WEP Process below) to four each year. These four dates are released in December for the following year and can be reserved by estates in a first come first served basis. Therefore, this must be considered and factored into any works programme when planning the WEP journey and the key milestones.

Consultation

There is no 'formal' requirement for a WEP to undergo formal public consultation. However, there are significant benefits to estates who actively engage with communities who live, work and spend their leisure time within their land holdings and the SDNPA will expect to see evidence of this taking place throughout the WEP process, particularly when forming the vision and at the point of firming up the Action Plan. Good consultation also adds to the 'weight' likely to be given to the document by the SDNPA.

There are many ways in which estates can seek to include communities, suggestions include activities such as open days, workshops, and questionnaires. Many estates already have well established ways of communicating with businesses and tenants and these can be good ways of engaging people. It is hoped that by adopting this approach, local communities will both be kept informed of the aspirations and issues faced by estates, and proactively contribute with ideas and information.

The SDNPA has lots of experience of consulting on plans and can be a source of ideas and information if needed.

3.1. THE ESTATE VISION

What is the Estate Vision?

The Estate Vision is a short and simple statement that clearly sets out the priorities of your estate.

It should focus on the ethos of the estate e.g. *'It is our vision to strengthen our multi-faceted business with a focus on wine production and visitors, which integrates sustainable farming and tourism practices'*, or *'In 20 years' time our Estate will be a place where sustainable farming enterprises continue; biodiversity thrives including the creation of new habitat; the local economy is supported by the new affordable housing...'*

This should not be development focused e.g. *'It is our vision to build 20 new houses, a biomass heating system and five new commercial units over the next 20 years'*.

There are examples in the [WEPs already endorsed by the SDNPA](#).

Why have an Estate Vision?

So that everyone, including all parts of your own organisation, the SDNPA and members of your local community can easily see what your priorities are.

Many estates and businesses will already have a vision. This need not change unless you believe it necessary. For estates which are centred round a specific activity (e.g., education, sporting excellence), the vision is likely to be very specific and not necessarily tailored towards the NP. This is understandable but we would encourage you to consider whether inclusion of elements from the SDNP Purposes and Duty or Special Qualities into the vision could be beneficial and this will be looked at during the endorsement process.

Another option might be to include a short explanation of how your Vision links to the NP Purposes and Duty, or one of the key plans of the NP e.g. the SDNPA (2020) PMP.

Who should write the Estate Vision?

This should be agreed at the highest level within your estate.

Even if you decide to get external support in order to write a WEP, there needs to be cumulative buy-in to ensure that what you want to achieve in the plan, is both ambitious but also realistic. The Landowner / Principal / Headteacher / Chief Executive will ideally take responsibility for the finalisation of the WEP.

The production of the WEP should also be an opportunity to consult with the local community or other interested groups, residents and organisations.

3.2. ASSET AUDIT

What is the Asset Audit?

The Asset Audit is a complete picture of all the assets of the estate, both physical and non-physical.

Whilst the asset audit predominantly sets out obvious elements such as land and land use, people and property, it should also include items like areas of tranquillity, dark night skies and community facilities such as schools, shops and microbusinesses, which are supported by the estate. When compiling the Asset Audit, you should consider the following:

What designations are in place on the estate? These might cover part or all of the estate, and extend beyond the boundary. It would include landscape, biodiversity, historic environment, access and recreation designations. Planning policy designations (for example, settlement boundaries or local green spaces) should also be included.

What built and natural assets are there? This could be the make-up of fields, archaeological features, barns, houses, farmsteads, business units, public rights of way, woodland. Remember to include assets that are in, on, under and over the land such as aquifers and mineral resources. It is often easy to identify the built assets, but consider the natural capital your estate has (i.e. the stock of renewable and non-renewable resources) for example:

- animal and plant species / habitats
- soils
- rivers, streams, lakes, ponds
- coastal areas and the sea.

Our natural capital is vulnerable to impacts from human activities and cannot be readily substituted and repaired, it is therefore as important as the buildings and infrastructure and we need a good understanding of these natural assets through your assessment process.

How are the land and buildings used? This could detail areas that are being farmed in a specific way (pasture, arable, farmed woodlands etc), tenancies, commercial occupation, areas under specific management agreements (e.g., Environmental Land Management (ELM) or its predecessors such as higher-level stewardship (HLS)), public and private spaces. How do any of these interrelate? Are any at risk, in need of improvement or expansion? In particular, if your estate contains buildings of historic value, a brief assessment of their condition, future care / maintenance and plans and the level of risk to them should be recorded. This might highlight areas in need of more detailed assessment and Conservation Officers can input into this as required.

What services do you provide? This should include the number of tenants (residential and commercial), any community/social facilities you provide (for example access across land for the school/reduced rent at the village hall), visitor attractions, rental of land for cultural events, training in specialist skills etc. as well as physical provision of services such as water services. How is the estate perceived? This could include its perceived contribution to the local community, how it has influenced visitors and residents historically (e.g. Eric Ravilious, Bloomsbury Group, William Blake) as well as the cultural contribution it makes today.

The examples above are not exhaustive, as each estate will be different, but they indicate some of the elements that may need to be included in the audit. In its simplest form, the Asset Audit is a series of maps, tables and images, which show the detail of the estate. This could be supplemented with case studies, which can be used to provide additional detail on specific elements. Initial consultation with officers at SDNPA to identify the unique features of your estate may help.

Why have an Asset Audit?

The Asset Audit allows the estate and all its activities to be seen within its local context, within the NP, nationally or even internationally.

It is critical to gather this information together so that it can be viewed as a whole. For those with complex future plans the Asset Audit will be particularly helpful in ensuring that everyone involved in the stewardship of the NP can see the context and connectivity of the whole estate and all of its activities, rather than just individual elements.

Who should write the Asset Audit?

Simple asset audits can be prepared by anyone intimately acquainted with the workings of the estate.

However, the assistance of a cartographer / graphic designer may be of benefit to ensure that the spatial information is as useful as it can be. The SDNPA are able to provide some assistance with mapping of strategic level designations and can provide a GIS mapping package See information below.

It is recommended that the managers of all key enterprises/activities within the estate are involved in developing the content of the Asset Audit. This could include estate/farm managers, individual business managers, property managers, event/product managers etc.

Where estates are particularly large or complex, additional professional disciplines may be of assistance this could include ecological advisors, planning practitioners, and heritage advisors. The input of local residents and other interested groups and organisations may also help you to identify assets.

Important information relating to the Asset Audit

Ideally, the production of the Asset Audit should be an opportunity for estates to gather information from all levels within their estate. Estates are strongly encouraged to involve and engage with their entire organisation in the process if possible, in order to get maximum benefit from the exercise. Ideally, all those involved with the estate should be aware of the WEP and their role in it.

There may be some cases where a large volume of data could be included within the WEP. We would recommend that estates take a pragmatic approach ensuring that there is a clear overall picture with use of specialist data sets when particularly pertinent to a particular interest or action.

Importantly the Asset Audit should not merely be a list of potential development sites. Whilst development opportunities are important to some WEPS, these must be seen holistically within the wider context.

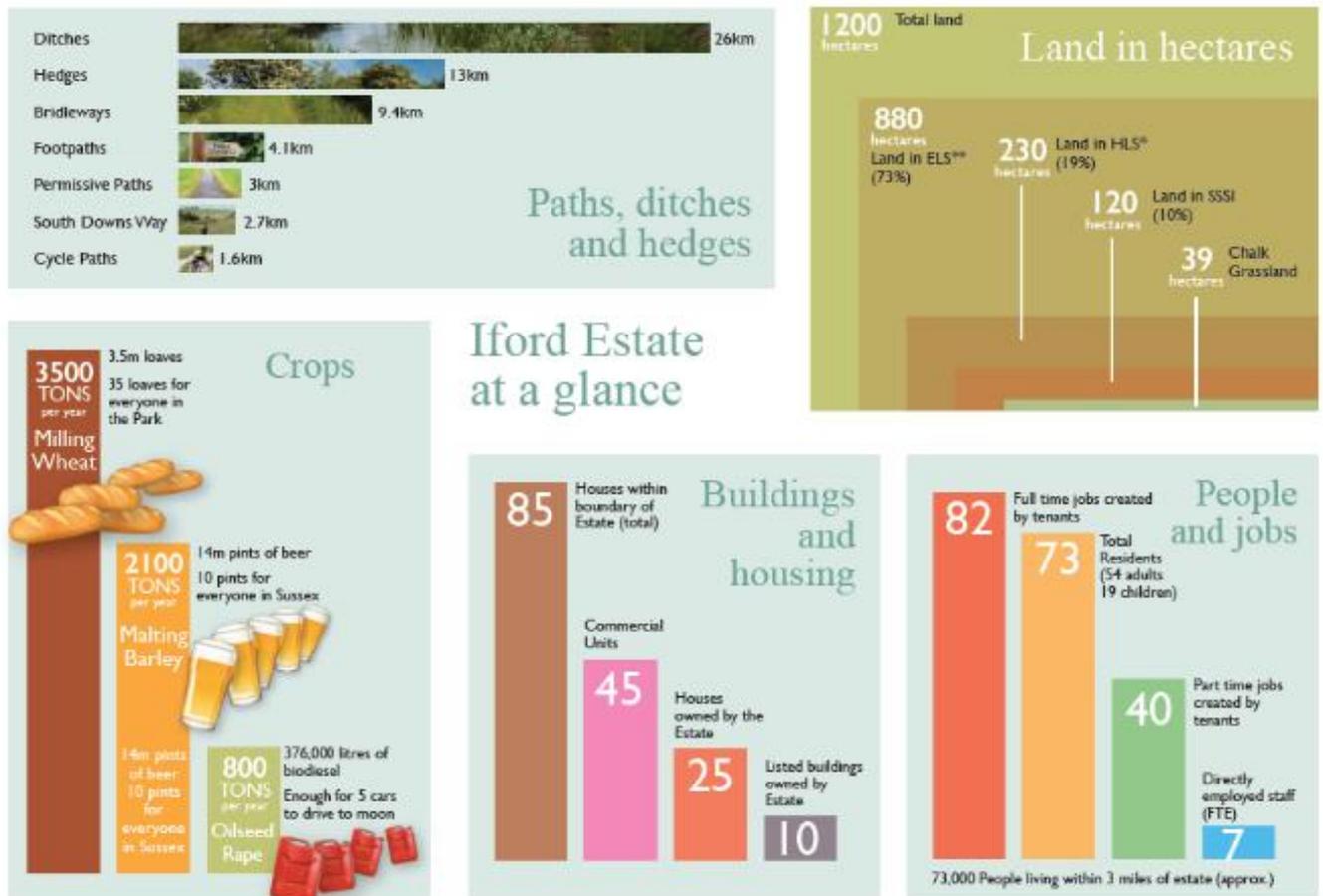


Figure 2: An example from Iford Estate on how to present data.

Landscape Character Assessment

The landscape character of the South Downs is rich and complex. The area's designation as a NP recognises that it is a landscape of national importance.

Landscape Character Assessment is an approach that allows us to categorise and describe the landscape in terms of distinct patterns and elements that distinguish them from another. For those estates wishing to affirm their assets in terms of landscape character, there are dynamic tools available, which can be found below.

[South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment](#)

[South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment](#)

SDNPA Mapping Package

To support the preparation of the Asset Audit the SDNPA have created a mapping package, which provides a range of basic data, which will be useful to the majority of organisations wishing to prepare a WEP.

The cost of this package is: £385.00 ex vat

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/WHOLE-EST-PLANS-MAPPING-PACKAGE.pdf>

3.3. ECOSYSTEM SERVICES & ANALYSIS

Ecosystem services are the benefits that people and society get from the natural environment, and underpin much of the rural economy. An ecosystems approach helps us to identify the benefits we get from nature, value them and build them into decision making and management. These benefits can be economic, social, cultural, or related to wellbeing. The South Downs provide a multitude of ecosystem services, and they can be grouped into four categories as illustrated below.

The NPA adopted an ecosystems approach to the SDNPA (2020) PMP and this is embedded into the SDNPA (2019) Local Plan. The diagram below provides a useful guide as to what services fall into which categories.

What is the relationship between natural capital and ecosystem services?

World Forum on Natural Capital states:

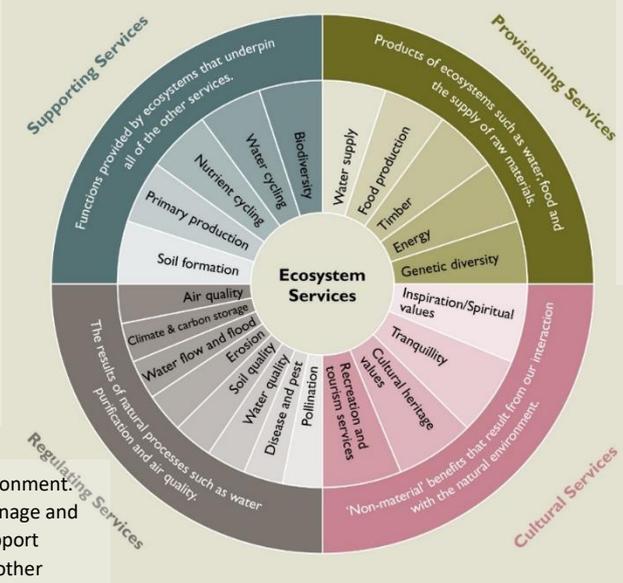
'Natural capital can be defined as the world's stocks of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things.'

It is from this natural capital that humans derive a wide range of services, often called ecosystem services, which make human life possible.

Your natural capital should be set out in the asset audit, the services you get from it can be set out in the Ecosystem Services Analysis.

Fig 3: Ecosystem Services Diagram

Supporting services offered by flora and fauna and microorganisms are essential for healthy soils, habitats and nutrient cycling, which underpin the environment's natural goods and services, which benefit people. The National Park has a rich variety of species, landscapes, rivers and coastline, which support the other ecosystems services, such as soil and water quality.



Provisioning services relate to the products and productivity of the natural environment. Approximately 85 per cent of the National Park is farmed and its soils support it being a major producer of cereal crops, which are grown mainly on the dip slopes. These soils also support grazing and biodiversity of important native habitats and species like the Duke of Burgundy butterfly. Approximately 25 per cent of the National Park is wooded, which contributes renewable fuel like biomass. The chalk hills, which sweep across the National Park, filter and store fresh water, providing us with high-quality drinking water.

Cultural services relate to people's enjoyment of the National Park and its special qualities. The distinctive landscape of the Western Weald, the chalk ridge, scarp and dip slopes and the dramatic Seven Sisters cliffs are of inspirational value through their sense of place and tranquillity, including dark night skies. Embedded in the landscape is important cultural heritage and social history, which is rich in art and literature, archaeological remains, traditional historic towns and villages and architecture. These special qualities provide social benefits, enhance people's health and wellbeing and provide multiple opportunities for education.

Regulating services are the controls from the natural environment. For example, rivers, which help to control water, flow, drainage and flooding. Rivers such as the Meon, Ouse and Cuckmere support habitats and biodiversity. Enhancing species like bees and other pollinators are vital for food crops as well as other plants and wildflowers. Woodland also prevents soil erosion and is an important resource for carbon storage, which helps to mitigate climate change. These services also regulate pollution in the air, water and on land. These include regulating carbon dioxide and air pollutants from cars and industry, chemicals from the treatment of agricultural fields or viticulture or surface water run-off and percolation from the urban environment into rivers and ground water.

What is an Ecosystem Services Analysis?

The Ecosystem Services Analysis is essentially a tailored SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) analysis. From this analysis, the current and future issues and opportunities within each category can be unearthed and responded to.

The ecosystem services analysis could be a basic table or a narrative. No one format suits all and it is likely that some areas will be relevant to one estate but not to another. It is important to focus on the value of the services relevant to the estate rather than on the areas where services may be lacking. There are a number of examples below of how this might be handled.

Why have an Ecosystem Services Analysis?

The approach combines both the needs of the estate and the NP.

By taking the natural capital of an estate (as identified in the Asset Audit) and interrogating it through an Ecosystems Services Analysis, the individual strengths and weaknesses of an estate and the opportunities and threats it faces can be examined in a clear and methodical way. It helps to ensure that the benefits and services people get from the natural environment are recognised and enhanced.

Who should write the Ecosystem Services Analysis?

A simple Ecosystem Services Analysis can be prepared by anyone intimately acquainted with the workings of the estate.

Like the Asset Audit, it is recommended that the managers of all key enterprises/activities within the estate are involved in developing the content of the Analysis. Those team members acquainted with the day-to-day running of the estate are best placed to identify the opportunities and threats that face both the estate and the NP.

Where estates/landholdings are particularly large and/or complex additional professional assistance, particularly from a multi-disciplinary planner/master planner may be of benefit to bring together all of the strands of information. The input and advice of any professionals (in areas such as landscape/ecology, heritage/conservation) who assisted in the preparation of the Asset Audit may also be useful. The SDNPA recognise that each estate is different and is willing to provide support and input where needed into the WEP.

Examples of a number of ecosystem services analysis are shown below.

Example Ecosystem Services Analysis

EXTRACT FROM THE IFORD ESTATE

Provisioning Services

Products of ecosystems such as water, food, and the supply of raw materials.

Water supply

The Estate has always strived to minimise its impact on the Environment, with water pollution, both of surface and ground water, being one of the biggest risks. To achieve this, buffer strips about all the water courses on the estate, and manure and fertiliser applications are carefully managed with qualified advisors overseeing applications.

Potential additionalities: Several elements of the farming operation, although acceptable from a regulatory standpoint, present a risk to the water supply. These include the sprayer filling facilities that are situated close to farm drains, and silage storage, either as round bale silage or storage in silage pits which were constructed in the 1950s.

The ongoing modernisation and reorganisation of the farm brings with it the opportunity to address these matters.

Food Production

Food production is the core focus of the Estate's business and agriculture is seen as being the primary generator of revenue for the Estate in future generations. Sufficient wheat is produced to make 3.5m loaves of bread each year – enough to provide 35 loaves each year for every resident of the National Park. That is more than half the bread eaten within the Park every year. The estate also grows a wide range of other crops and grazes beef cattle and sheep on areas where it is not possible or desirable to cultivate.

Potential additionalities: The modernisation of the farming infrastructure brings with it scope for increasing the productive efficiency of the farm, without needing to take more land into production (and out of habitat schemes).

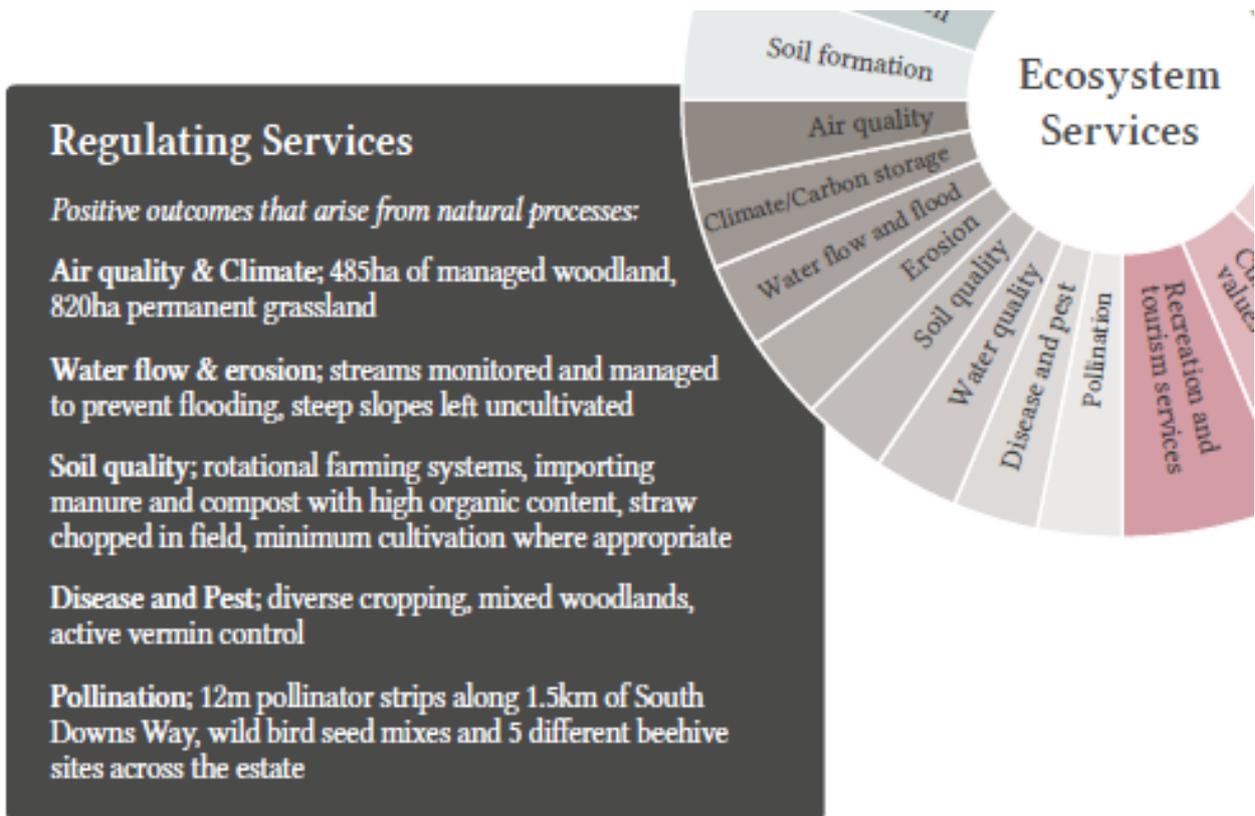
Timber

The Estate has no commercial forestry.

EXTRACT FROM THE WEST DEAN ESTATE

CULTURAL SERVICES	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Recreation and tourism services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> over 100,000 visitors a year to Gardens including events 150,000 visitors to Living Museum special events held throughout the year 21 miles of PROW cycling and horse riding encouraged designed walks within the park 5 walking routes across the Estate short courses in the arts and crafts dark skies for astro-photography accessible by public transport and bicycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no agreed strategy with the Living Museum to mitigate parking issues small areas of lighting affecting dark skies pedestrian link to College and museum is poor no shared ticketing visitor centre needs upgrading to improve facilities (EH) letting accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve visitor centre reduction in shoots joint ticketing community officer conversion of buildings into offices/workshops/art studios allotments extension of Centurion Way to improve access to College and Gardens Bothys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of affordable accommodation for key workers EPC upgrades increasing rents loss of affordable housing
Cultural heritage values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 55 listed buildings 13 Scheduled Monuments registered Park art and antique collections accredited museum (Living Museum) important centre for modern art major provider in arts conservation with international reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> archive not located in appropriate environment no assessment of non-designated heritage assets no archaeology policy lack of methodology for tree removal (Forestry policy) to protect archaeology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management agreement with SDNP reinstate Norwegian Lodge construct bothys conversion of buildings into offices/workshops/art studios 	

EXTRACT FROM THE WISTON ESTATE



Below is a generic template to assist estates with the Ecosystem Services & Analysis section of the WEP. This is available on request as an editable version.

Ecosystem Services template		Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Supporting Services	Soil formation				
	Primary production				
	Nutrient cycling				
	Water cycling				
	Biodiversity				
Provisioning Services	Water supply				
	Food production				
	Timber				
	Energy				
	Genetic diversity				
Cultural Services	Inspiration/Spiritual Values				
	Tranquillity				
	Cultural Heritage Values				
	Recreation and tourism services				
Regulation Services	Pollination				
	Disease and pest				
	Water quality				
	Soil quality				
	Erosion				
	Water flow and flood				
	Climate & carbon storage				
	Air quality				

3.4. ACTION PLAN

What is the Action Plan?

The Action Plan is the response to the findings and identifies key actions or projects.

The Action Plan could be a table that lists outcomes and potential projects, their likely timeframe, their link with any SWOT analysis and the SDNPA priorities (e.g., the SDNPA (2020) PMP, Special Qualities or Ecosystem Services Analysis).

It is suggested that an estate should attempt to include approximate timescales and priorities, in order to give some shape to their Action Plan, however it is recognised that these will vary between estates and may not be appropriate for all projects.

If the WEP is successfully endorsed, this is not agreement that any future individual planning application would be approved but rather the document will enable future development proposals to be given positive regard when being considered for development proposals outside of settlement boundaries.

Why have an Action Plan?

The Action Plan is an opportunity to clearly set out the type and range of activities, which will take the estate forward in its role as a steward within the NP. It allows the NPA to see individual projects within the context of the entire estate and a wider set of actions.

This is particularly important for Development Management activities where individual requests for planning consent may need to be understood within the context of the collective actions and plans of the estate. This contextual background will also be highly beneficial if you are seeking external funding and other forms of project support.

Who should write the Action Plan?

An Action Plan can be prepared by anyone intimately acquainted with the workings of the estate, but to ensure it is actually deliverable it should have input from across the estate with agreement from the key decision makers.

It needs to be useful and realistic. Where estates are particularly large and/or complex, additional professional assistance, particularly from a rural consultant or estate manager may be of benefit to ensure that the Action Plan can be effective as part of the estate's wider business plan.

This might be another opportunity to consult with the local community or other interested groups, residents and organisations. They may be key parties in the delivery of some of these projects or actions. If the WEP has implications for local residents / tenants, then they should be given the opportunity to be actively involved. We will wish to see that community and / or other stakeholder consultation has informed the proposal.

Important information relating to the Action Plan

With the need for increased urgency to tackle the dual crises of our time, climate change and nature depletion. The SDNPA has turned up the dial on the expectations of Estates, in recognition of their role as landowners to positively contribute to meeting these dual challenges. As a result, the SDNPA has now updated the WEP guidance on Action Plans to ensure they contain direct actions in pursuit of climate action and nature recovery.

- The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 sets out clear environmental targets at a national level. There will be an expectation for Estates to demonstrate in their Action Plans how they are contributing towards the delivery of the EIP.
- There should be a clear aim to hit the South Downs National Park Net Zero target by 2040. This should include a pledge to monitor performance and report back to the South Downs National Park Authority every five years.
- The South Downs National Park Authority have a target to ReNature, with 33% of the National Park managed for nature by 2030. All endorsed WEPS should include targets to help contribute towards this goal, with a pledge to monitor performance and report back to the South Downs National Park Authority every five years.
- There should be a clear progression and justification of projects from the Asset Audit, through the Ecosystem Services Analysis and into the Action Plan.
- The inclusion of projects designed as enabling development is not precluded, but there should be a clear process to demonstrate need if this is to be considered reasonable within the planning process.
- Where new dwellings are proposed, these should meet the priority housing needs of the local area, hence they should be affordable homes, or accommodate full-time, rural workers. Any

exceptions to this would need to be fully justified, backed by clear evidence and deliver multiple benefits to ecosystem services and the special qualities of the SDNP.

- The Action Plan should not just be a list of development projects, but show how, if any development projects are proposed, they will assist in the wider Action Plan and stewardship of the countryside and the assets it provides.

	SWOT RESPONSE	ACTION	OUTCOME	PMP	PRIORITY
Dark Skies and tranquility page 51	CS tranquility	Explore reasons for low quality dark skies at Preston Farm	to improve dark skies and tranquility	1, 3, 4, 5, 6	H
	CS tranquility	Approach SSE regarding streetlighting and improving canopies	to reduce light spill over village and improve dark skies	1, 3, 4, 5, 6	M
Farms and Farming page 54	SS combined	Promote the creation of a West Dean farm cluster	to improve habitats and promote biodiversity to support farmers by sharing aims and information to create support network to promote sharing of resources	2, 3, 8	M
	SS biodiversity RS pollination	Explore the use of more diverse crops for game cover	to encourage greater biodiversity and interest	2, 3	M
	SS biodiversity RS water quality	Explore potential reduction in rapeseed	to protect water quality by reducing slugs and the need for pellets (metaldehyde)	3	M
	SS combined	Record good conservation practice	to monitor and encourage ongoing conservation gains, especially if new Countryside Stewardship scheme is not taken up.	1, 2, 3	H

Fig 4 – Extract taken from West Dean WEP

4. THE ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

What does endorsement mean?

WEPs which are of sufficient quality can be endorsed by the SDNPA through the Policy & Resources Committee. They can assist in the objectives of the SDNPA (2020) PMP as a shared endeavour. From a landowner's perspective, the WEP can be used as a useful supporting document for seeking grants or funding bids.

As previously stated, an endorsed WEP will ensure proposals outside of settlement boundaries within rural estates and large farms are given positive regard when development proposals are considered, and as such could be used by Officers and Planning Committee Members as background information when making planning decisions. It will not guarantee you planning permission but helps present your scheme in the context of the wide range of activities going on in your estate.

However, endorsement is not about planning. It shows our commitment to work collaboratively to deliver multiple projects ranging from education to biodiversity enhancements, improved public access to public awareness.

The Process

If you aspire for your WEP to be endorsed by the SDNPA the WEP process outlined below must be followed exactly. For those estates looking to have their WEP endorsed, it is imperative you contact us at the SDNPA before you commence working on the WEP so SDNPA Officers can advise on the process and answer any questions you have to make sure the WEP journey starts in an efficient and effective way. The basic stages for endorsement are outlined below.

Stage 1 - Inception

If an estate is considering producing a WEP for endorsement by SDNPA or has already decided to do so, estates must contact SDNPA to notify us. This will trigger a meeting between the SDNPA and the estate as well as an inception workshop.

Stage 2 - Early Draft

Stage 2 of the WEP process is arguably the busiest phase in the WEP process. The estate is strongly encouraged to conduct early public consultation in the WEP process to help inspire the creation of the WEP. It is generally advised to do this early in Stage 2.

The estate must produce an early draft that will be entered into the first of two SDNPA internal consultations. The consultation period is 4 weeks and sandwiches a formal members' site visit to the estate. On completion of the consultation period, SDNPA will collate and share the consultation responses with the estate within 4 weeks.

Stage 3 - Final Draft

Stage 3 begins with the estate digesting the feedback provided as a result of the first SDNPA internal consultation and makes changes accordingly. The completion of a final draft then triggers the second and final SDNPA internal consultation. The second consultation is also 4 weeks. On completion of the

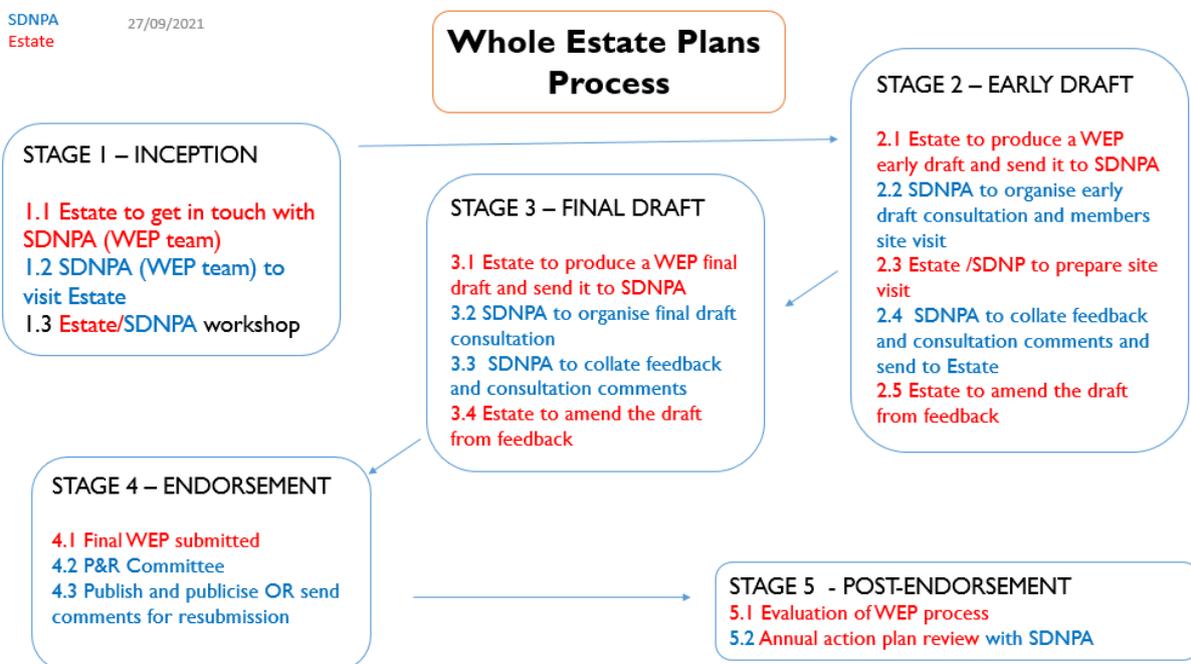
consultation period, SDNPA will collate and share the consultation responses with the estate within 4 weeks.

Stage 4 - Endorsement

Stage 4 begins with the estate digesting the feedback provided as a result of the second SDNPA internal consultation and makes changes accordingly. Once both the estate and SDNPA Officers are confident, the changes reflect the feedback provided to date, the estate is invited to present their WEP to P&R Committee for endorsement. Estates are encouraged to speak at the P&R Committee and make themselves available on the day to answer questions specific to the estate. Once a decision on endorsement has been made, if positive, the newly endorsed WEP will be published by the SDNPA / on the SDNPA website and be afforded positive regard when development proposals are considered in the future.

Stage 5 - Post-Endorsement

Endorsement of a WEP is very much the start of the next chapter. The creation of the WEP and the relationships built, between the SDNPA and the estate, on the journey, lay the foundations for partnership working in the future. Of course, estates are under no obligation by the SDNPA to implement against their Action Plans; however, there is an expectation for this. Estates with endorsed WEP's will be encouraged to meet annually with SDNPA Officers to carry out annual reviews to track performance against SDNPA (2020) PMP outcomes and continue to nurture relationships.



5. FUTURE WORKING

An endorsed WEP aids collaboration between an estate and the SDNPA to achieve the ambitions of the landowner while also delivering on the SDNPA (2020) PMP outcomes in pursuit of the NP's purposes and duty.

They act as a catalyst for building relationships, they facilitate the understanding of the NP's Special Qualities, they identify opportunities and threats to the estate and, importantly, they enable better understanding of the pressures facing estates.

They also enable a landowner/estate to demonstrate how they contribute to the outcomes and priorities identified in the SDNPA (2020) PMP. An endorsed WEP will ensure proposals outside of settlement boundaries within rural estates and large farms are given positive regard when development proposals are considering. Estates who benefit from an Endorsed WEP will have their planning applications assessed on a case-by-case basis to ascertain if the application will be Called-In by the SDNPA and determined by an in-house SDNPA Case Officer. A WEP can also be used to help guide and support funding bids, inform future neighbourhood development plan production, agri-environment and forestry schemes and with other natural capital projects. They also serve as an important communication tool within the community to enable a better understanding at a local level as well as providing a clear direction for legacy and succession planning.

The SDNPA recognise the huge benefits from developing long lasting relationships with estates, farms and landowners who are responsible for the designation of our amazing landscape.

The WEPs are seen as a Memorandum of Understanding with an agreed Action Plan, which shapes the future working relationship between the SDNPA and the estate.

SDNPA will offer regular liaison and annual review meetings to monitor progress against the Action Plan. Following the end of each financial year, SDNPA officers will contact estates with endorsed WEPs to commence preparation for an annual review. It takes the form of a meeting to discuss the previous year, implementation of the Action Plan and tracking of the estate's progress against the SDNPA (2020) PMP outcomes.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, please contact us at:

WEPS@southdowns.gov.uk

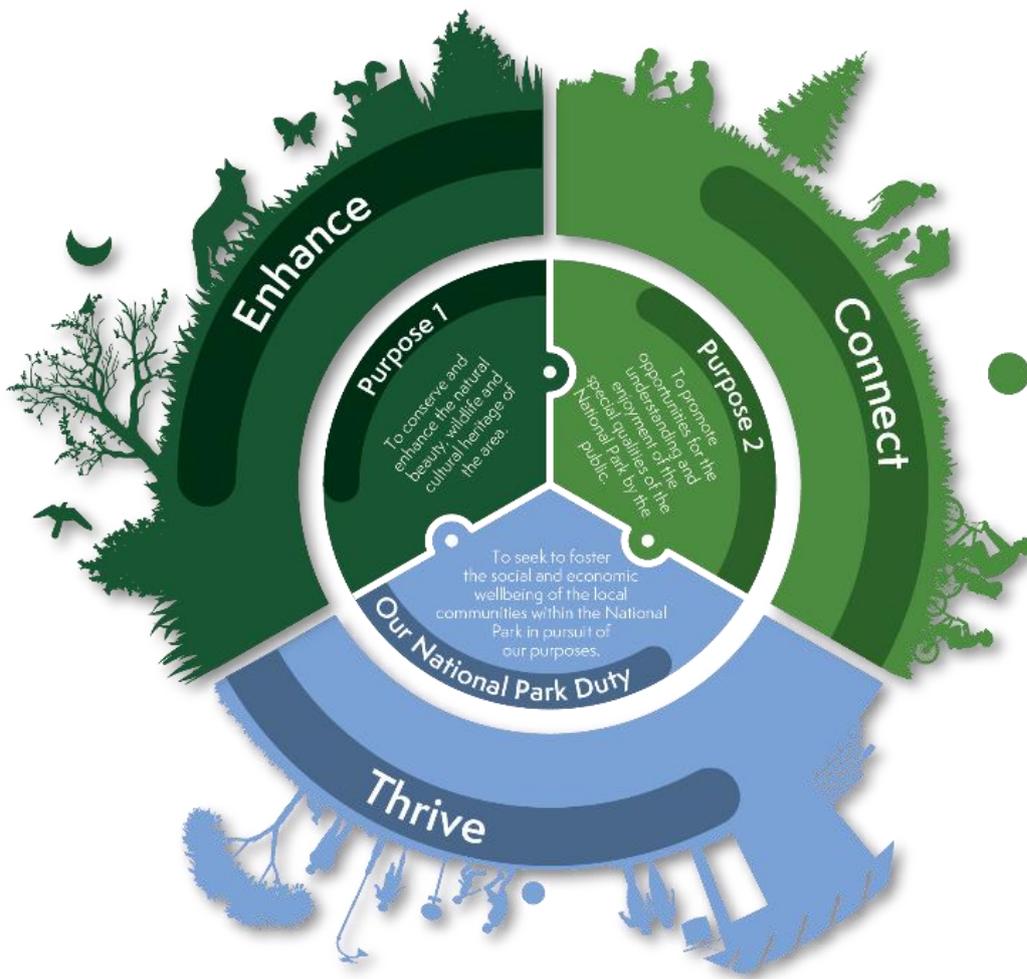
Phone us on 01730 814810 and ask for a member of the Whole Estate Team (Nick Heasman or Mark Alden).

Or visit:

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/whole-estate-plans/>

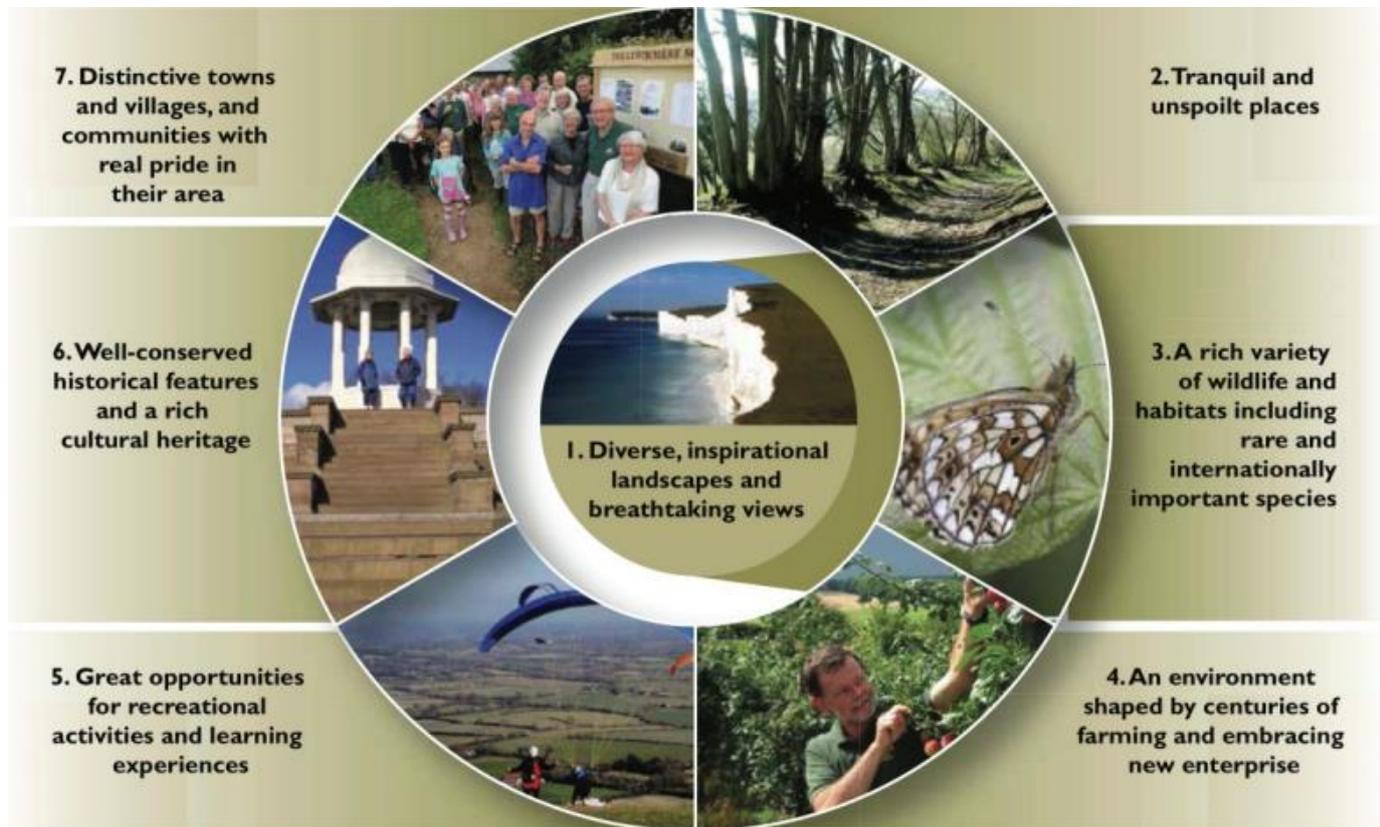
7. APPENDICES

Appendix I: National Park Purposes and Duty



Source: SDNPA website (2021)

Appendix 2: Special Qualities of the National Park



Source: SDNPA website (2021)

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