

Report to	Policy & Programme Committee
Date	26 May 2016
By	Director of Planning
Title of Report	Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Endorse the Sustainable Tourism Strategy attached as Appendix I to this report.**
- 2) Note the next steps to develop a framework of both existing and potential projects in discussion with partners.**

I. Summary and Background

- I.1 As reported to the March P&P committee the South Downs National Park Sustainable Tourism Strategy, 2015-2020, sets out the National Park Authority's priorities for implementing these policies and four themes which group together activities and products in a way that would be easily recognisable to visitors and those working on programmes.
- I.2 The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) consulted key partners on the draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy. The aim of the consultation was to obtain feedback on the main elements of the strategy first with a view to developing a framework of delivery projects (existing and potential) in discussion with partners. The feedback from this consultation has been taken into account.
- I.3 An earlier draft of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy was incorporated as an appendix to the Tourism Bid to the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development report to Policy and Programme Committee on 13 October 2015.
- I.4 Key tourism partners were invited to give their views on the draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy during a three week consultation, from 23 October – 13 November 2015. Local authorities, area partnerships, the Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere, Tourism South East (TSE) and National Parks England (NPE) were asked to comment. A total of 12 responses were received from a mix of local authorities as well as TSE and NPE.
- I.5 The consultation responses were supportive of the strategy and in particular welcomed the four visitor facing themes:
 - An Adventure Land
 - A Cultural Land
 - A Natural Land and
 - A Working Land.
- I.6 Respondents were positive about working in partnership with the National Park Authority to help us deliver our sustainable tourism priorities as set out in the strategy. For example the Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere and East Hants DC both expressed a keenness to work with SDNPA on using the Shared Identity, sustainable travel and developing the gateways and hubs in their localities.

- 1.7 A few consultation responses expressed concern about the lack of measurable targets in the strategy. As a result SDNPA has amended the strategy to explain that we have a set of indicators already, in the PMP, for example measuring visitor experience and that we also intend to include specific measures for any project included in the framework which will accompany the strategy. A particular concern of one local authority was that the strategy does not set a target for growing visitor numbers. SDNPA's view is that this single comment needs to be considered in context as our role as a National Park Authority in relation to tourism is not growth in visitor numbers per se but to make tourism more sustainable and attractive to people from all backgrounds, ages and incomes and to implement the stated policies in the Partnership Management Plan, rather than tourism growth per se, regardless of the implications.
- 1.8 The amendments made to the Sustainable Tourism Strategy following the consultation are incorporated in the strategy being presented to the Committee. Officers will follow up the interest in joint initiatives received as part of the consultation with the individual partner organisations concerned.
- 1.9 As the purpose of the strategy is to bring together existing, pre-agreed strands of work it does not require formal NPA approval. Therefore the committee is asked to endorse the strategy so that Officers can take the next steps towards implementing the strategy.

2. Next Steps

- 2.1 The strategy focuses on *sustainable* tourism and explains the objectives and priorities which will guide SDNPA's delivery and resource commitments going forward. **Appendix 2** of the strategy provides a useful diagrammatic one page summary of these alongside the four visitor facing themes. The strategy will be reviewed as part of the refresh of the PMP.
- 2.2 There are four main priorities: area-based; business development; sustainable travel; and knowledge and custodianship. For each of these some detail is provided on where SDNPA will focus its efforts around these priorities with mention of projects (existing and potential) which will or could support their delivery.
- 2.3 A range of both current and potential partners is identified in the strategy including local authorities, transport operators, tourism businesses and tourism advisory bodies, land-based organisations and Local Enterprise Partnerships. Some of these are partners in current tourism related projects such as the food and drink portal and 'Discover More for Less'.
- 2.4 Officers will take forward developing a framework of projects with partners from April 2016. New project concepts will be considered by SDNPA's internal Sustainable Economy and Tourism Theme Programme Board before proceeding to an expression of interest.

3. P&P Committee Considerations

- 3.1 The P&P Committee considered, and were asked to endorse the strategy at their meeting on 1 March. The Committees comments included:
- i) The tone of the document at times seemed to imply that tourism was a problem requiring management rather than promotion.
 - ii) The need to reference the benefits of tourism and the National Park's Purpose 2.
 - iii) The need to include clear objectives, and an executive summary explaining the purpose of the document.
 - iv) A view that the strategy could be amended to also appeal to a more affluent market.
 - v) Whether a section on "green-laning" / use of 4x4s could be included.
- 3.2 Following this meeting the Strategy has been altered to take account of the Committees previous comments and ensure that the message is clear – come and enjoy the South Downs – and we will seek to assist you in doing this in a variety of ways e.g. sustainable transport, local food.

Other Implications

Implication	Yes/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	<p>The resource commitment to the development of the strategy, as opposed to specific projects, has involved staff time mainly by the Sustainable Tourism Officer, the Sustainable Futures Manager and members of the Sustainable Economy and Tourism Theme Programme Board.</p> <p>No other funding commitment is required at this stage. Any proposed new tourism projects requiring funding from the Strategic Fund would be submitted through Project for the South Downs and subject to SDNPA's project approval processes.</p> <p>Funding sources (internal and/or external) will be identified for any projects included in the framework of projects to support delivery of the strategy.</p>
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The Sustainable Tourism Strategy enables the better use of resources as it brings together a range of activities currently being undertaken across the Authority, providing a clarity of approach.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None
Has due regard been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	<p>The strategy seeks to ensure equality of opportunity for all in terms of access to recreation and tourism.</p> <p>Specific projects will be subject to equalities impact assessments as required to ensure the Authorities obligations are met</p>
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
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy	The objectives and priorities of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy contribute to the principles set out in the Sustainability Strategy in particular living within environmental limits, ensuring a strong healthy and just society and achieving a sustainable economy.

4 Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 4.1 There is a risk of insufficient partner engagement in the delivery of the strategy. This is partly mitigated by the strategy consultation which indicated good support among partners and brought forward proposals from them for new joint initiatives. It is further mitigated by strong existing projects and programmes which SDNPA can build on, for example the Local Sustainable Transport Fund programme focused on sustainable travel for visitors.

- 4.2 Resources will be required if the SDNPA is to implement this strategy effectively. Whilst there are sources of external funding such as LEP Growth Deal and EAFRD, matched funding would be required. This is a legitimate call on the major projects fund.

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Appendices	I. Sustainable Tourism Strategy
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive, , Director of Strategy and Partnerships
External Consultees	Responses to the partner consultation on the draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy were received from: Arun DC, Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere Region, Chichester DC, East Hampshire DC, East Sussex CC, Horsham DC, Lewes DC, Mid Sussex DC, National Parks England, Tourism South East, West Sussex CC and Winchester CC. The following partners were consulted on the draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy but did not respond: Adur and Worthing Councils, Brighton and Hove CC, Eastbourne BC, Hampshire CC, Wealden DC, East Sussex Rural Partnership, Rural West Sussex Partnership and Coastal West Sussex Partnership.
Background Documents	Report to Policy and Programme Committee 13 October 2015, Tourism Bid to the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Agenda Item 9 and Appendix to Agenda Item 9: https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/meeting/13-october-2015/