

Report to	South Downs National Park Authority
Date	30 March 2017
By	Director of Countryside Policy and Management
Title of Report	Future of Farming

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to

- 1) Note the work of National Parks England (NPE) and the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) with regard to assessing the implications of exiting the European Union (EU) on agriculture within National Parks.**
- 2) Endorse the Progress Report produced by the NPE Future of Farming Group as the proposed way forward for developing new agri-environment schemes within England's National Parks.**

1. Summary and Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Authority on the possible implications for the South Downs National Park of future changes in agriculture policy and funding and the NPE work on the same.
- 1.2 Most land in the English National Parks is used for farming. In the South Downs National Park (SDNP) 85% is classified as farmland and most the remainder is forestry, which will also be impacted by likely future changes on policy and funding. It is predominately the impact of agriculture on the natural features of these areas over many centuries that has shaped the landscape and led to their designations. However, some intensive farming practices have had and continue to have negative impacts on the environment. It is therefore essential that the future agricultural policy and financial framework post the United Kingdom's (UK) withdrawal from the EU is focused on sustainability; environmental and social. Without a robust and progressive policy one of the principle tolls by which National Park Purposes can be achieved will be missing.

2. National Policies and Positions

- 2.1 The Environmental Audit Committee has published the report of its inquiry into the implications of the UK withdrawing from the EU – its principle recommendations are twofold:
 - The need for a UK Environment Protection Act to ensure that UK regulation after withdrawing from the EU is as at least as strong, or stronger, than that afforded by the Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and other key EU legislation.
 - The need for clarity about the sort of land management payments scheme which could replace the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- 2.2 The Prime Minister's speech earlier in 2017 on Article 50 and the UK's withdrawal from the EU was essentially silent on issues to do with environmental regulation, agriculture and rural policy. At the Oxford Farming Conference and elsewhere, Defra has pledged to produce two Green Papers, a 25 year strategy for the natural environment (the work on which was started before the EU referendum last year) and a Green Paper on the future of food and farming. Although flagged as separate green papers, both issues are inextricably linked, as

set out above.

- 2.3 The National Farmers Union (NFU) and Country Landowners Association (CLA) are working behind the scenes on their policy positions. In particular, the CLA is being forward thinking and considering future UK agricultural policy in terms of natural capital (i.e. the stocks of habitat they have on their land) and landowners and farmers receiving payments from the services this natural capital provides to citizens in terms of clean water, flood storage, pollination etc.
- 2.4 The environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have also been active in setting out their ideas, which are not dissimilar to the CLA's. For example, the National Trust and Green Alliance are promoting the development of a National Infrastructure Scheme where landowners and farmers would be paid to deliver ecosystem services, such as clean water and flood protection.

3. National Parks England (NPE)

- 3.1 Farming is a key element of the economies of National Parks. In addition to the much larger basic payment scheme (Pillar 1 of the CAP), in 2016, public investment into agri-environment schemes (Pillar 2) within the English National Parks is estimated to be £67 million.
- 3.2 The UK's withdrawal from the EU will likely result in the level of agri-environment expenditure / investment coming under close scrutiny, competing with other governmental departments; health, education, defence, etc. However, any reduction in public investment for agricultural support within English National Parks could significantly impact their landscapes, rural communities and cultural traditions.
- 3.3 In order to ensure continued environmentally sustainable farming in National Parks and the pursuit of National Parks purposes, NPE established a Member-led task and finish Future of Farming Group to provide advice to the NPE Board on the strategic priorities in relation to farming post the UK's withdrawal from the EU. The group is chaired by Jim Bailey (North York Moors chair) with the following members; Sebastian Anstruther (South Downs), Neil Heseltine (Yorkshire Dales), Robin Milton (Exmoor), Kevin Bishop (Dartmoor Chief Executive) and Adrian Shepherd (Yorkshire Dales Head of Land Management).
- 3.4 To respond promptly to the Defra Green papers (see 2.2) the NPE Future of Farming Group has produced a progress report (**Appendix 1**)
- 3.5 The focus of the report is on recommendations for post EU withdrawal arrangements for supporting and investing in land management within the English National Parks and the opportunity for National Park Authorities (NPAs) to play a greater role in local co-ordination and, potentially, delivery. Such delivery could be both outcome led and at a landscape scale (e.g. farm clusters).
- 3.6 NPE agreed that NPAs should approve the progress report. This will ensure that when the final paper goes to the Board in April, it can be approved on behalf of the membership of all English National Parks, providing a consistent message to Defra from all the National Parks.

4. South Downs National Park Authority

- 4.1 The SDNPA Members' European Exit Working Group (Norman Dingemans, Margaret Paren, Janet Duncton, Sebastian Anstruther and Ian Phillips) has met on a number of occasions to discuss and agree how it supports NPE's Future of Farming Group and provide a steer for the work that the SDNPA is undertaking at a local level.
- 4.2 Although NPE will respond to Defra, in relation to the two Green Papers (within the twelve week consultation window) on behalf of the ten English National Parks, the SDNPA intends to broaden this approach by submitting a joint response from partners and stakeholders in the SDNP. This joint response will identify the common issues which unite farmers and landowners, NGOs, statutory agencies and other partners and stakeholders.
- 4.3 The schematic plan (**Appendix 2**) identifies the process for the development of this SDNP joint response. It is based on counting down the number of days from the commencement of when any Green Paper is announced and would run in parallel / complement the work of NPE. Where possible, the plan utilises existing Members and Partners' meetings, plus two

bespoke farmer / landowner workshops (drawn from the six farm clusters within the SDNP) and the establishment of a parallel internet forum to allow all Members, staff and volunteers to feed in views. From the information and responses gathered, a joint Members / South Downs Partnership session will develop the final SDNP response for submission.

- 4.4 The process for submitting a joint response on behalf of the SDNP is challenging but nevertheless achievable. However, such an approach will gain traction with Defra and strengthen local relationships. Both will put the SDNPA in a strong position to develop and deliver possible agri-environment pilot schemes. Throughout the process, this work will be supported by the facilitation services and technical expertise of Cumulus Consultants Ltd.

5. **Governance Committee/P&P Committee /Planning Committee /NPA Considerations**

- 5.1 A SDNPA Members' European Exit Working Group was set up. See 4.1

6. **Other Implications**

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	It is not envisaged that further decisions will be required. However, the Working Group will continue to meet and will make recommendations to the SDNPA if required.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	A budget of £50k per annum for the next three years (2017-20) has been identified for this work. This is subject to approval as part of the Authority's budget setting process.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	An approach to the development of agri-environment schemes that aligns with National Park purposes ensures that resources will also contribute to the National Park's outcomes.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None arising directly from these recommendations.
Has due regard been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes. No equalities implications arise directly from this paper. The next stage of this work may require a full equalities impact assessment which will be undertaken at the appropriate time.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None arising directly from this paper.
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None arising directly from this paper.
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None arising directly from this paper.
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy.	The development of agri-environment schemes that support and contribute to National Park purposes supports all 5 principles of the SDNPA sustainability strategy.

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

- 7.1 Risks associated with Brexit are captured in the corporate risk register which is reviewed by Governance Committee. The working group and the proposed way forward set out in this report are identified as mitigations in that risk.

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Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NPE Future of Farming Group Progress Report2. Schematic Plan for the development of SDNP joint Defra Green Papers response
SDNPA Consultees	Director of Countryside Policy and Management;
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	The Future of the Natural Environment after the EU Referendum inquiry