

South Downs National Park
Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2015-20



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Executive Summary

The South Downs National Park is the largest rural resource for recreation and tourism in the South East of England, thus tourism plays a significant role in its local economy. The last overarching estimate showed that the National Park has approximately 46 million visitor days per year, making it the most popular Protected Landscape in the country which generates an income of nearly £5 billion and supports some 12,000 jobs. The South Downs National Park is found within just a few miles of several major conurbations and close to numerous major national transport gateways and is accessible to over 10 million people regionally. Popular and accessible though it is, the Park also has fragile habitats and sensitive areas, a small number of hotspots currently attract a very disproportionate number of its visitors, and the vast majority arrive by car. This strategy is therefore designed to promote a more sustainable approach to the development of tourism so that visitors can enjoy more of the National Park without compromising its Special Qualities.

The Government has provided two statutory purposes for National Parks in England. All public bodies and utility companies, when undertaking any activity which may have an impact on the designated area, have a duty to have regard to these purposes.

Purpose 1: To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

Purpose 2: To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

In addition, the National Park Authority has a socio-economic duty:

NPA Duty: To seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park in pursuit of National Park Purposes.

This strategy is underpinned in other national policy including the Defra 2010 Circular¹, and Defra's March 2016 Eight Point Plan for National Parks which places strong emphasis on Purpose 2. The aim of this Sustainable Tourism Strategy is to enable enjoyment of the area and guide the tourism activities of the South Downs National Park Authority in its work with partners. This strategy builds on the South Downs Partnership Management Plan 2014-2019.

The strategy's start point provides by setting the context of tourism in the National Park, referring to recent local studies and national reports. This is followed by seven sustainable tourism objectives (set out on Page 7) which address the following:

- the visitor experience and offer;
- visitor pressures;
- sustainable practice by tourism providers;
- visitors means of access to the National Park and fostering custodianship;
- visitors contribution to the local economy.

These objectives are supported by the strategy's 'delivery tools' which illustrate ways in which the NPA will work with partners on enjoyment of the landscape, particularly, but not exclusively, by means of sustainable travel, encouraging business development and custodianship. The strategy

¹ English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular 2010, March 2010, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

provides a set of four delivery priorities for the National Park Authority which will direct its joint work with partners on tourism activities. The first priority is area-based, focusing on activity at specific locations; the remaining three are theme-based, namely: business development; sustainable travel; and knowledge and custodianship.

The strategy concludes with four 'visitor facing' themes, used to engage the public in experiencing the National Park:

- Adventure Land;
- Cultural Land;
- Natural Land;
- Working Land.

The National Park Authority works with a range of partners to implement this strategy, through the delivery of existing projects and developing new initiatives. This is indicated in the detail of the four visitor themes and in a summary of the strategy framework in Appendix 2. A companion delivery plan of projects follows, updated annually, as Appendix 3 of the strategy.

Context to the Sustainable Tourism Strategy

The first **State of the South Downs National Park Report** (published in 2012) set out to capture a picture of the newly established National Park as a first snapshot, providing a baseline against which future changes could be measured as the National Park matured.

A crucial starting point in managing change for the future was to capture the essence of what makes the National Park important – its Special Qualities. The report was structured around seven identified Special Qualities of the South Downs. These seven qualities have informed the model that is the basis of this Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

The **Partnership Management Plan (PMP) 2014-19** was published in 2013, setting out a shared Vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 11 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make the Vision and outcomes a reality. It focuses where we all believe partnership action can make a tangible difference over the next five years.

Preparation of the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) was led and co-ordinated by the National Park Authority working jointly with a high-level stakeholder group – the South Downs Partnership. The Plan is designed to stimulate local action, influence the major streams of public and private investment into the National Park, and align with the policies and programmes of other public bodies. It drives the Authority's own business and operational plans, and provides the starting point for the development of the policies in the Local Plan. The 11 long-term outcomes of the PMP have been used to shape the objectives of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

The **National Park draft Local Plan** sets out how the National Park will develop into the future. The spatial context for this Sustainable Tourism Strategy is the draft Local Plan and is framed to accord with and support the tourism-related policies of the Local Plan, including those on Visitor Economy and Recreation. Options for tourism issues were considered in the Local Plan Options Consultation Document published in February 2014. The Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation took place in Autumn 2015 and the draft policies detailed in Appendix 1 of this document.

Relevant Local Studies

A number of studies have been completed over the last few years that have been used to inform the strategy. The **South Downs Visitor and Tourism Economic Impact Study (2013)** summarises a series of research studies commissioned by the SDNPA that included a study of visitor-related businesses in the South Downs, visitor and resident surveys, and a value and volume modelling exercise to calculate the economic impact of tourism in the South Downs.

The **Visitor Travel Survey (2014)** was commissioned as part of a DfT-funded case study looking at the impact of the Government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) programme on visitor travel behaviour in the Lake District, New Forest and South Downs National Parks. The LSTF programme included a range of infrastructure improvements and travel awareness campaigning activity to encourage greener travel by visitors. The programme began in 2012, continuing until March 2016. Transport issues are inextricably linked to the management of tourism and this study has provided useful evidence to inform the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

The **Visitor Accommodation Review (VAR) 2015** was commissioned in early 2014 by the South Downs National Park Authority to inform the development of the emerging South Downs National Park Local Plan and the delivery of the Partnership Management Plan. It was finalised in February 2015 and the study indicated a number of key features to visitor accommodation in the National Park. The review identified shortages of all types of accommodation at peak times, a strong demand

for high quality accommodation and increasing demand for all types of accommodation in the future. These findings provide an important context in the shaping of objectives for this strategy.

Informative Tourism Trends: The National Context

The GB Tourism Survey (GTBS) 2013

This latest annual survey was completed in 2013 and assesses the volumes and values of domestic tourism in Great Britain. The GBTS is jointly sponsored by VisitEngland, VisitScotland and VisitWales, and provides a full snapshot of the current domestic tourism market conditions across the country.

It is estimated that, in 2013, GB residents took around 123 million trips of one night or more within Britain. These trips involved a total of 374 million nights away from home, resulting in an average tourism trip length of three nights. Tourism expenditure on these domestic trips was around £23 billion, representing an average spend of £187 per trip and £62 per night away from home.

By relating these levels of tourism volume and value to the total population, the average level of tourism per head of population can be calculated. In 2013, the average GB adult resident:

- took two tourism trips of one night or more away from home within GB;
- stayed away from home for approximately three nights per trip;
- spent in the region of £190 per trip.

These characteristics of domestic tourism have therefore tended to focus regional or city tourism strategies to target the short break market rather than full week or longer stay visitors.

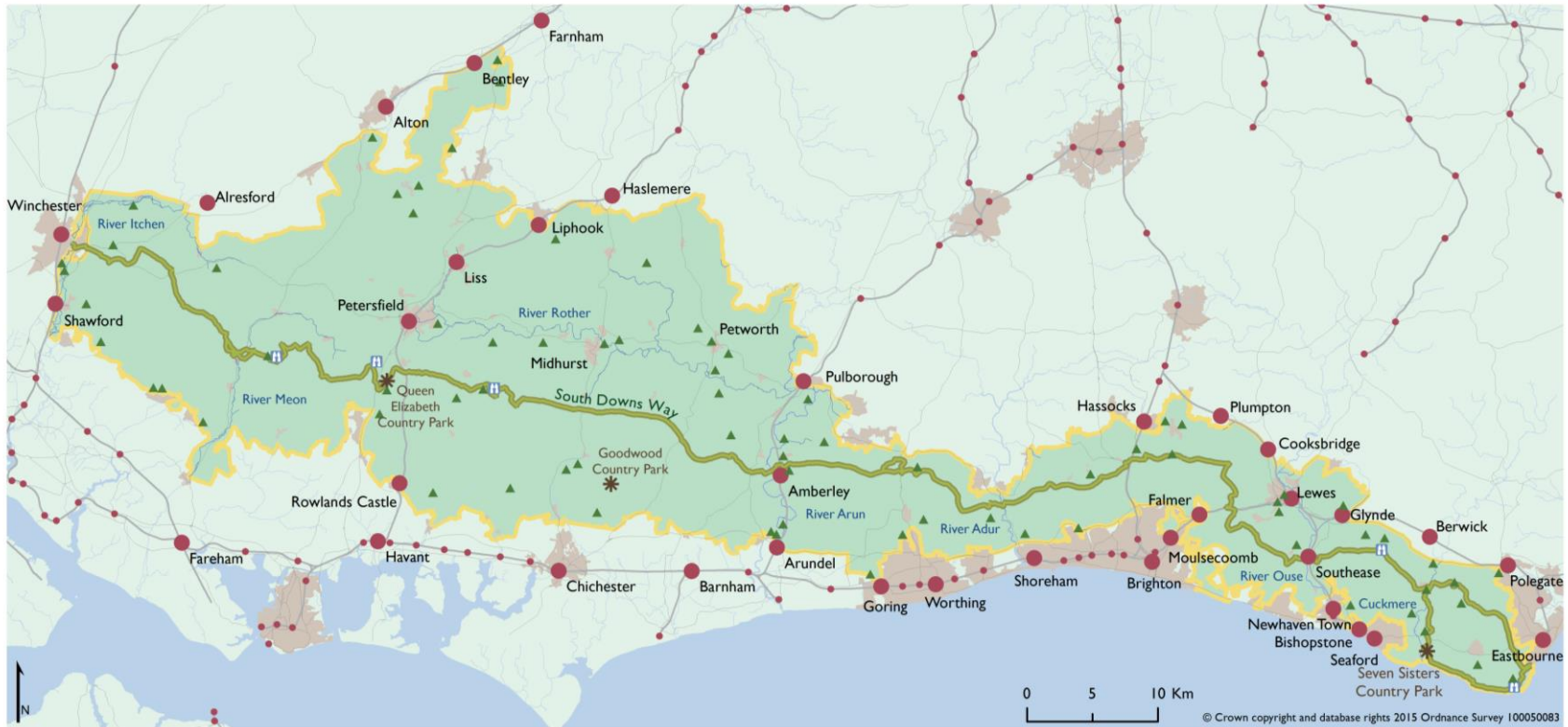
Trends for the Next Decade by Visit England (December 2013)

The recession from 2008 to 2011 has changed visitor attitudes and behaviours. Being 'green' is less important to visitors/consumers as the 2008-11 downturn has resulted in more difficult choices on personal finances. However, consumers still have ethical values and standards; they have gently shifted to ethical consumerism, i.e. the legitimacy of products and services, boardroom practices, and supply chain management taking a more responsible approach (corporate social responsibility). The importance of localism is also increasingly crucial; it is seen to add authenticity and trust.

Other key emergent trends identified in this document are:

- Visitors are increasingly time-poor and cash-strapped, consumers will look to maximise their leisure spend – increasing the number of short breaks (at the expense of longer ones) and are turning visiting friends & relatives-based breaks into leisure and activity breaks.
- Demographic trends will heighten the importance of family trips – and it is the traditional rural destinations that can benefit if they adapt to the needs of visitors.
- 'Nostalgia tourism' is on the rise; it is driven by consumers' uncertainty about the future and the result is visitors looking for authenticity and meaning in their experiences.
- Activity tourism is growing as a reaction to more sedentary lifestyles as people seek to 'de-stress' through adventure experiences.
- Accommodation is becoming a more complex area to address; a diverse range of accommodation types will provide security of custom for all. New areas like glamping will only grow further, traditional large hotels may struggle to hold onto market share.
- There is a new consumer desire to increase personal 'cultural capital'. The lifestyle media promotion of new skills (antiques, cooking, baking, country crafts) has played a role in this area and the public are keen to try new things they think have been lost to their families.
- Rural destinations in England have an opportunity to tap into something that is 'quintessentially English' – the delivery of a unique offer or a point of difference that sets the destination apart from others.

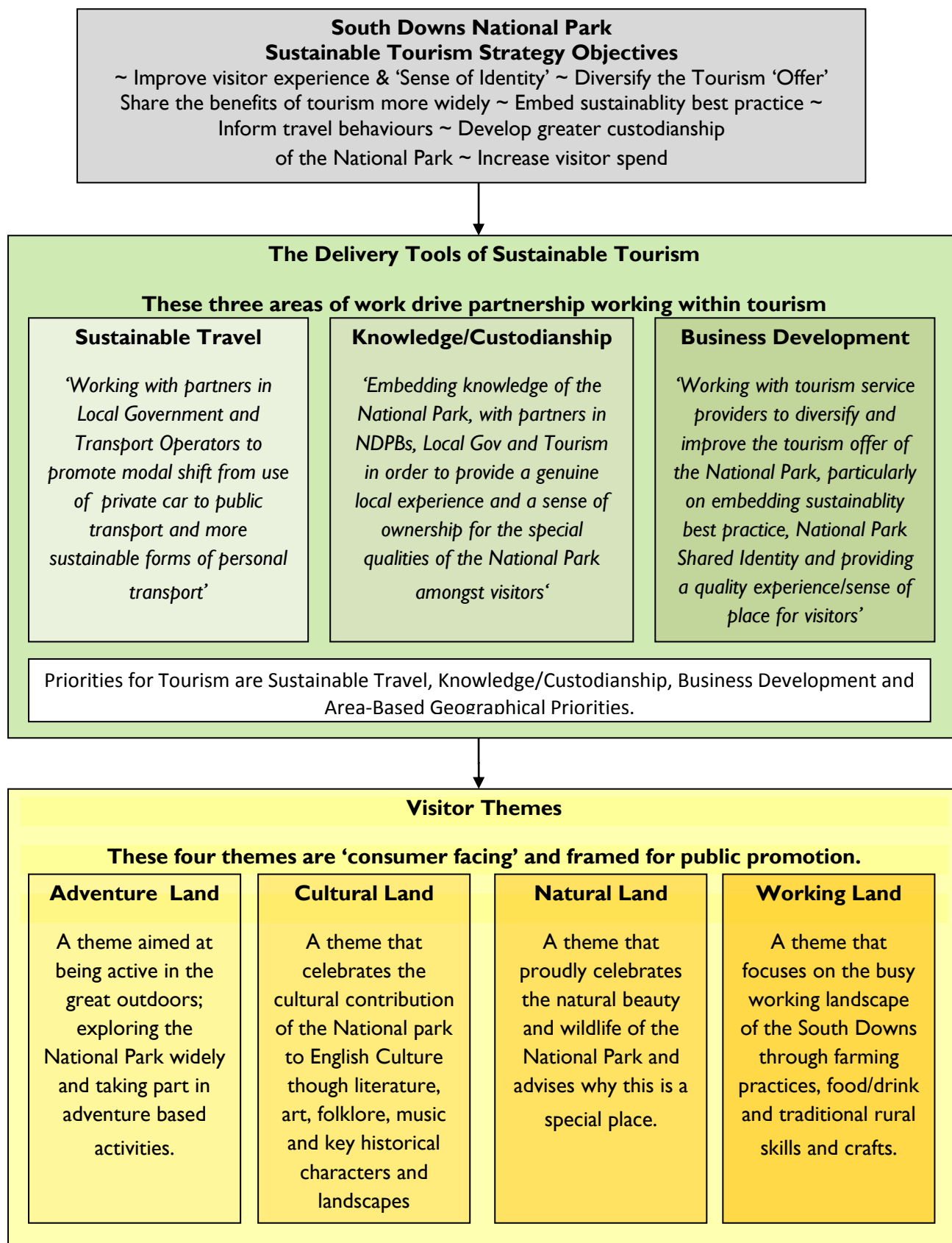
Visitor Access and Attractions in the South Downs National Park



Key	
 South Downs National Park	* Country Park
● Gateway Railway Station	▲ Attraction
● Other Railway Station	 Viewpoint
— South Downs Way	 Settlement

The Framework Model in Delivering a Sustainable Tourism Strategy

This is more fully detailed in Appendix 2 and then in Appendix 4 with projects.



The Sustainable Tourism Strategy Objectives



On the basis of the informing trends and context provided by the National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP), draft Local Plan and the previous listed studies, seven core objectives are identified in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy. The PMP includes a number of outcome 'indicators' such as visitors' satisfaction which will help measure the success of this strategy's objectives and ensure visitors enjoy the landscape.

Objective 1

To improve the visitor experience, develop a strong sense of local identity and ensure good quality design and sensitive development. .

Opportunities will be provided to make it easier for visitors to discover, enjoy and understand the National Park and value its special qualities so that they leave with a strong sense of place.

Local identity and character will be used to enrich the visitor experience offered by the National Park. The built environment of the National Park is crucial to local identity and therefore the SDNPA will ensure as the planning authority that design guidance will provide quality sensitive development appropriate to place.

Contributes to PMP Outcomes 5, 10 & 11

Accords with PMP Policies 31 and 42

Objective 2

To diversify the tourism offer of the National Park, providing sustainable income for tourism service providers (TSPs), diversifying services and extending the tourism season.

A wider range of activities and interests is sought to ensure the National Park appeals to a wider range of visitors and that there is 'something for everyone' to avoid reliance on a narrow demographic. Tourism service providers will be assisted and encouraged to extend their offer and reduce dependence on a single mode of income. The limited seasonality of tourism in the National Park will be extended more widely throughout the year with a focus on the quiet winter months for new events and programmes of activity.

Contributes to PMP Outcomes 9 & 10

Accords with PMP Policies 43, 47, 52, 53 & 55

Objective 3

To share the social and economic benefits of tourism across the entire National Park, ensuring that the scale of tourism to be serviced at sites reflects the sensitivities of the landscape.

Services for visitors should be developed and delivered at a scale appropriate to the local context and setting and where there is an identified need. Visitors will be enabled to explore the National Park more widely with new infrastructure such as trails and visitor experiences that tell the story of the various landscapes across the National Park. Visitor information and interpretation is an important element of this.

Contributes to PMP Outcome 1 & 2

Accords with PMP Policies 21, 35, 36, 37, 41 & 42

Objective 4

To encourage and support sustainability best practice in the tourism sector in working with delivery partners.

Tourism service providers will be enabled to deliver greater environmental sustainability. The SDNPA will work with partners to share knowledge and skills on sustainability best practice through a variety of networking and sharing approaches on areas such as local food, utilities/resource efficiency and waste minimisation, and in the encouragement of sustainable tourism behaviour. Visitors will benefit from improved environmental sustainability in the places they stay and visit.

Contributes to PMP Outcomes 1, 5 & 11

Accords with PMP Policies 18, 41, 45, 47 & 54

Objective 5

To encourage change in travel behaviour of visitors accessing the National Park.

Existing visitors will be incentivised to switch from use of private vehicles to public transport by means of linked travel and visitor attraction/experience tickets. This will be supported by better signposting and promoting the accessibility of key areas of the National Park by cycling, walking and using public transport from transport hubs and gateways. New visitors, including those without cars, will be encouraged to access the South Downs through sustainable transport options where reasonable. All SDNPA tourism information will include public transport and sustainable access information.

Contributes to PMP Outcomes 5 & 8

Accords with PMP Policies 35, 36, 37, 38 & 41

Objective 6

To encourage a greater sense of custodianship of the National Park by visitors and improve the experience of tourism for residents.

Generating opportunities and programmes that build a sense of 'custodianship and belonging' out of the primary objective of enjoying responsibly the landscape of the South Downs National Park will create loyalty and repeat visits in the long term. Involving visitors in initiatives such as 'Leave No Trace' and 'Share the Path', which encourage good relations among visitors, residents and farmers, will aid a sense of ownership of the Special Qualities. Shared Identity and Sense of Place are useful to this objective.

Contributes to PMP Outcomes 1, 2, 6, 5 & 8.

Accords with PMP Policies 15, 16, 29, 31, 33, 45 & 47

Objective 7

To raise visitor spend to levels that contribute more widely to the economy of the National Park.

The average daily spend of the visitor to the South Downs is amongst the lowest of all 15 UK National Parks. There is a clear need to raise average spend to secure long term viability of businesses and ensure vital services are maintained in our small rural communities. Visitor spend should be increased more widely throughout the entire National Park, helping to create jobs for rural communities and maintain investment in tourism infrastructure. Increasing average visitor spend will be focused on the diversification of existing tourism services, improving food and drink information, creating multi-site linked experiences, improving sustainable travel options and in the creation of appropriate events linked to local character. Both day excursion and short break visitors will be targeted in drawing up packages and itineraries with our local tourism partners. These visitors will include those from London, the South East, the rest of the UK and international visitors.

Contributes to PMP Outcome 10

Accords with PMP Policies 14 and 41

The Delivery Tools of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy

The Delivery Tools (or mechanisms) of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy are those programmes of work that require SDNPA to fully engage with partners to deliver a more enjoyable and responsible form of tourism that reduces visitor impact, encourages more sustainable behaviour, where appropriate, improves visitor experiences and ensures the National Park purposes are met. There are three broad areas of work that can be defined as delivery tools as below. The delivery priorities for these areas of work are in the 'priorities' section of this strategy ([ref. section / page no](#)).

Enabling Sustainable Travel

Working with partners in Local Government and Transport Operators to promote a modal shift from the use of the private car to public transport and more sustainable forms of personal transport.

This area of work means providing informed choices to visitors on accessing the National Park by trains and buses. To enable this, linked travel and activity incentives will need to be developed and provided. The quality of information on accessing the National Park by public transport will need to be more effectively communicated. Tourism businesses will require advisory support on how to promote accessibility by non-car use. Infrastructure to support walking and cycling at accommodation and visitor attractions will need improvement and clusters of businesses supporting cycling and walking will serve to make non-car access more attractive as an option for visiting the South Downs.

Encouraging Business Development

Working with tourism service providers to diversify and improve the tourism offer of the National Park, particularly on embedding sustainability best practice and providing a quality experience/sense of place for visitors.

This area of work means accessing what is now a vast range of resources provided by agencies with expertise on sustainability and customer service best practice. SDNPA can act as the facilitator by helping businesses to access programmes, projects and grants maintained or operated by organisations such as Energy Saving Trust for energy efficiency, water saving schemes by water companies and generally to reduce overheads costs whilst demonstrating a commitment to a cleaner environment. On customer service, the SDNPA can assist tourism businesses to become highly knowledgeable on the local offer and enable more training such as Landscape Ambassadors Training.

Knowledge/Custodianship

Embedding knowledge of the National Park, with partners including public agencies and tourism groups, in order to provide a more informed local experience and a sense of ownership for the Special Qualities of the National Park among visitors to the South Downs.

This concentrates on programmes that inform visitors on why this National Park is a special place and involves campaigns such as Leave No Trace which seek behaviour change. It also requires developing those experiences that are unique to the National Park and ensuring that tourism partners have clear consistent messages on the offer of the South Downs National Park.

Knowledge and custodianship will be improved with more projects using the recently developed Shared Identity (see appendix 2) and Sense of Place Toolkits. These tools are considered useful in furthering the special qualities of the National Park amongst all those who visit.

These Delivery Tools are further explained with priorities in the following section and with detailed projects in Appendix 3.

Priorities for Sustainable Tourism in the South Downs National Park

This strategy identifies four main delivery priorities for sustainable tourism: area-based; business development; sustainable travel; and knowledge and custodianship.

The South Downs National Park Authority will bring together a framework of existing projects and proposed new projects, in discussion with partners, based around these priorities. These projects will be produced as an Appendix 3 to the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Area-Based Priorities (listed from West to East)

1. Winchester: Although mainly outside the National Park boundary, Winchester is a key gateway to the South Downs from the west with Winchester City Mill as the main SDNP visitor focus. The City is a sustainable transport hub and there is a need to improve links and signage from stations to both the South Downs Way and the National Park generally. Winchester provides a significant offer on local food and drink experiences which should be further exploited.
Supports Objectives 1,3, 5 and 7.
2. Continued partnership in the 'Heart of Hampshire' Destination Management Partnership with East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) and Winchester City Council (WCC) to further the offer provided by the Hampshire part of the South Downs.
Supports Objectives 1, 3 & 7
3. Petersfield: A centre for cultural heritage, recreational activity, and a priority 'gateway and hub' for sustainable transport given long-distance rail links to London and the south coast. There is a need to explore opportunities for an expanded range of visitor accommodation including both budget and a boutique hotel development. There is a distinct need to improve signage between national routes/trails, stations and attractions, and to develop a key South Downs Welcome/Visitor Information Point within the town's existing tourism facilities.
Supports Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7
4. Chichester: The City is another important hub for tourism and a transport gateway to the National Park, though just outside the National Park. There is no SDNP presence at the railway station and neighbouring bus/coach station; a much higher profile is needed to welcome visitors into the South Downs.
Support Objectives 1 and 5
5. Midhurst: The Midhurst Tourism Partnership (MTP) identifies the town as the 'Heart of the South Downs' and an ideal base to explore a significant part of the South Downs. There is a need for interpretation and signage improvements that fit the character and offer of Midhurst as a small market town, and public transport is poor. To explore the development of events MTP considers that the town needs a new marketing identity and a refocus to deliver increased tourism. Midhurst provides an opportunity for a linked experience 'day tripper' package.
Supports Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 5
6. Petworth: Identifies closely with the National Trust and has a significant antiques market and a growing reputation as a place to find local food and drink. Petworth has a strong identity although it would benefit from a location specific opportunity for a linked experience 'day tripper' package to keep visitors in the town for longer. Public transport is limited.
Supports Objectives 2, 3 and 5

7. Haslemere and Pulborough, Alton and Hassocks: Identified as key gateways to the National Park through significant railway stations, with an identified need to improve SDNP profile in order to take advantage of the Greater London Market.
Supports Objectives 3 and 5
8. The large village settlements of Selborne, Chawton, Alfriston and Ditchling: Key heritage and culture centres because of the significant scale of literary and heritage events and attractions at these locations. Further development of projects is needed to raise the profile of all four historic communities.
Supports Objectives 3 & 7
9. Arundel: Located on the very edge of the National Park, it is also in the centre of an area with significant natural capital and numerous cultural heritage attractions. Arundel requires a SDNP 'gateway/hub' project and visitor information needs further development on the cultural and heritage attractions of the area.
Supports Objectives 3 & 5
10. Brighton: As the premier urban destination on the south coast cheek by jowl by the National Park – Brighton is a key tourism destination in its own right. It is also an important transport gateway with three railway lines, coach interchange and very good bus links the Downs. This provides opportunities to access the Downs by means other than car by exploit the interchange onto both bus and bicycles. Brighton Station requires some SDNP presence. Brighton also provides a key base to support food and drink related tourism and represents a significant area of growth in activity with wine bus tours and new vineyard walk tours to further exploit.
Supports Objectives 3, 5 & 7
11. Lewes: A key access gateway and hub serving the east of the National Park; warrants increased SDNP profile at the railway station, improved bus station, and improved links from public transport to bicycle/walking facilities and the local long distance paths. Lewes is also a key centre for food and drink experiences and need to be a focus of food experiences and programmes. Lewes is lacking in a broad range of accommodation.
Supports Objectives 3, 5 & 7
12. Eastbourne: The gateway town of the eastern edge of the National Park, it lacks any signature project that connects it to the South Downs. Eastbourne has a sizeable accommodation stock that is readily accessible to the iconic and popular Sussex Heritage Coast. A clear link through enhanced signage and interpretation is required in Eastbourne combined with a 'gateway' project and improved / promoted sustainable transport.
Supports Objectives 1, 3, 5 & 7

Business Development Delivery Priorities

1. Development of an online sustainable business resource guide compiling current grants, free advice and resources to be found, which would help tourism businesses reduce their overheads costs.
Supports Objective 2
2. Deliver further growth and product development of South Downs Food (online portal) as the National Park's local food network, to create a valuable entity that is both financially self-sustaining and adds value to the local food and drink supply chain.
Support Objective 2, 4 and 7

3. Development of bids for EU Protected Geographical Indicator (PGI) Status for South Downs Lamb and other notable produce.
Supports Objectives 1, 2, 4 & 7
4. Tourism South East (TSE) is the lead partner in a campaign that is designed to help traditional country pubs become sustainable financial businesses and avoid further loss of rural hostelrys to other development. The 'Great Country Pubs' programme by TSE and the CIC 'Pub is the Hub' Campaign are key routes to protecting these rural establishments from development. SDNPA to support the initiatives and become a 'supporter' partner in both.
Supports Objectives 1, 2 & 7
5. Creation of a *Sustainable Tourism Partnership* that would include local authority partners, transport operators and incorporate all Our Land and the South Downs Food businesses, with potential to develop a business association in the long term.
Supports Objectives 1, 2, 4 & 7
6. Linked to no. 5 above, development of a sustainable business learning package, offering workshops and online training tools such as the Landscape Awareness Training, and using the best practice and skills provided by organisations such as the Carbon Trust.
Supports Objectives 4 & 6
7. Investigate the potential of a quality mark scheme (QMS) for tourism businesses/workers across the National Park involving four key areas: customer service (for example the Welcome Host and TSE Exceeding Visitor Expectations training qualifications); landscape and National Park awareness; sustainable travel knowledge; and culture and heritage of the South Downs.
Supports Objectives 4 & 6
8. Support the development of the camping and glamping sector in the South Downs through a formal camping and glamping accommodation development programme for key routes such as the South Downs Way and Shipwrights Way.
Supports Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5

Sustainable Travel Delivery Priorities

1. A 'Gateways and Hubs Development Programme' at key identified locations both inside and outside the National Park with reference to the area-based priorities. These gateways and hubs will include South Downs Visitor Information Points at 'edge of National Park' attractions such as the Winchester City Mill project and sustainable transport points/interchanges. There may be potential for seasonal 'travel ambassadors' promoting sustainable travel to be part of the gateways and hubs programme.
Supports Objectives 1, 4 & 5
2. Research and development for a 'one stop shop' South Downs Cycle and Walk Portal, providing a resource for all cycle hire, repair shops, cycle friendly accommodation, routes, and any other provision suitable for biking and walking. Consider sponsorship opportunity.
Supports Objectives 1 & 5
3. Development of park-wide 'cyclists and walkers welcome' and an enhanced 'cycling standard' facilities scheme across the National Park following a pilot project.
Supports Objectives 1, 2 & 5

4. To attract the 'extended' day tripper, development of a 'South Downs Day Tripper' package linking integrated travel tickets (e.g. resurrecting the bus and train Downlader ticket) to places to eat local food promoted by 'South Downs Food' with discounts at attractions in clusters around accessible villages and towns like Midhurst, Alfriston, Selborne, Petworth, Chawton.
Supports Objectives 1, 2, 5 & 7
5. Improve cycling facilities on key trails with priority given to the development of services for recreational cyclists on route such as cycle repair, water points and appropriate signage.
Supports Objectives 1 & 5
6. Development of cycle hire pick up/set down network across the National Park.
Supports Objectives 2 & 5
7. Development of 'car-free holidays' packages around transport hubs in clusters; incorporating formation of joint marketing and promotion groups similar to the East Hampshire Heritage Group.
Supports Objectives 1 & 5

Knowledge and Custodianship Delivery Priorities

1. Continue to roll-out the *National Park Shared Identity* on destination and partner websites, Visitor Information Points, leaflets, signage and other tourism projects. Shared Identity should be a condition of tourism projects receiving funding from SDNPA.
Supports Objectives 1 & 6
2. Investigation into the development of a 'Visitor Giving' scheme at tourism destinations and services to help contribute to SDNPA and LHAs' paths maintenance programmes.
Supports Objectives 1 & 6
3. Promotion of sustainable visitor behaviour e.g. '*Share The Path*' to encourage people who cycle on National Park trails and paths to consider other users and '*Take the Lead*' for responsible dog walking.
Supports Objectives 1 & 6
4. Promote the '*Sense of Place*' Toolkit, when finalised, as the National Park's main online learning process to build knowledge of the National Park.
Supports Objectives 1 & 6
5. Promote and support the John Muir Award with educational officers organising and providing programmes of learning in the various landscapes of the South Downs with schools, colleges and adult education courses.
Supports Objectives 1, 4 & 6
6. The dramatic white cliffs coast is by far the most popular part of the National Park, with over a million visitors to Beachy Head each year and hundreds of thousands to other attractions, such as Birling Gap, Seven Sisters Country Park and Friston Forest. There is an active Heritage Coast partnership, with an emerging strategy and action plan, including a key section on Sustainable Tourism. The area needs co-ordinated marketing, engaging tourism and related businesses to help provide a quality "offer", utilising the public transport links in the area and promoting the cultural, landscape and other special qualities of this iconic place.
7. The Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere region was confirmed in September 2014. Support the '*Best of our Biosphere*' tourism promotion and the '*Green Infrastructure – enhanced*

networks of green space from town to Downs' element of the programme. SDNPA will provide ongoing support for specific projects within the Biosphere that serve to inform and educate on sensitivities of the rural landscape all around the reserve.

Supports Objectives 4, 5 & 6

8. Participate in the the *Leave No Trace* Campaign and support the countryside-based behavioural change campaigns of Keep Britain Beautiful.

Supports Objectives 1 & 6

9. Promote online tourism information and itineraries through the development of the South Downs Discovery Map and use existing digital platforms to promote walks, cycle routes and other experiences.

Supports Objectives 1, 5 & 6

10. Support of National Parks Week run by National Parks England and the major promotion project '*Countryside is Great*' Campaign by Visit Britain with SDNP themed itineraries and visitor promotions.

Supports Objectives 1 & 6

Adventure Land Theme

A theme aimed at exploring and being active in the great outdoors, discovering the wider National Park and taking part in new activities.



Tag line: 'This is a landscape for adventures; a landscape that is shaped for the curious to roam, for the thrill seeker to test themselves and for everyone to explore and discover'

Theme Context

The adventure land theme is supported by one of the Special Qualities listed in the National Park Management Plan:

'Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences'

This theme helps to shape a programme within the sustainable tourism strategy that will contribute to two of the PMP policies:

Policy 43: Support the development and maintenance of appropriate recreation and tourism facilities and visitor hubs, in and around the National Park, including a mix of quality accommodation, which responds to market demands and supports a sustainable visitor economy.

Policy 21: Support woodland owners to provide a range of appropriate recreational, sporting and other diverse activities within woodlands, recognising the potential commercial value of these uses.

Theme Subjects

Cycling Off-Road
Watersports
Geocaching

Walking & Rambling
Air Sports e.g. ballooning
Camping & Glamping

Orienteering
Equestrian Activities
Outdoor Learning

Theme Tools

Cycle Hire Connectivity
Big Adventure Theme Weekend
Activity Park Online Guide

Walk/Cycle Welcome Host
Walking Festivals
Sense of Place Toolkit

Geocache Trail
Adventurous Trails
Shared Identity

Theme Potential Partners

British School of Ballooning
Local Authorities
Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere
Sustrans and Cycling Groups
Forestry Commission

Cycle Hire Companies
Sport England
Camping/Glamping Sites
British Orienteering
National Trust

Geocache.com
British Canoe Union
Country Estates
Walk England
Visit England

Cultural Land Theme

A theme that celebrates the vast contribution of the National Park to English Culture through literature, art, folklore, music and key historical characters.



Tag Line: 'This is a cultural land, a landscape celebrated in poetry, in song, in breathtaking art and in classic works of the finest English Literature; a landscape that inspired and continues to inspire.'

Theme Context

The cultural land theme is rooted firmly in two of the Special Qualities listed in the National Park Management Plan:

*'Well conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage'
and 'Distinctive towns and villages, and communities with pride in their area.'*

The cultural heritage of the South Downs is vast when considering literature, art, and the cultural land theme helps to contribute to two of the PMP policies:

Policy 31: Raise awareness and understanding about the National Park with consistent messages that inspire and celebrate a strong sense of place.

Policy 32: Encourage and support creative and cultural activities which connect with and increase appreciation of the National Park's special qualities.

Theme Subjects

Market Towns of the Downs
Village Traditions
The Landscape Designer
Quirks & Eccentricities

Literary Legacy
Defence of the Downs
Country Houses & Estates
Music and Film

Folklore & Storytelling
Key Historical Characters
Art & Sculpture

Theme Tools

Literary Trails
Cultural A-Z Guide
Open Garden Weekends
Sense of Place Toolkit

Celebratory Theme Years
South Downs Autumn Festival
SDNP Shared Identity
South Downs Cultural Society

Transient Exhibitions
Residents Stories
Artisans Showcase

Theme Potential Partners

Arts Council England
National Trust
English Heritage
Sussex Fine Arts
Local Authorities

Local Historical Trusts/Societies
Local Schools & Colleges
The West Sussex Arts Society
Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere
Hampshire Cultural Trust

Culture Arundel
Visit Brighton
Village Partnerships
The Downland Arts Society
RSA South Coast

Natural Land Theme

A theme that proudly celebrates the natural beauty and wildlife of the National Park and educates visitors on why this landscape is a special place.



Tag Line: 'This is a natural landscape; a tapestry of ancient woodland, open rolling downland, colourful heath lands, magnificent cliffs, crystal clear chalk rivers and abundant wildlife'

Theme Context

The natural land theme supports several of the Special Qualities listed in the Park Management Plan:

'A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species', 'Tranquil unspoilt spaces' and 'Diverse inspirational landscapes and breath-taking views'.

This theme helps to shape a programme within the sustainable tourism strategy that will contribute to one of the PMP policies:

Policy 31: Raise awareness and understanding about the National Park with consistent messages that inspire and celebrate a strong sense of place.

Theme Subjects

Dark Night Skies
Ancient Woodland
Heaths & Moors
SDNPA Landscape Diversity

Wildflowers & Spring
Rivers & Waterways
Birds & Insects
Celebrating Seasons

Protected/rare species
Chalk Grasslands
Strategic Landscape Views

Theme Tools

Nature-based Trails
Monthly Newsletter
Leave No Trace Campaign
Shared Identity

Seasonal Celebration Events
Annual Bird Census
Responsible Dog Walking
Sense of Place Toolkit

NatureBlog/My South Downs Story
Geo-tours
Guide to our Landscapes
Springwatch

Theme Potential Partners

Local Authorities
Keep England Beautiful
Sussex Wildlife Trust
Royal Geological Society
Hampshire Wildlife Trust
Environment Agency

Natural England
Royal Soc. Geography
Wildfowl & Wetland Trust
British Trust for Ornithology
Woodland Trust
B & L Downs Biosphere

National Trust
RSPB
Visit England
Schools & Colleges
Forestry Commission
UK Dark Sky Partnership

Working Land Theme

A theme that focuses on the busy working landscape of the South Downs through farming practices, local food & drink experiences and the sharing of traditional rural skills and crafts.



Tag Line: 'This is a working landscape shaped by centuries of farming practice, enterprise, traditional skills and trade.'

Theme Context

The working land theme is rooted firmly in two of the special qualities listed in the National Park Management Plan:

*'A landscape shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise'
and 'Distinctive towns and villages, and communities with pride in their area.'*

This theme helps to shape a programme within the sustainable tourism strategy that will contribute to two of the PMP policies:

Policy 14: Develop the market for and production of sustainable food, drink and other products with a South Downs National Park provenance.

Policy 15: Increase understanding of farming and of farmers as the custodians of many of the special qualities of the National Park.

Theme Subjects

Market Towns of the Downs
Traditional Farming Skills
Homeware Production

Local Food Provenance
Furniture Making
Artisanal Produce/Skills

Wine & Beer Production
Contemporary Craft
Animal Husbandry

Theme Tools

Open Farm Weekends
Artisanal 'Open Houses'
Cooking & Foraging Classes
Great County Pubs Project

Wine & Beer Production Tours
Themed Weeks
Food & Drink Experience Trails
Shared Identity

South Downs Food Portal
Farm Experience Courses
Craft & Skills Fairs
Sense of Place toolkit

Theme Potential Partners

Arts Council England
National Trust
National Farmers Union
Southern Cooperative
Local Authorities

SD Land Managers Group
SD Farmers Markets Group
South East Vineyards Association
LEADER Groups

Responsible Travel
CAMRA
Tourism SE
LEPs

Appendix I

Policy and Local Studies Context of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Background and Context to the Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Several evidence documents inform the development of the sustainable tourism strategy for the South Downs National Park, these are:

- The State of the South Downs National Park 2012;
- The South Downs Park Management Plan 2012;
- The South Downs National - Local Plan
- The South Downs National Park Visitor Survey 2012;
- The Visitor Travel Survey 2014; and
- The Visitor Accommodation Review 2015.

The State of the Park Report 2012

This document describes, in some detail, the landscape and attributes of the National Park that shape its special qualities. It provides the baseline from which future action and change, as outlined in the Management Plan, can be judged. Crucially, it provides a snapshot of the National Park shortly after official operational activity began referencing a wide range of data sources to indicate how the landscape is faring. The document makes clear where there are gaps in evidence and how these might be plugged in future so that policy and strategic objectives are more readily defined.

Natural Capital

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the report consider the unspoilt spaces, habitats, tranquillity and landscape value of the National Park. The data included within these chapters points to a landscape with significant sensitivities, rare habitats and features that are uncommon if not unique to the British Isles. The underlying geology of the South Downs of chalk, upper greensand, lower greensand, and Wealden clays has created 1,653 square kilometres covering 18 recognised landscape types which support an immense diversity of habitats. Many of these landscape types, and the habitats they support, are at significant risk from a variety of sources including climate change, transport corridor developments, and visitor pressure. In order to minimise such threats, significant knowledge, custodianship and learning is needed in order to maintain and protect them from these considerable human pressures. A sustainable tourism strategy needs to reflect this natural capital and value the resource.

Farming and rural economy

Chapter five of the report finds that the rural economy has strongly influenced the landscape of the South Downs and that it is primarily a working landscape with over 80 per cent of the South Downs farmed. Past agricultural practices have produced some nationally valuable habitats including chalk downland and lowland heath, with traditional breeds specific to the area such as Southdown and Hampshire Down sheep significant in the past and still bred today. Many farmers and landowners are helping to conserve and enhance important habitats through environmental stewardship schemes. The report finds that farmers in the South Downs are resourceful and have always responded quickly to the economic winds of change. Some farmers are diversifying their businesses; providing tourist accommodation and meeting the growing market for locally produced food and drink thus becoming skilled at promoting the landscape and its produce. This provides a strong basis to build a tourism theme based on the working landscape of the South Downs.

Recreation and Activity

Chapter six of the report states that there is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates how access to nature and opportunities for outdoor activity can have an important impact on physical and mental health and well-being. The evidence in the report is built around existing access to land, the state of rights of way, access to waterways and lakes, access to the air, and those businesses that provide activity and recreational opportunities across the National Park.

This chapter looks at opportunities for access, recreation and learning experiences, focusing on users and participation, and considering any barriers that prevent some people from experiencing and enjoying the National Park. It points to the need for a tourism theme built around 'adventure and learning' experiences that visitors can enjoy and build a relationship with the National Park.

Cultural Heritage

Chapter seven of the report addresses the rich cultural tapestry of the South Downs; art, music and rural traditions have been layered deeply within the landscape over centuries. There is a strong association with well-known writers, poets, musicians and artists who have captured the essence of this most English of landscapes and drawn inspiration from the sense of place: Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen, Hilaire Belloc, Edward Thomas, Gilbert White, Edward Elgar, Joseph Turner, Eric Gill and Eric Ravilious, among many others. Today traditions continue through activities such as folk singing and events like Findon sheep fair. Culture lives on with new art and expression, celebrating the strong traditions of the past.

South Downs Park Management Plan (PMP) 2012

The South Downs Partnership Management Plan 2014 – 2019 (PMP) was adopted in December 2012.

The PMP Vision to 2050 is set out below.

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.

Visitors and tourism are one of six important sectors that have been prioritised in the PMP to strengthen partnership working, improve sustainability and expand delivery that enhances the National Park's special qualities. The Plan contains four specific sustainable visitor and tourism policies:

Policy 41: Maintain visitor enjoyment and influence visitor behaviour in order to reduce impacts on the special qualities and increase visitor spend in and around the National Park.

Policy 42: Develop a consistent and co-ordinated approach to the promotion and marketing of the South Downs National Park as a sustainable visitor destination.

Policy 43: Support the development and maintenance of appropriate recreation and tourism facilities and visitor hubs, in and around the National Park, including a mix of quality accommodation, which responds to market demands and supports a sustainable visitor economy.

Policy 44: Encourage and support tourism providers to develop sustainable business practices and increase knowledge about the National Park's special qualities to provide a distinctive and high-quality visitor experience.

The text supporting the sustainable visitor and tourism policies also refers to:

- The importance to the economy of encouraging more staying visitors, who spend six times more than residents making a day visit from home, and the need to add to the depth and variety of the visitor accommodation product on offer, particularly of high quality, to do this.
- Gaps in visitor accommodation provision along the South Downs Way.
- The need for a greater variety of accommodation types in and around the National Park to cater for all incomes.
- Future development of tourism facilities to drive the economy should build on existing gateways, visitor hubs and sustainable transport.

A number of other PMP policies where a sustainable tourism strategy has a role to play are:

Developing a sense of adventure through the many outdoor activities in the National Park:

- Policy 21 - Support woodland owners to provide a range of appropriate recreational, sporting and other diverse activities within woodlands, recognising the potential commercial value of these uses.

Creating travel behaviour change:

- Policy 35 - Promote and enhance integrated travel provision from rail stations located at gateways and within the National Park for pedestrians, cyclists and bus travel.
- Policy 36 - Improve existing public transport provision for visitors and local communities, especially by increasing the availability of Sunday and evening bus and train services.

Educating the visitors on the special qualities of the National Park with its rich natural environment, a place to be outdoors and the story of the National Park:

- Policy 31 - Raise awareness and understanding about the National Park with consistent messages that inspire and celebrate a strong sense of place.
- Policy 45 - Develop high-quality learning experiences, particularly in the outdoors, and resource materials that link to the special qualities of the National Park.

- Policy 47 - Support and encourage traditional rural skills by providing training and skills development which relate to the historic and natural environment necessary to conserve, enhance and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park.

Contributing to a successful rural economy, local supply chains and supporting business development:

Policy 54 - Support training schemes and employment opportunities to ensure balanced communities in the National Park.

- Policy 52 - Enhance local production by developing local economic supply chains and enabling businesses in the National Park to gain added value by inking their marketing activities to the special qualities of the area.
- Policy 53 - Improve access to business advice and funding that supports the creation and expansion of small and medium sized enterprises, in particular, those that help sustain communities and enhance the special qualities.
- Policy 55 - Promote opportunities for diversified economic activity in the National Park, in particular, where it enhances the special qualities.

Emphasising that the National Park is shaped by centuries as a rural working land and giving visitors an opportunity to reconnect with food and farming:

- Policy 14 - Develop the market for and production of sustainable food, drink and other products with a South Downs National Park provenance.
- Policy 15 - Increase understanding of farming and of farmers as the custodians of many of the special qualities of the National Park.
- Policy 16 - Engage with dog walkers to encourage responsible behaviour, especially around livestock and ground nesting birds.

The PMP provides a framework for the emerging National Park Local Plan, and once in place, the new Local Plan and subsequent development management decisions will play a key role in the delivery of the PMP's policies and 2050 vision.

Visitor Pressure

The PMP notes that there is a balance to achieve with managing tourism development and promotion in the context of a highly sensitive protected landscape. Visitor pressure presents a risk to the special qualities of the National Park.

“Each year there are over 46 million visitor days to the area, although the average level of spend by visitors is low. There is great potential to encourage people to stay longer and contribute more to the local economy. The tourism sector is fragmented and transport options for those who want to leave their cars at home are often limited. A great deal is now being done to utilise the designation of the National Park by starting to improve visitor information and to encourage a greater variety of appropriate activities.

Opportunities for public access are plentiful and widespread. Despite this, the impact of very high numbers of people focused on some areas of the National Park has led to recurring problems for some landowners and communities. These include injuries to sheep and disturbance to ground

nesting birds by uncontrolled dogs, inconsiderate car parking, fly tipping and gates being left open. Targeted measures are needed to tackle these problems.”

The need to minimise the impact of visitor pressure generally, and on specific ‘honey-pot sites’, whilst spreading the benefits of tourism more widely must be reflected in the objectives of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

The South Downs Local Plan

The spatial context for this Sustainable Tourism Strategy is the emerging Local Plan for the National Park. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy is being framed to accord with and support the tourism policies of the Local Plan.

Local Plan Options Consultation (February 2014)

The *Local Plan Options Consultation Document* (February 2014) raised three issues in regard to tourism. Firstly, how should the Local Plan consider visitor accommodation? The preferred approach in this Local Plan is for a strategic policy which takes a positive, flexible and enabling approach to tourism related development which applies to the whole National Park, provided that development is in accordance with national park purposes and other relevant policies in the Local Plan, and does not harm the special qualities.

The second issue raised was how should the Local Plan consider types of tourism developments and recreational activities? The preferred approach is again for a strategic policy which takes a positive, flexible and enabling approach to tourism-related development which applies to the whole National Park, provided that development is in accordance with national park purposes and other relevant policies in the Local Plan, and does not harm the special qualities. The policy acknowledges that some recreational activities in some locations may be inappropriate in the National Park. Therefore, development must not, on its own or cumulatively with other development and uses, prejudice or disadvantage peoples' enjoyment of other existing and appropriate recreation, environmental education or interpretation activities, including the informal quiet enjoyment of the National Park.

The final question raised was what approach should the Local Plan take to static holiday caravan sites? The preferred approach in this Local Plan is to have a general policy by which proposals for any type of visitor accommodation be judged subject to the context of that site and other relevant policies.

Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation (September 2015)

The draft Local Plan, known as the South Downs Local Plan: Preferred Options, was published for consultation in September 2015. This contains a draft policy on tourism and a draft policy on recreation. The draft policies and supporting text is set out below.

The comments received during the consultation on these policies will be collected and analysed by the SDNPA. The responses will be taken into account alongside the evidence base to help formulate the next version of the Local Plan. This will be the Publication version, which will be subject to another round of public consultation prior to being submitted to the government for independent examination. The SDNPA aims to adopt the Local Plan in 2017.

Sustainable Tourism and the Visitor Economy

Supporting Text

6.44 In order to promote sustainable development and in accordance with the Development Strategy (Policy SD22), proposals for visitor accommodation, visitor attractions, recreational activities, environmental education and interpretation should, where appropriate, be located in sustainable or gateway locations. Train stations both within and on the edge of the National Park act as visitor gateways and points of access to other modes of sustainable transport. However, given the nature of some tourism-related and recreational activities, a more rural location or proximity to geographically specific feature, such as the coast or a river, may be required. Where development is

proposed outside settlement policy boundaries, it will need to be demonstrated that there are exceptional circumstances, in accordance with Policy SD22 and that proposals will meet the requirements set in Policy SD20 (Sustainable Tourism and the Visitor Economy). This is to ensure that the proposals are in accordance with National Park purposes and do not harm the special qualities.

6.45 While the SDNPA will support growth in sustainable tourism, there are associated challenges for the environment and local communities. High numbers of visitors can put pressure on some locations or 'hot-spots', for example, by impacting on tranquillity and causing physical erosion. Visitors travelling throughout the National Park can increase congestion on certain routes and car parking can impact on the environment, residents and the experiences of visitors. The Authority will support proposals for sustainable visitor attractions and recreational activities, which, by reducing or mitigating against any undesirable impacts, will appropriately balance the needs of visitors, provide benefits to the economy and will not adversely impact the environment.

6.46 The Authority will support proposals which are consistent with the second purpose. However, where proposals appear to conflict with the first purpose, then the Sandford Principle will be applied and greater weight will be given to the first purpose.

6.47 The Authority will seek to retain visitor accommodation. This is supported by existing evidence in the Visitor Accommodation Review (2014), which indicates a need to increase capacity and potential for growth in demand for visitor accommodation. This study also identifies that due to the availability of sites for new development, any loss of visitor accommodation can be difficult to replace. Proposals that would result in the loss of visitor accommodation will be required to demonstrate that it is financially unviable, by providing the following:

- Evidence of adequate marketing for sale for the existing use, with a reputable speciality agent, at a realistic price that reflects the value of the business either as a whole or in parts and for a period of at least 12 months. Where the accommodation is located close to a geographically specific feature such as a river or a long distance footpath such as the South Downs Way and outside of settlement policy boundaries, as defined on the Policies Map, the marketing period should be for a period of at least 24 months.
- Evidence of non-viability, including poor performance, lack of market demand and that the business has been well-managed and marketed and all reasonable efforts have been made to find a viable future for the business.

6.48 In order to support a year-round visitor economy, the Authority will seek the relaxation or removal of seasonal planning restrictions, where appropriate. Instead, conditions will be used to prevent the occupation of accommodation as a permanent dwelling and restrict continuous periods of stays by occupiers (for example, for a maximum of 28 days), ensuring the facility remains for visitor use.

Strategic Policy SD20: Sustainable Tourism and the Visitor Economy

I. Development proposals for visitor accommodation and visitor attractions will be permitted provided that they comply with other relevant policies and they are in accordance with the following requirements:

a) It should be clearly demonstrated and evidenced that:

- i) the facilities proposed will provide opportunities for visitors to increase their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities;**
 - ii) the design and location of the development reduces the need for travel by private car and encourages access by sustainable means;**
 - iii) development proposals will not generate an increased level of activity which would detract from the experience of visitors or adversely affect the character, appearance and amenity of the area;**
 - iv) development proposals make use of existing buildings, where appropriate; and**
 - v) it is demonstrated that any proposed on-site facilities or ancillary buildings are necessary and that on-site facilities will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the vitality and viability of town or village centres or assets of community value.**
- b) In addition, where proposals are located in the countryside as defined on the Policies Map, it should be clearly demonstrated and evidenced that it is in accordance with Policy SD22 (Development Strategy) and:**
- i) there is a need for development in that location;**
 - ii) the scale, intensity of use or activity is appropriate in that location;**
 - iii) it can be satisfactorily accessed by sustainable means, including public transport, walking, cycling or horse riding; and**
 - iv) it is closely associated with other attractions/established tourism uses, including the public rights of way network.**
- 2. Visitor accommodation will be controlled and retained as such, unless it can be demonstrated that it is financially unviable or that any net loss of accommodation is necessary to allow appropriate relocation or redevelopment. Evidence of a robust marketing campaign of at least 12 months, for accommodation located within settlement boundaries, or of at least 24 months for accommodation located close to a geographically specific feature or a long distance footpath or outside of settlement boundaries, will be required that clearly demonstrates that there is no market demand for the premises.**
- 3. Opportunities for appropriate relocation or redevelopment of existing visitor accommodation or related development which is currently resulting in harm to the special qualities will be encouraged.**
- 4. The Authority will support a year-round visitor economy, through the relaxation or removal of seasonal planning restrictions, where appropriate, while ensuring the facility remains for visitor use.**
- 5. Development proposals for visitor accommodation and visitor attractions that would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the National Park's special qualities or that do not provide adequate opportunities for visitors to increase their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities will be refused.**

Recreation

Supporting Text

6.50 The Authority will normally support proposals which are consistent with the second purpose. Developments should provide opportunities for visitors to increase their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities, for example, by reflecting the valued characteristics of the National Park's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.

6.51 'Tranquil and unspoilt places' is one of the special qualities. The National Park provides a valuable sense of tranquillity within a heavily populated part of the United Kingdom and it is something that visitors and residents greatly value. The quiet enjoyment of the countryside can be vulnerable to disturbance from other recreational activities. It will need to be demonstrated, in accordance with Policy SD8 (Relative Tranquillity), that proposals will not generate an increased level of activity by creating or exacerbating a 'tourist hotspot' which would detract from the experience of other visitors or affect the character, appearance and amenity of the area.

Strategic Policy SD21: Recreation

1. Development proposals for recreational activities, environmental education and interpretation will be permitted provided that they comply with other relevant policies and they are in compliance with the Development Strategy (SD22) and located in sustainable or gateway locations.

2. It should be clearly demonstrated and evidenced that:

a) the facilities proposed will provide opportunities for visitors to increase their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities;

b) the design and location of the development reduces the need for travel by private car and encourages access by sustainable means;

c) development proposals make use of existing buildings, where possible; and

d) it is demonstrated that any proposed on-site facilities or ancillary buildings are necessary and that on-site facilities will not undermine the vitality and viability of town or village centres or assets of community value.

3. In addition, where proposals are located in the countryside as defined on the Policies Map, it should be clearly demonstrated and evidenced that it is in accordance with Policy SD22 (Development Strategy) and:

a) there is a need for development in that location;

b) the scale, intensity of use or activity is appropriate in that location;

c) it can be satisfactorily accessed by sustainable means, including public transport, walking, cycling or horse riding; and

d) it is closely associated with other attractions/established tourism uses, including the public rights of way network.

4. Development proposals must not, on their own or cumulatively with other development and uses, prejudice or disadvantage people's enjoyment of other existing and appropriate recreation, environmental education or interpretation activities, including the informal quiet enjoyment of the National Park.

5. Development proposals for recreational activities, environmental education and interpretation that would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the National Park's special qualities or that do not provide adequate opportunities for visitors to increase their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities will be refused.

6. Development proposals that involves the loss of existing recreational facilities which serve the Purposes of the National Park, will be refused except where provision is made for an equivalent or improved replacement of the existing facilities on site or in another equally accessible and suitable location.

The South Downs Visitor and Tourism Economic Survey 2012/13

The South Downs Visitor and Tourism Economic Impact Study (2013) summarises a series of research studies commissioned by the SDNPA that included a study of visitor-related businesses in the South Downs, visitor and resident surveys and a value and volume modelling exercise to calculate the economic impact of tourism on the South Downs. Some of the key findings of this study include:

- The audit identified 386 accommodation businesses in the South Downs with 8,888 bedspaces. Two-thirds of businesses were in guest accommodation, but caravan and camping sites dominated bedspace capacity with 55% of bedspaces.
- 40% of tourism businesses indicated they had plans for growth, often because they were operating at full capacity.
- Just over three quarters of visitors to the National Park were day visitors from home and 17% were people visiting for the day while staying on holiday in another location. Only 5% of visitors were staying overnight in the South Downs National Park. However staying visitors spent 4 times as much per day as day visitors.
- 46 million visitor days were spent in the South Downs National Park in 2011/12, generating over £464m of expenditure and supporting 8,194 jobs.

This survey indicated that whilst there is a healthy tourism economy within the South Downs there are a several key characteristics of tourism in the National Park that may be considered strategic 'weaknesses', for example:

- An overall reliance on day visitors who spend much less than overnight stayers, and this then creates substantial seasonality for tourism in the South Downs
- An almost complete dependence on use of private car
- An overall reliance on a number of key sites
- Visitors are not sufficiently aware that they are experiencing a National Park or that they are in a special place.

A way of counteracting these issues is to create legible distinct themes that visitors can easily recognise in order to build their knowledge and patronage of the National Park.

The Visitor Travel Survey 2014

The visitor travel survey was commissioned as part of a DfT funded case study looking at the impact of the government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund programme on visitor travel behaviour in the Lake District, New Forest and South Downs National Parks. The LSTF programme of works included a range of infrastructure improvements and travel awareness campaign activity to encourage greener travel by visitors. The programme began in 2012 and continues until March 2016.

The visitor survey commissioned involved face-to-face interviews with a random sample of just over 1000 visitors across key sites within the National Park between the 4th July and 26th September 2014 using a standard questionnaire developed by Cumbria Tourism.

- Over half of all visitors (58%) were travelling from homes and returning to homes outside the South Downs on the same day. Two in 10 visitors (20%) were local day visitors travelling from homes located within the South Downs.
- Overnight visitors staying in accommodation within the South Downs accounted for 8% of all visitors and a further 15% were also visitors on an overnight trip of one or more nights but these visitors were staying in accommodation outside the South Downs and visiting as part of a day excursion.
- The average trip expenditure per person among non-local day visitors was £9.01. This average includes day visitors travelling to the South Downs from their home and returning to their home on the same day as well as those visitors staying overnight outside the South Downs but visiting it as part of a day excursion. Local resident expenditure was very similar at an average of £9.37 per person per day.
- Visitors staying overnight in the South Downs spent on average £29.51 per night on accommodation (this average includes those who incurred no expenditure by staying in the home of a friend/relative or a second home). With this additional expenditure on accommodation, the average spend per person per night among staying visitors was £51.12. With an average trip length of 5.2 nights, total trip expenditure for staying visitors came to an average of £265.82 per person.
- Overall enjoyment of the visit to the South Downs was found to be exceptionally high. Almost all visitors rated the overall enjoyment of their visit as either 'high' or 'very high' (97% in total).
- The factors contributing most to the overall enjoyment with the visit was the tranquil scenic environment of the South Downs (mentioned by 86% of visitors) in terms of the sense of peace and quietness they found there and the beauty of the natural landscape.
- Visitors were asked about modes of transport used to travel to the South Downs and of all the modes used, the one which was their main mode of transport. The car dominates access by a substantial margin (the results also include vans, campervans and motorcycles) with 81% of visitors mentioning this among all the modes of transport used and with 82% of visitors using it as their main mode of transport.
- Those travelling to and around the South Downs by car were asked whether there was one thing which would make them consider forms of transport other than the car. Nearly half of all car users (48%) felt they had no real choice but to travel with their car for a number of practical reasons such as carrying heavy outdoor equipment, travelling with several small children or with several dogs, and therefore did not foresee that it would be possible to change.

The Visitor Accommodation Review (VAR) 2015

This study was commissioned in early 2014 by the South Downs National Park Authority to inform the development of the emerging South Downs National Park Local Plan and the delivery of the Partnership Management Plan. It was finalised in February 2015 and the study indicated a number of key features to visitor accommodation in the in the National Park, including:

- A visitor accommodation sector that is performing very strongly at weekends and during the week in the peak summer months, with frequent shortages of all types of accommodation at these times.
- Strong demand for high quality accommodation, which generally trades at the highest levels of occupancy and price.
- Clear prospects for future growth in the demand for all types of visitor accommodation in the National Park.
- A generally healthy mixed profile of accommodation catering to a wide range of tastes and group sizes.

Aside from presenting some strong performance aspects to the visitor accommodation market in The South Downs, the report suggested there were a number of risks to maintaining current supply of accommodation:

- The need for a robust accommodation retention policy
- Planning for the staff accommodation needs of rural businesses; tourism businesses are struggling to retain staff in an area of expensive accommodation and housing.
- Possible stagnating quality and not enough investment on providing mixed use accommodation/activity sites.
- Improving year round occupancy to ensure business viability (extending the season).
- A need to translate high visitor numbers in places like the South Downs Way into overnight stays at nearby accommodation.
- Country pubs losses are a key risk to the individual offer of many small communities and once lost a country pub is a local income stream lost permanently.

There were a number of opportunities highlighted within the study:-

Delivery of an 'Accommodation Network' along the South Downs Way

A clear gap is identified in terms of the provision of visitor accommodation serving the South Downs Way. As a significant visitor draw it is important to plan to meet the needs of these user groups and create a network of accommodation establishments at appropriate stopping off points. The report is mindful of the special qualities however; it states that it must be borne in mind that some locations to support this could quite be isolated, remote and in sensitive locations. This therefore requires careful planning. The accommodation requirements of South Downs Way users could be met by a mixture of small scale B&Bs, bunkhouse accommodation, hostels, camping barns, camping pods and glamping sites.

The development of a 'South Downs Pub Accommodation Development Programme'

The VAR emphasised that the rural country pub is key to the character of the South Downs and has a role to play in meeting accommodation needs. The VAR finds that the South Downs has seen a significant increase in the provision of pub accommodation, and the strong performance of this type of accommodation in the National Park indicates potential for additional provision, particularly of high quality pub accommodation and boutique inns. There are opportunities for existing pub accommodation businesses to upgrade and further develop, including adding guest bedrooms.

The Rise of Glamping & Eco-holidays

Reflecting an appetite for more localised experience and a responsible form of tourism, the report maintains that there is good potential for the South Downs to expand on many of the current and emerging rural visitor accommodation development trends. Glamping is rapidly growing in popularity in the UK in particular; the South Downs National Park has a small supply of glamping accommodation at present. Glamping businesses that have opened in the National Park have quickly found a strong market. The study suggests that there is scope for significant expansion of this type of accommodation, which could be encouraged and guided, as appropriate, in the National Park, and have good fit with an eco-related product development strand.

Other opportunities indicated:

- Some clear gaps in current accommodation provision, most notably in terms of hotel accommodation in Petersfield and Lewes (the National Park's largest towns) and gaps in accommodation supply along the South Downs Way.
- Strong interest from national, regional and local visitor accommodation developers, operators and investors, as well as from land and property owners interested in visitor accommodation development.
- A largely leisure driven and seasonal market for visitor accommodation in the National Park, suggesting a need for incremental supply growth in order to avoid overly diluting winter trade.

Identified 'need' for a Tourism Strategy

The Visitor Accommodation Review makes the case for Sustainable Tourism Strategy. It suggests that a tourism strategy that articulates the 'big vision' for the tourism sector in the National Park is required. The VAR states that a tourism should help to achieve and deliver the Park Management Plan; set out the strengths and weaknesses of the National Park's tourism offer; establish the key markets to target; set out product development requirements to meet the market needs; set out marketing/branding activity themes; and co-ordinate a tourism product development and marketing action plans to move the sector forwards.

The Approach to and Delivery of Visitor Accommodation

Visitor accommodation is addressed in the new South Downs Local Plan: Preferred Options. The policy for tourism accommodation is SD20 and is included in full in Appendix I.

This policy and the findings of the recent Visitor Accommodation Review have re-focussed the delivery of accommodation. The Partnership Management Plan has made a clear commitment to the development of sustainable tourism, including the development of a variety of visitor accommodation that responds to market demand. There is also a wider rationale for supporting the development of visitor accommodation, in that it provides opportunities to:

- Improve the vitality of the National Park's towns and villages, particularly in terms of helping to boost their evening economies;
- Keep village and country pubs open and viable, maintaining them as a resource for local communities;
- Improve farming and country estate incomes and thus supporting agriculture and landscape management;
- Create jobs for local people and self-employment opportunities;

- Sustain existing tourism and leisure businesses, such as golf courses, fishing lakes, horse riding stables, wedding venues and visitor attractions;
- Find new uses for redundant and even derelict buildings and sites.

Rather than support the development of visitor accommodation in isolation, it can be seen that if appropriately managed various scales of tourism accommodation can be stitched into the fabric of the National Park's economic, environmental and community life to bring widespread benefits.

In order to promote sustainable development, proposals for visitor accommodation should, where appropriate, be located in sustainable or gateway locations. Train stations both within and on the edge of the National Park act as visitor gateways and points of access to other modes of sustainable transport. Visitor accommodation can help secure the vitality of town centres and improve the evening economy. These are key locations where it would be appropriate to encourage further visitor accommodation provision, particularly in terms of hotels, guest houses and B&Bs.

However, given the nature of some tourism-related and recreational activities, a more rural location or proximity to geographically specific feature, such as the coast or a river, may be required. Where development is proposed outside settlement policy boundaries, it will need to be demonstrated that there are special circumstances, in accordance with the draft policies of the Local Plan.

Tourism Accommodation Markets

The target markets for of tourism accommodation for visitors to the South Downs are:

1. The key market for all types of visitor accommodation is people coming for short breaks.
2. People attending weddings and family parties are a significant market for hotels, B&Bs/guest houses, inns/pub accommodation businesses, and to a slightly lesser extent self-catering properties and touring caravan and camping sites.
3. People coming for long holidays (of a week or longer) are a key market for self-catering businesses/holiday cottage complexes and some touring caravan and camping sites, but are of less importance to B&Bs/guest houses, inns/pub accommodation businesses and hotels.
4. Overseas tourists are an important market for all categories of accommodation.
5. Walkers on the South Downs Way are a reasonably important market for all types of visitor accommodation business.
6. People stopping off en-route to the West Country are a market for some B&Bs/guest houses and inns/pub accommodation businesses but are of less importance to the majority of self-catering operations and touring caravan and camping sites.
7. Business visitors are an important market for some hotels and inns/pub accommodation establishments and a secondary market for other hotels, B&Bs/guest houses and self-catering businesses, but of less importance to touring caravan and camping site operations and youth and group accommodation.
8. Events such as the Glyndebourne Festival and Goodwood Festival of Speed and Revival are important drivers of business for hotels, pubs and guest houses/B&Bs, and self-catering and caravan and camping businesses in the surrounding area.
9. Hotels attract some additional markets: high quality hotels attract some residential conference business from London; shooting parties are an important market for some hotels in Lewes and Midhurst between August and December; hotels in Lewes occasionally attract overspill from Brighton conferences, and a few hotels take some group tours.
10. Group and youth accommodation establishments attract schools groups, special interest activity groups, corporate groups on team building courses and family and friends get-togethers.

Visitor accommodation is referred to in the Area-based Priorities.

Appendix 2:

Shared Identity and The Sustainable Tourism Strategy Themes

The Shared Identity Themes and how they relate to the four visitor-facing themes of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy are illustrated below.

<i>The Shared Identity themes represent priorities for both communication and development of the South Downs National Park experience. The theme headings are not marketing messages or straplines; they give focus to particularly important aspects of the South Downs National Park story</i>	<i>Translates in Sustainable Tourism Strategy As:</i>
'A Story of Englishness' The South Downs National Park tells a story of everyday Englishness through time. Farmland cultivated for centuries stand as a gentle backdrop to iconic landscapes, ancient ruins and picture postcard villages, still thriving today and driven by the timeless passion of the communities living and working here. The South Downs Way forges its way through our National Park linking those communities together and centuries on, still attracts visitors from near and far to come and create their own stories on William Blake's "Green and Pleasant Land".	A Cultural Land A Working Land
Living Landscape Uniquely, the South Downs National Park is and always has been a living and working place but is no less beautiful or engaging for that. Land and life have always been and probably will always be interwoven. That is why generations of people have explored and enjoyed our National Park's rolling hills, iconic white cliffs and wildlife-filled forests. It is also why cultivated farmlands, historic villages and modern towns can co-exist in a vibrant balance of conservation and change, shaping the landscape we enjoy over time.	A Natural Land
Human by Nature The South Downs National Park has been shaped by the people who have worked, lived and visited here over centuries. Cultivated farmlands, managed forests and even the villages built into hillsides, and towns built on the coast, have all added to the rich landscape we enjoy today. We live and work in a proactive and positive partnership with this beautiful and poetic place, striving to ensure that our National Park's intelligent, welcoming and often quirky personality remains unspoiled and accessible to all.	A Working Land A Cultural Land
Connecting Experiences Experiencing the South Downs is about discovering its secret gems. Some of the most special things in the National Park are not necessarily well known and might be as simple as a secluded wood or a stunning view, as well as a variety of smaller visitor attractions. The aim is to group different 'experiences' together for different sets of National Park users and to make them easy to find. This could mean a cycle trail with stopping off points; a tour of archaeological sites; discovering the area's geology or a river walk ending with lunch of local food and real ale at a pub! This is all intended to enrich the visitor's experience and lets the stories of the area be told. This approach also allows visitors to contribute to the conservation of the National Park through better management of potential sensitive 'hot spots' by promoting a range of alternative experiences, and by promoting the use of public transport. It is all about 'exploring more' but in a sustainable way.	An Adventure Land A Cultural Land

Appendix 3 Summary Framework of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy

The Seven Sustainable Tourism Strategy Objectives for the National Park

- 1. To improve the visitor experience through a strong sense of local identity and add value to work of local partners in tourism industry.**
Contributes to PMP Outcomes 5, 10 & 11
Accords with PMP Policies 31 and 42
- 2. To diversify the tourism offer of the National Park; providing more sustainable income for tourism service providers (TSPs), diversifying services and extending the tourism season.**
Contributes to PMP Outcome 9 & 10
Accords with PMP Policies 43, 47, 52, 53 & 55
- 3. To spread the benefits of tourism more evenly & widely across the National Park.**
Contributes to PMP Outcome 1 & 2
Accords with PMP Policies 21, 35, 36, 37, 41 & 42
- 4. To incorporate sustainability best practice with our working partners in tourism**
Contributes to PMP Outcomes 1, 5 & 11
Accords with PMP Policies 18, 41, 45, 47 & 54
- 5. To encourage change in travel behaviour of visitors to the National Park**
Contributes to PMP Outcomes 5 & 8
Accords with PMP Policies 35, 36, 37, 38 & 41
- 6. To generate a greater sense of custodianship of the National Park by visitors and improve the experience of tourism for residents.**
Contributes to PMP Outcomes 1, 2, 6 5 & 8.
Accords with PMP Policies 15, 16, 29, 31, 33, 45 & 47
Indicator: Number of volunteer days spent on activities. Percentages of visitors who are aware that the national park is a special place.
- 7. To raise visitor spend to levels that contribute more widely to the economy of the National Park**
Contributes to PMP Outcome 10
Accords with PMP Policy 14 and 41
Key Indicator: Average length of visitor stay & spend per day

Delivery Tools for Sustainable Tourism Strategy The NPA has three strategic areas of work to develop in partnership with other organisations that are not immediately recognisable as products to visitors and residents. These projects groups are park-wide and are framed to ensure tourism contributes to PMP sustainable outcomes. Sustainable travel, strategic business development and developing knowledge/custodianship of the National Park are all essential elements of tourism delivering for the 2050 vision of the PMP.

Sustainable Travel

Spread tourism more evenly by moving visitors around the National Park in offering a genuine alternative to the use of private hydrocarbon cars.

Existing Projects

- Cycle First
- Car Free Holidays
- Visitor Attraction Bus Route
- Discover More 4 Less
- Transport Operators Training

Knowledge and Custodianship

Embedding knowledge across the park, with partners, in order to provide a genuine local experience and a sense of ownership in our visitors.

Existing Projects

Share the Path Behaviour Change
Embedding Shared Identity Toolkit
Sense of Place toolkit
Landscape Ambassadors Training
Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere

Sustainable Business Development

To work with our tourism service providers on diversifying and improving our tourism offer whilst respecting the special qualities of the National Park.

Existing Projects

Food and Drink Portal (SDNPA/Natural Partnerships CIC)
West Sussex Beautiful Outdoors (WSCC Leading)
Our Land

Visitor Themes – ‘Public Facing’ Projects and Campaigns Providing clear and consistent themes gives visitors key messages about the offer of the National Park. Thematic Development should focus on four key areas that relate to the special qualities of the park. SDNPA can in future build projects connected to these themes that will embed the special qualities of the National Park into the views of visitors

**An Adventure Land
(Hiking, Biking,
Rambling, Running &
Equestrian and
Exploring)**

Existing Projects

*The South Downs
GeoTour*
Car-free Holiday
Lewes & Petersfield
Cycle First
Discover More 4 Less
Cyclists and Walkers

**A Cultural Land
(Literary Legacy,
Historical Characters,
Stories, Quirks etc)**

Existing Projects

The Writers Way
Shipwrights Way
East Hants Heritage
Experience
Arun Valley Heritage
Experience
A-Z 'Alphabet' of the
Downs

**A Natural Land
Wildlife, landscape,
Astronomy and geo-
tourism)**

Existing Projects

Dark Night Skies Park
Brighton & Lewes Downs
Biosphere
Heathlands Reunited
Forestry Family Fun Events
(Rename Campaign)
John Muir Award & Events
Meon Valley Trail

**A Working Land
(Food, Drink & the
Creative/Productive Park
etc.)**

Existing Projects

SouthDownsFood.org
Delicious Days Guide
Farmer's Markets Guide

Projects to Explore

South Downs Local Food
Month
Artisans of the Park

Appendix 4: Delivery Tools and Themes Projects (to be developed)