

South Downs National Park Authority

Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy 2017-2022

Version 1.0

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DOCUMENT AMENDMENT HISTORY

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1.0	Jeremy Burgess	24/08/2017	Further edits of draft strategy pre circulation
0.04	Chris Fairbrother & Jeremy Burgess	18/08/2017	Edits of draft strategy in preparation for circulation on 24 th August.
0.03	Chris Fairbrother	10/03/17	Strategic outcomes added to document.
0.02	Tanya Rowan	31/10/16	Final amendments made to Strategy template
0.01	Tanya Rowan	25/10/16	First draft of Strategy template sent to Anne Rehill to review

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I. Introduction and background

This is the first Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy for the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). It sets out our aim and direction for the work of the National Park Authority on the key areas of Landscape and Biodiversity for the next five years. It is written in the light of the National Park purposes and duty and in the context of the vision, outcomes and policies of the [Partnership Management Plan 2014-2019](#), supported by the evidence produced in the [State of the South Downs National Park 2012](#) report. It follows the ecosystem services approach that has been adopted in other key documents.

The Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy is important to prioritise our work and help demonstrate how we are delivering the purposes and duty and PMP as a National Park Authority and in partnership with others. Prioritisation has been undertaken by considering what can be achieved over the 5 year period, identifying the key ecosystem services and looking at actions linked to these in relation to 3 areas, firstly capturing key contributions from business as usual, secondly current project work that is ongoing and finally new areas of work that will be subject to the availability of resources.

The strategy has been developed with a clear thread from the PMP outcomes and policies through priority ecosystem services and then strategic outcomes for these services which are reflected in the action plan.

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*

Duty: *To seek to foster the social and economic well being of the local communities within the National Park in pursuit of our purposes.*

2. Why do we need a strategy for landscape and biodiversity?

- 2.1 The Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy has been developed in order to prioritise the work of the National Park authority in delivering the Partnership Management Plan and our Purposes and Duty.
- 2.2 The strategy takes into account the core documents of the National Park as well as National Policy drivers such as the Defra 8 Point Plan, the Natural Environment white paper, Natural Capital Committee reports and Making space for nature. Our work will support creating a thriving natural environment and protection of Landscape in the National Park.
- 2.3 The evidence base for developing this strategy and its action plan has included our work on climate change, ecosystem service mapping, green infrastructure, tranquility mapping and landscape character assessment. This has led to the selection of the priority ecosystem services detailed in section 3. Each of these priority ecosystem services has then been considered in more detail through a series of workshops and to produce a set of strategic outcomes. Future actions will link to these outcomes, the priority services and the core principals.

2.4 Links to PMP outcomes and policies

Outcome 1: The landscape character of the National Park, its special qualities and local distinctiveness have been conserved and enhanced by effectively managing land and the negative impacts of development and cumulative change.

Outcome 2: There is increased capacity within the landscape for its natural resources, habitats and species to adapt to the impacts of climate change and other pressures.

Outcome 3: A well-managed and better connected network of habitats and increased population and distribution of priority species now exist in the National Park.

General Landscape Policies 1-8

Farming Policies 11-13

Woodland Policies 17 – 22

Water Policies 23 – 26

Research/Rural Skills Policies 46 - 47

- 2.5 In developing this strategy we have consulted widely with SDNPA strategy colleagues, the South Downs Partnership, members, planning policy, research and evidence team and key external partners. We have done this to ensure the strategic approach we have taken, and the outcomes we have identified, are sound and based on a broad range of expert opinion from across our work.
- 2.6 This is the SDNPA's first landscape and biodiversity strategy. It is essential that it sets a clear direction and demonstrates a clear link to the following documents and strategies:
- National Policy Drivers such as Defra's 8-Point-Plan for National Parks, Defra 25 year plan – Environment and Farming (awaited), the principles of the Lawton review "Making space for nature", Natural Capital Committee Reports, Biodiversity 2020 and the Natural Environment White Paper.

- European drivers such as the Birds, Habitats and Water Framework Directives and international drivers such as the UN biodiversity convention.
 - Local drivers such as the Local Plan, Climate Change Adaptation Plan, Partnership Management Plan 2014-19 and Green Infrastructure Framework
- 2.7 The Authority has sought to adopt an **Ecosystems Approach** across all of its strategic planning work. The ecosystem approach is a strategy for the ‘integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes their conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.’
- 2.8 This requires us to:-
- Work at a Landscape scale;
 - Understand how natural systems work;
 - Value what nature and the natural environment provides for society;
 - Ensure we plan and undertake management for the long term;
 - Deliver multiple benefits through our work;
 - Deliver through effective partnership working;
 - Involve local communities and interest groups in decision making.

3. The landscape and biodiversity strategy – core principles

- 3.1 The Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan will take an integrated approach to land management issues. All projects and work programmes will be driven by the following over-arching principles and will need to:-
- Enhance, and add value to, the stock of **Natural Capital** within the National Park area. Enhancing value of the stock could include the development of a coherent and resilient ecological network that benefits both wildlife and people.
 - Protect, restore or enhance the priority **Ecosystem Services** delivered within the National Park. Identifying the benefits of these services in supporting Natural Capital and the opportunities for multiple ecosystem service benefits to be delivered through projects and actions.
- 3.2 The term Natural Capital is increasingly used to describe the parts of the natural environment that produce value for people. It underpins all other types of capital – manufactured, human or social. It is the foundation on which our economy and society is built. It is our ‘stock’ of water, soil, land and species.
- 3.3 These stocks underpin our economy and produces value for people, both indirectly and directly. The goods provided by these stocks include clean air and water, food, energy and recreation – the flow of Ecosystem Services.
- 3.4 Despite its obvious importance, the value of natural capital is routinely taken for granted. The benefits that come from nature are often not taken into account in decision-making. There is growing evidence that uninformed decisions not only damage the environment, but also have significant negative consequences for the economy.
- 3.5 Taking the stock of Natural Capital as the starting point, and considering the drivers outlined above, we have identified the priority ecosystem services that underpin the landscape and its biodiversity. Together they also deliver wide range of associated benefits that we rely upon. These

are also the ecosystem service functions that are facing the greatest declines and are likely to have the greatest impacts in terms of the National Park and its wider economy. They also reflect the most pressing issues and challenges that we are currently facing in the South Downs.

3.6 The impact or effect of development and planning decisions upon the stock of Natural Capital and ecosystem services is also a consideration. As a consequence the Local Plan for the South Downs National Park includes strategic policies that seek to protect and enhance them. We will be taking this approach to inform our responses to development proposals and major infrastructure projects that come forward within the National Park or its setting.

3.7 Therefore the focus of the Action Plan and its initial tranche of projects will be on the following priority Ecosystem Service functions. Through targeting these at a landscape scale we will achieve the best outcomes and support effective delivery of the Partnership Management Plan:-

Priority Ecosystem Service	Associated Ecosystem Service benefits being delivered
Pollination	Genetic diversity, Food production and other provisioning, supporting and cultural services.
Water Quality	Water cycling, water flow and flood attenuation and other regulating, provisioning and cultural services
Soil Quality	Nutrient cycling, Food production and other provisioning, supporting and cultural services.
Carbon Stocks.	Timber production, energy, flood attenuation, biodiversity and other regulating, supporting and cultural services
Air Quality	Climate regulation, Green Infrastructure, biodiversity and other regulating, supporting and cultural services.
Biodiversity	Habitat connectivity, genetic diversity and other provisioning, supporting and cultural services.

3.8 Actions on these priority areas will be evidence based and targeted to where they will be most effective and make best use of resources. We will use our existing evidence base, and GIS based tools such as EcoServ, the Habitat Connectivity and Opportunity Mapping and Ecological Network mapping, to effectively target our work spatially and to define focus areas within the National Park.

3.9 For example, in the case of pollination services we will use the EcoServ GIS mapping tool to highlight service flows and hotspots. We will use this to guide discussions with land managers within the farm clusters to identify where they are willing to work with us collectively and at an individual farm and field level.

4. Our strategy for landscape and biodiversity.

4.1 For each priority Ecosystem Service we have developed a set of strategic outcomes that will be delivered through the Action Plan. These outcomes describe what we want to have achieved, directly or with partners, by 2022. They relate to the vision and outcomes set out in the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) and will set a ‘direction of travel’ to help us progress towards achieving this vision.

<u>Strategic Outcomes - Pollination</u>	
(P1)	Land management practices are supporting pollinators and natural pest regulation.
(P2)	An increase in planting of more resistant crop species has helped to reduce pesticide use.
(P3)	Pollination services have increased resilience to climate change.
(P4)	Habitat connectivity and the permeability of the landscape to pollinators has been improved.

<u>Strategic Outcomes - Water Quality & Water Cycling</u>	
(W1)	The hydrological connection between rivers, open water and wetlands has been restored, delivering a wide range of environmental benefits.
(W2)	Water quality and infiltration have been improved through good soil and land management practices, reducing excessive nutrient and sediment loads.
(W3)	Rates of surface run-off have been reduced, reducing diffuse pollution, ensuring good levels of base flow and delivering enhanced flood storage.
(W4)	Natural channel morphologies have been established, making water bodies more resilient to climate change impacts and improving their function.
(W5)	Chalk streams and headwaters have been protected and enhanced to improve their chemical and biological status.
(W6)	The permeability of urban surfaces has been increased. Rain gardens and swales have enhanced storage capacity and have improved drainage, water quality and reduced surface run-off.

<u>Strategic Outcomes - Soil Quality & Nutrient Cycling</u>	
(S1)	Soil erosion in high risk areas has been reduced through improved soil conservation measures such as contour ploughing, 'no tillage', cover crops or long-term grass leys.
(S2)	The structure and microbial condition of soils, and its ability to store water and nutrients, have been improved through changes to land management practices
(S3)	Soil conservation measures have been adopted widely in areas that are prone to erosion or may be more susceptible to climate change impacts or drought conditions.

<u>Strategic Outcomes - Carbon stocks</u>	

(C1)	Carbon storage capacity within the National Park has been increased and is providing a wide range of additional public and environmental benefits.
(C2)	The planting and maintenance of tree species that are more resilient to climate change impacts has increased across the National Park.
(C3)	Woodlands are providing a wider range of public benefits including enhancing biodiversity, natural flood management, air quality, carbon sequestration and renewable energy potential.

Strategic Outcomes - Air Quality & Climate Regulation

(A1)	Local Air quality has been improved through increased tree planting in appropriate locations.
(A2)	Stream and river corridors have more shade and better controlled temperatures as a result of targeted woodland regeneration.
(A3)	Fossil fuel use has been reduced because of an increased uptake of wood fuels, micro-generation and community based renewable projects in suitable locations that have provided additional ecosystem service benefits.

Strategic Outcomes - Biodiversity & Ecological Networks

(B1)	Areas of valuable wildlife habitat are bigger, better managed and more 'joined up', the quality and diversity of core wildlife sites has been improved and barriers to managing priority habitats have been addressed.
(B2)	The genetic diversity and resilience of target or priority species has increased and they have been able to expand their range.
(B3)	A landscape-scale strategy for tackling invasive and pest species has been implemented and their impact and spread has been reduced within the National Park.
(B4)	High quality Green Infrastructure has been delivered that supports and enhances the delivery of Ecosystem Services and habitat connectivity at local and regional level.

Strategic Outcomes - Cultural Services

(CS1)	Landscape Character and iconic or important views within the National Park have been protected and enhanced.
(CS2)	The areas of highest tranquillity have been protected and enhanced.
(CS3)	The impacts of light pollution have been reduced, and the quality and extent of the dark night sky within the National Park has been protected and enhanced.

5. Working in partnership

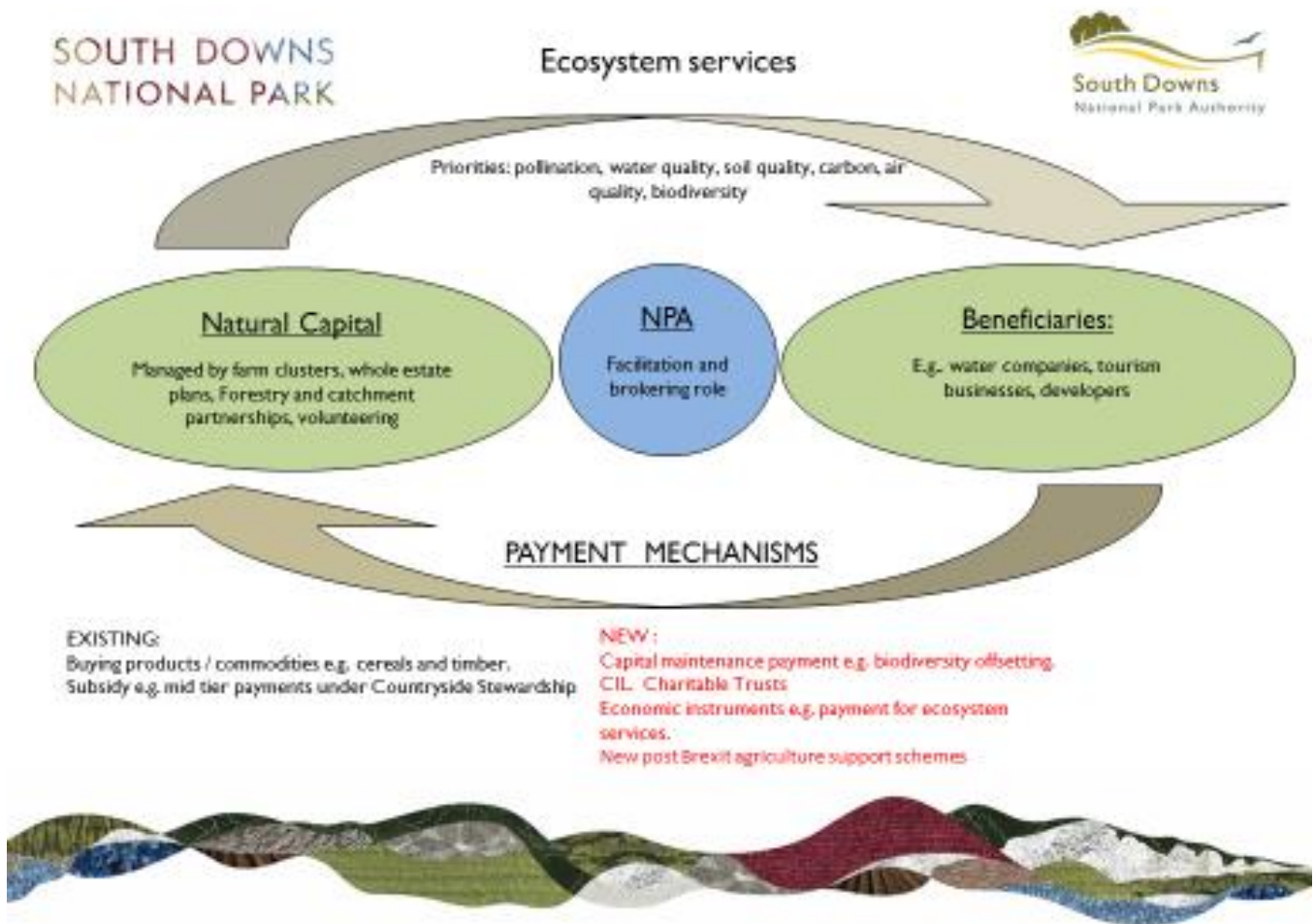
- 5.1 We recognise that it is only through the development of relevant and robust partnerships that many of our objectives can be achieved.
- 5.2 We are keen to collaborate with a wide range of organisations and individual sector specialists, both locally and more widely on priority work. Our aim is to bring together a range of people with relevant knowledge, skills and expertise to support projects of relevance to the South Downs National Park.
- 5.3 Organisations and individuals we are keen to broker partnership arrangements with include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Key to delivery are **Private landowners**, managers and farmers – via the Farm Clusters, Forestry Partnership and Whole Estate Plans where applicable
 - **Environmental NGOs** such as the Lawton group (Wildlife Trusts in Hampshire & IOW, and Sussex, RSPB, National Trust and Woodland Trust), and the Rivers Trusts that are involved in catchment partnerships.
 - **Statutory Agencies and local authorities** this will include regulatory bodies and partners that have a wealth or relevant expertise including the Forestry Commission, Environment Agency Natural England and English Heritage and the Local Nature partnerships.
 - Companies that have an environmental interest and duty such as **Water and power** companies and Network Rail
 - **Community & Amenity Groups**, local residents, community representatives and volunteering organisations who can be involved in delivery of local actions.
 - **Academic institutes & independent researchers**. This will include **Specialists** in their field, for example local ecologists and links to the wider family of protected landscapes where knowledge can be shared.

6. Development of the Action Plan

- 6.1 This Strategy will be accompanied by an **Action Plan** which will detail the projects and initiatives we aim to undertake 2019-24 to contribute to achieving the strategic outcomes and vision. It also sets out the delivery mechanism and describes where involvement from partners is required. The plan represents a rolling programme of work to be reviewed annually.
- 6.2 Along with the other seven parts of the PMP Delivery Framework, we will review this Landscape & Biodiversity Strategy every five years

7. Delivery Mechanisms

In taking projects forward we will also look to develop and test new mechanisms for delivery. This may involve developing new incentive or market driven approaches such as Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES). We will work with others to make the case for investing in the natural capital of the South Downs. The diagram below illustrates the delivery mechanisms, flow of services and our pivotal role in taking forward this approach.



Definition of technical terms used within the strategy

Landscape Character – The distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes it different from another (rather than better or worse)

Landscape-scale – A project or programme of work that delivers outcomes or activities across a large area and is based on a sound understanding of the character and function of that landscape. This also takes into account the natural and cultural elements of the landscape both old and new.

Green Infrastructure – A network of multi-functional green space, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and are integral to the health and quality of life of communities.

Natural Capital – The stock of natural resources, which includes geology, soils, air, water and living organisms. These are assets that provide people with a wide range of goods and services (see ‘Ecosystem Services’) which underpin our economy and society and which make human life possible.

Ecosystem – A system, or a group of interconnected elements, formed by the interaction of a community of organisms with their environment.

Ecosystem Services – the benefits that people and society get from the natural environment.

Ecosystem service benefits – The wider Environmental, Cultural, Economic or Welfare benefits provided through Ecosystem Services.

Ecosystem service function – The range of Ecosystem driven processes that provide ecosystem services, these are usually grouped into four broad categories – regulating, provisioning, supporting and cultural.

Resilience – The ability to absorb, resist or recover from disturbances or damage from natural influences, human activities (including climate change) while continuing to provide ecosystem services.

Hotspots – A small area with relatively high Ecosystem Service function or activity in comparison with its surroundings. Also relates to areas that deliver multiple functions within a landscape.