

South Downs National Park Authority

Communications & Engagement Strategy 2012–2018

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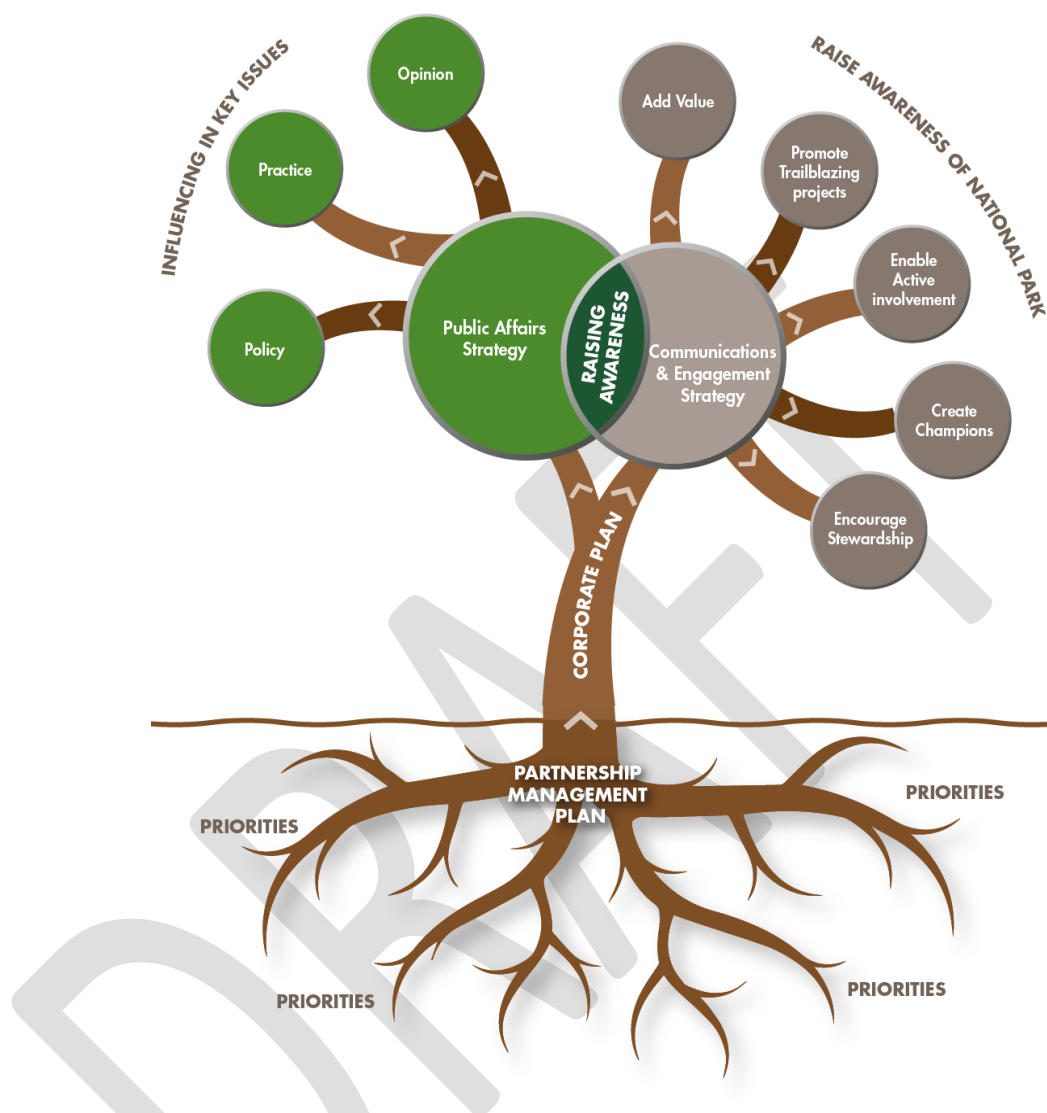
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1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 As the UK's newest national park situated in the heart of its most populated region, we face both particular challenges and opportunities in how we communicate and engage – both with each other, with our many partners and with the wider world.
- 1.2 With the advent of the South Downs National Park Trust we must also effectively tell the story of the National Park and communicate its special qualities to an entirely new audience in new and innovative ways.
- 1.3 This Communications & Engagement Strategy sets out a framework to enable us to meet these challenges and to grasp the opportunity to build on the connection and commitment of all those who should and would join us in working towards securing the sustainable future of the South Downs National Park.
- 1.4 The Communications & Engagement Strategy was approved by the full National Park Authority in September 2012 and a new strategy will be developed to align with the PMP and Corporate Plan cycle of 2019–2024.
- 1.5 It will help deliver the key priorities of the Partnership Management Plan, the Corporate Plan and the emerging Local Plan, as well as the national agenda set out in the Defra 8-Point Plan for National Parks.
- 1.6 It will work alongside and in support of the Public Affairs Strategy which will identify the key strategic issues affecting the National Park that the Authority has the opportunity to influence in pursuit of our Purposes and Duty (see Figure 1). It will also align with the stakeholder management plan to ensure we are communicating with the right stakeholders at the right time and in the right way.

Figure 1: How the Public Affairs and the Communications & Engagement Strategies work together



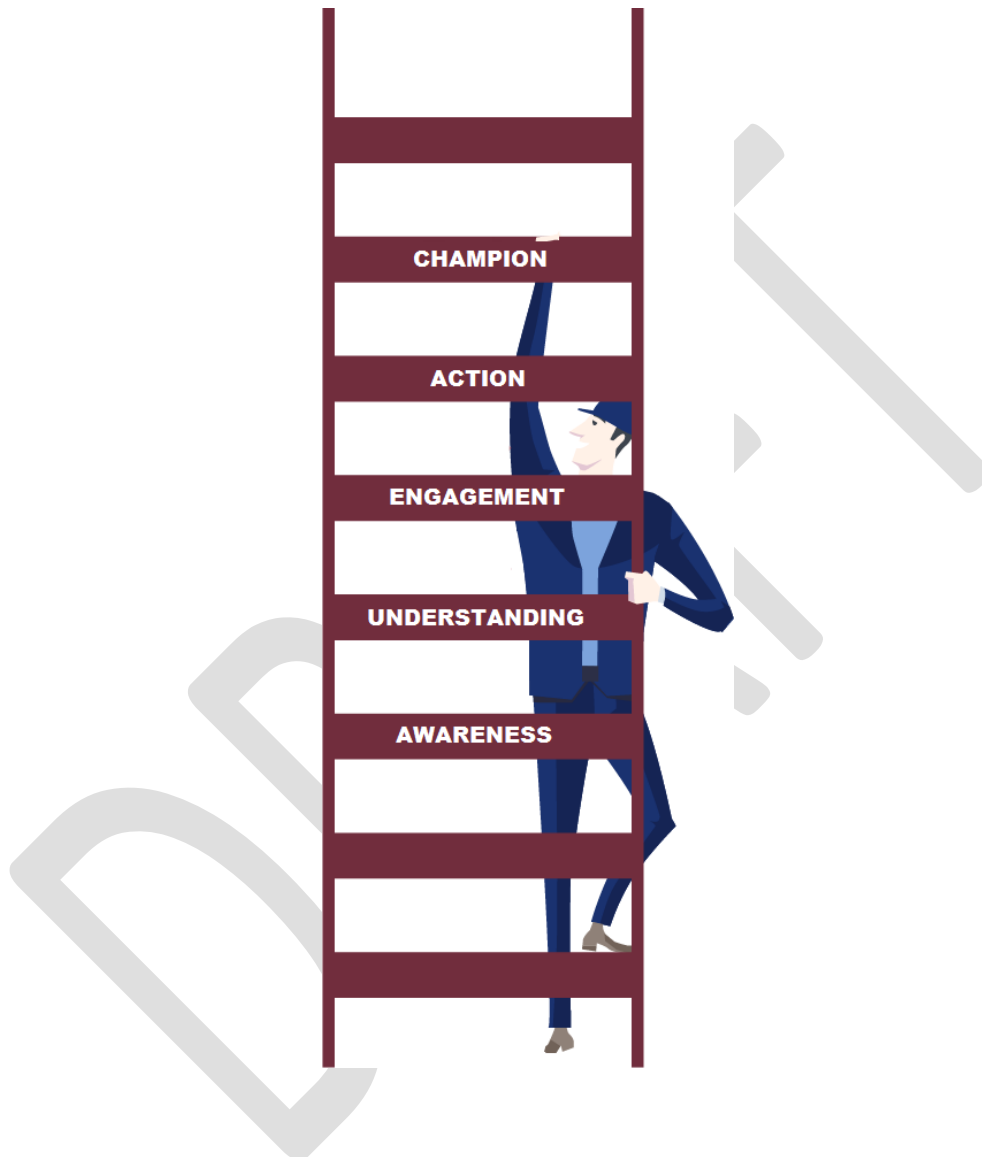
1.7 The Communications & Engagement Strategy maintains its two overarching goals:

- **To raise the profile** of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and to promote understanding of the National Park Purposes and the Duty of the Authority.
- **To take those inside and outside the National Park and both internal and external audiences on a journey** from becoming aware of the National Park to understanding and enjoying the Special Qualities of the National Park, to taking an active role in caring for it and championing it and the work of the SDNPA and its partners (see Figure 2 below).

As set out in the first objective, the next few years will focus on raising awareness with audiences, with a particular focus on the South East and hard to reach groups such as those in our urban fringe.

The annual Delivery Workplan (see Appendix A) that will deliver this strategy will identify clear, targeted communications and engagement activities. In addition, clear audiences and how we will communicate with them will be identified in both the Public Affairs Strategy and the Stakeholder Management Plan.

Figure 2: The Ladder of stewardship: Taking people on a journey



I.8 This strategy provides a framework within which we can:

- **engage** effectively with our communities and stakeholders;
- **communicate** well with our audiences;
- **collaborate** closely with our partners;
- **enable** active involvement with the National Park.

I.5 The strategy is underpinned by the Guiding Principles agreed by the Authority in its shadow year to:

- **Champion** the SDNP;
- **Bring people together** to achieve more for the South Downs through combined action;
- **Influence** policy and decision making (largely to be delivered through the Public Affairs Strategy);
- **Deliver** flagship projects;
- **Engage** directly with local residents;
- **Encourage** volunteering; and
- **Build** effective partnerships.

2 Key messages

- The South Downs National Park is a living, dynamic place where vibrant communities combine with rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, and spectacular landscapes.
- Situated in the most populated part of the UK, the South Downs offers invaluable green space for recreation, enjoyment and well-being, and forms the heart of an essential green infrastructure in the South East
- The South Downs is a beautiful and iconic place that continues to be managed by over 500 landowners, and we have a shared responsibility to care for it and to secure its future.
- We are committed to working in partnership with stakeholders from across the South Downs and beyond.
- Being part of the National Park adds value to and benefits the communities, businesses and landscapes of the South Downs.
- We work with businesses and communities across the National Park to support a diverse and sustainable rural economy which is positively linked with the special qualities of the National Park.

3 How we will deliver this strategy

- 3.1 Effective communication and engagement is essential to achieving our purposes and duty. Clear, consistent, correct and inspiring communication is the responsibility of everyone across the South Downs National Park Authority – staff, members and volunteers, and the South Downs National Park Trust. The Communications & Engagement Team will provide specialist communications & engagement services while also supporting all parts of the SDNPA with the skills and resources so that staff, members and volunteers can all play an effective role in communicating our key messages and achieving our objectives.
- 3.2 It sets out the broad work planned until 2018, when it will be reviewed to align with the PMP and Corporate Plan reporting cycle of 2019–24. A more detailed Annual Workplan will be developed to ensure the strategy can flex and adapt to the ever-changing communications environment.
- 3.3 In our approach we will:
- **Build on our partnership model of working** by using the connections, commitment and work of our partners across the National Park and at a national level.
 - **Tap into the skills and knowledge from across the Authority to provide additional input on communications & engagement work** and ensuring that communications flows throughout the organisation.

- **Continue to provide an information hub for the Authority:**
 - providing the tools and expertise needed to share information;
 - gathering and sharing the stories and achievements of the National Park that will form the basis of our communications & engagement work.

3.4 There is much that we can and should do but as a lean organisation and in line with our Guiding Principles, it is vital that we focus during the timespan of this strategy on:

- setting clear and achievable objectives that reflect the priority pillars of the Partnership Management Plan and the Corporate Plan;
- communicating the right message clearly to the right audience at the right time; and
- building effective partnerships to achieve our goals.

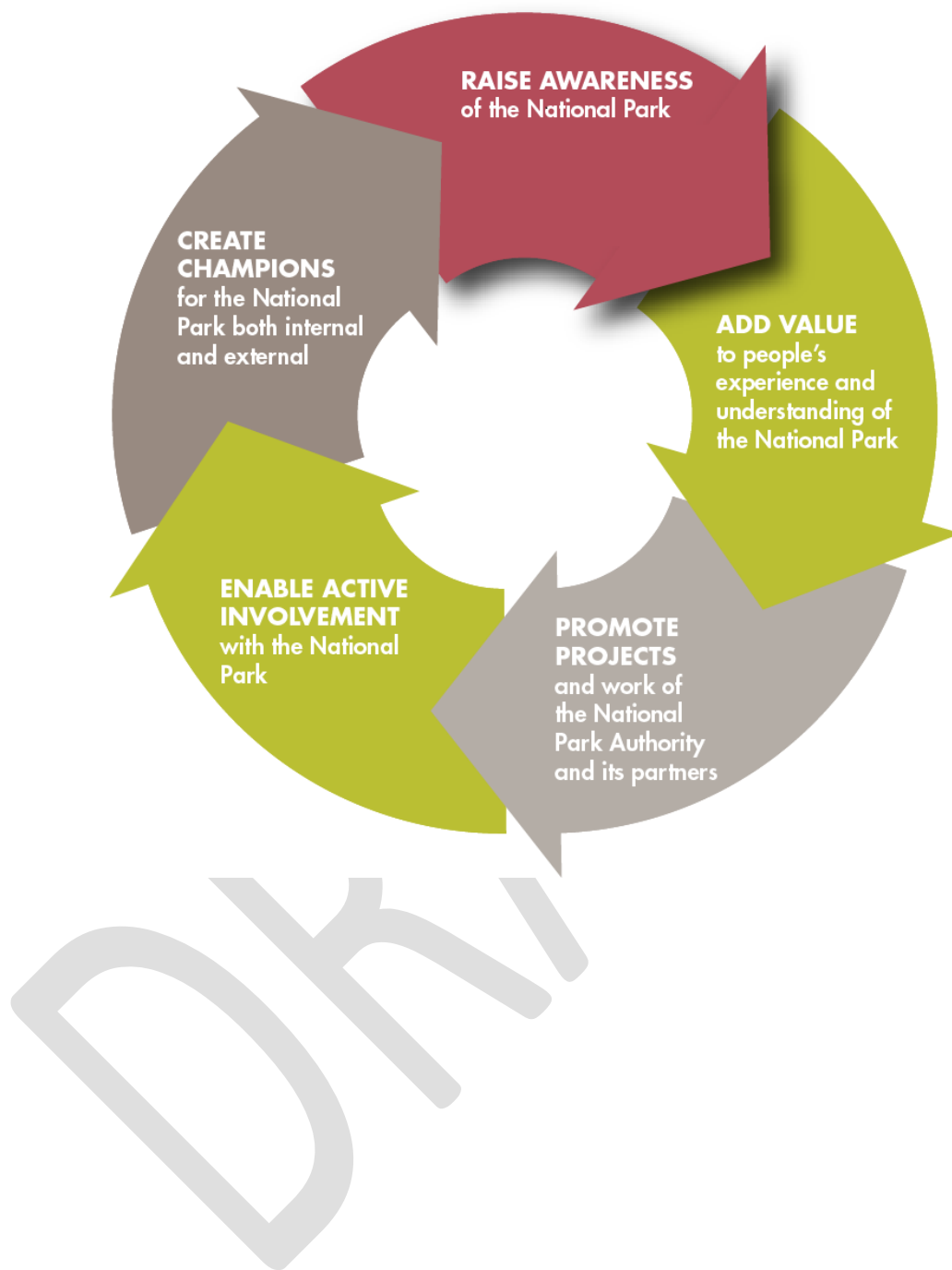
4 How we will target and measure our communications & engagement work

4.1 We will continue to use a number of sources of information for our baseline including the recent YouGov survey and visitor survey (2012). We will then use a number of new and existing means to assess how we are doing including:

- Citizens' Panel
- Output stats across all relevant channels
- Further YouGov surveys
- Partner surveys and other means.

We will develop a clear set of measures that will be presented to members as part of the annual reporting cycle as a infographic with 10 or so key stats that are currently being developed with the Projects & Performance Team.

5 Key Communications & Engagement Objectives



Appendix I: Communications & Engagement Delivery Action Plan 2017/18 (work ongoing)

PMP	Corp PI	Objective	Key Audiences	Delivery Actions	Measures of Success	How will we measure	SDN PA staff resource	Ext partners
		Raise awareness of the National Park with those in the South East who currently don't know about or use the National Park with a particular emphasis on hard to reach groups						
				Events review	Increase awareness of the National Park within the South East to 60%	Annual YouGov survey		
				Events plan to include at least 4 events targeted at reaching hard to reach groups	- 10,000 people reached through our events - 2,500 people spoken at targeted events	Calculate from attendance figures		
				Entry signage project to the National Park	20 entry signs installed	Opportunities to view?		
				Village signage				
				Develop five visitor hubs and gateways	5 visitor hubs/gateways in place being used	Visitors numbers?		

		Shared identity on RoW signage	New shared identity signage rolled out across South Downs Way			
		End marker for SDW installed in Eastbourne	SDW end marker installed			
		Increase social media presence across facebook/twitter/Instagram	Twitter followers target: 10,000 Facebook: 6,500	Quarterly and annually		
		Grow the monthly enewsletter list	3,250 subscribers.			
Add value to people's experience and understanding of the National Park		Produce two editions of South Downs View		Distribution of 50,00 copies		
		Two editions of South Downs View				
		Miles without Stiles				
		Develop a Planning enewsletter to improve understanding of planning within the National Park				
		Launch Go South Downs to enable car free travel in NP				
		Make 60 routes available on ViewRanger App				
	Support activities of Discover England funded project					

		Promote sustainable behaviour through Take the Lead campaign				
		Promote and enable use of shared identity and Communicating South Downs by businesses and communities across the NP				
		Dark Skies Festival and support Stargazers Welcome				
		Support Walkers & Cyclers Welcome scheme				
Promote the trailblazing projects and work of the National Park Authority and its partners		Lead on Heathlands Reunited interpretation, engagement and campaigns as set out in the project activity plan including arts commission for community led interlinking interpretation				
		Provide communications support to CHAMP project.				
		Lead on development of UK wide communications through management of NPUK Communications work				
		Promote stories/coverage of 10 SCF projects per year				
		Develop new annual chalk event				
Enable active involvement		Launch and promote the South Downs Trust and its fundraising				

	with the National Park		Deliver Heathland Reunited events/engagement programme				
			Promote volunteering opportunities and support volunteering including through Downland Thymes production				
			Promote the accessibility of the National Park including creating five new Miles without Styles leaflets				
			Continue to develop Communicating the South Downs Portal				
			Run Take the lead campaign with partners on dog behaviour				
	Create well-informed, inspirational champions for the National Park –internal and external		Develop ‘responsible dog ambassadors’				
			Carry out an internal communications review				
			Develop inspirational inductions for new staff and Members.				