

Report to	Policy and Resources Committee
Date	21 November 2017
By	Communications & Engagement Manager
Title of Report	Public Affairs Strategy

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to

- 1) Approve the Public Affairs Strategy to go to December NPA**
- 2) Recommend three priority issues to NPA to be the focus of our proactive public affairs work over the next 12–18 months.**

1. Summary and Background

- 1.1 This Public Affairs Strategy (set out at Appendix 1) sets out the necessary framework to enable the National Park Authority to influence public policy, build and maintain a strong reputation and find common ground with stakeholders on key issues that impact on our statutory purposes and duty, and special qualities.
- 1.2 It stems directly from the guiding principles determined by the Authority to “Influence policy-making and the decisions... acting as a voice for the National Park and... a source of knowledge and expertise”.
- 1.3 Our current public affairs work is ad hoc and reactive. This strategy will enable us to develop focused messaging over a sustained period to influence senior opinion formers.
- 1.4 It is important to note that this Public Affairs Strategy is **one** means by which we will deliver the objectives of the Partnership Management Plan, Local Plan and Corporate Plan – but only those that require and will benefit from public affairs work. It is one piece of a larger coordinated jigsaw of activity.
- 1.5 The strategy has been developed and shaped by input from SMT, OMT, the Chair and Russell Oppenheimer and SMT/Committee Chairs, as well as input from strategic leads across the organisation.

2. Aims of the Public Affairs Strategy

- 2.1 This first Public Affairs Strategy for the Authority has three aims:
 - To set in motion a coordinated approach to our public affairs work
 - To agree guiding principles for how we can effectively and quickly deal with emerging issues
 - To identify the top three issues key issues that we will proactively work on over the next 18 months. This ‘Action Plan’ part of the strategy is designed to be reviewed every 18 months.

2.2 Key issues on which we could potentially focus our public affairs work over the coming 12–18 months have been identified, with the intention that the P& R Committee recommend three priority issues from the following list for inclusion in the final strategy that will go to the December NPA for approval:

- The future of farming;
- Water;
- Affordable homes;
- Sustainable tourism;
- Health and wellbeing

2.3 The Committee is asked to agree the top three priorities and recommend them to the Authority for approval.

3. **What next?**

3.1 Once Members have chosen their three priority issues, for each issue we will:

- carry out a detailed stakeholder mapping exercise;
- hone and develop the key asks and ‘elevator pitches’ etc;
- develop a detailed action plan to enable Members and Officers at all levels to contribute to influencing the identified objectives. (A template for what the detailed Action Plan will look like is detailed in Appendix B of the Public Affairs Strategy);
- identify measures for each issue.

3.2 Work is also ongoing on the detail of the Communications & Engagement Activity Plan for 2017/18 and on the Stakeholder Management Plan (Appendix B of the Public Affairs Strategy).

4. **How Public Affairs and Communications & Engagement will work together**

4.1 It is also important to note that the Public Affairs Strategy will sit alongside the Communications & Engagement Strategy but does not replace it (see Figure 2 in the Public Affairs Strategy).

4.2 The Public Affairs Strategy is all about **how we will influence changes** in policy, practice and thinking and will identify three key priority issues, as agreed by Members, for what we will focus our proactive public affairs work on

4.3 It will be **supported by** our wider awareness raising and communications work as set out in the Communications & Engagement Strategy (set out at Appendix 2) as agreed by the NPA in September 2012 and revised to take account of the latest position of the Authority.

4.4 For information, the Communications & Engagement Strategy is attached at Appendix 2. A new Communications & Engagement Strategy will be developed in 2018 and will run from 2019–2024 to align with the updated PMP and new Corporate Plan

5. **Measuring success**

5.1 It is vital that we establish an achievable, consistent and useful means of measuring both our public affairs and communications & engagement work that we can report back to members on annually to show the progress towards the goals of the strategies.

5.2 The specific impact of individual public affairs activities is notoriously difficult to measure as it can be, at times, impossible to attribute a change in behaviour, policy or practice to one particular activity. We have identified some baseline information for each of the issues. Once the three key issues have been recommended by this Committee and then agreed by the Authority in December, we will work with the Projects & Performance Team to confirm measures for each objective that can be reported back to Members as part of the annual reporting cycle. The setting of baselines will depend on the particular topic chosen. For example, if Affordable Homes is chosen much of the baseline will come from our Local Plan evidence base.

5.3 For our Communications & Engagement work going forward we will 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.

5.4 This will be presented to members as part of the annual reporting cycle as an infographic with 10 or so key stats that are currently being developed with the Projects & Performance Team.

6. NPA Considerations

6.1 A new Communications & Engagement Strategy will be developed to align with the PMP and Corporate Plan cycle of 2019–2024.

7. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	Yes: Approval of the full Public affairs Strategy by NPA Approval of three priority public affairs issues by NPA
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	None for Communications & Engagement Strategy above those that will be included in the annual Communications & Engagement Budget.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Effective strategies ensure targeted use of the funds allocated for this work.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	N/A
Has due regard been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	No implications arising from the strategies. The equality implications of activities will be reviewed each time. The Communications & Engagement Strategy sets out to target hard to reach groups including those with protected characteristics.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy: 1. Living within environmental limits 2. Ensuring a strong healthy and just society 3. Achieving a sustainable economy 4. Promoting good governance 5. Using sound science responsibly	Contributes to principles 2 and 4 of the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy.

8. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 8.1 There is a risk that the Authority does not have mechanisms to identify and respond to emerging issues. The Public Affairs Strategy mitigates this risk.

RUTH JAMES

Communications & Engagement Manager

South Downs National Park Authority

Contact Officer:	Ruth James
Tel:	01730 819251
email:	Ruth.james@southdowns.gov.uk
Appendices	1. Public Affairs Strategy 2. Updated Communications & Engagement Strategy
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	PMP, Corporate Plan, Communications & Engagement Strategy