

**Agenda Item 11
Report 23/17**

Report to	South Downs National Park Authority
Date	19 December 2017
By	Communications & Engagement Manager
Title of Report	Public Affairs Strategy

Recommendation:

The Authority is recommended to:

- 1. Agree the Public Affairs Strategy, and associated priority areas for the period January 2018–January 2020.**
- 2. Agree that the strategy and its priority areas be subject to a review by Policy and Resources Committee in early 2019. Any recommendations arising from this review, including any recommendations to amend the priority areas to be reported to the NPA for consideration.**
- 3. Note that the stakeholder management plan will be further developed and delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the P&R Committee and the Authority Chair, to approve the updated stakeholder management plan for inclusion in the strategy.**

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 can be 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 key areas identified by Members 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.
- 1.6 On 21 November 2017 the strategy was discussed at P&R Committee and the Committee recommended to the NPA for approval.

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 two years. This 'Action Plan' part of the strategy is designed to be reviewed every 12 months.
- 2.2 A lengthy discussion took place at the P&R Committee as to which were the three top priority issues on which to focus the Authority's public affairs work over the next two years.
- 2.3 Five options were put before Members, and as requested by the Chair of P&R, officers made a recommendation on the three areas that they felt were of greatest priority. Following the detailed debate by Members, the P&R Committee voted to agree the top three issues that they wished officers to develop more fully for the full Authority meeting.
- 2.4 The top three issues agreed by the P&R Committee are as follows:
- Future of farming;
 - Water; and
 - Sustainable tourism.
- 2.5 As agreed at the P&R Committee, following on from the Committee, officers worked to further develop the three priority issues above including:
- mapping out key stakeholders.
 - developing short, concise key messages.
 - setting out an action plan on how we will go about influencing the key stakeholders to achieve the identified objectives.
- 2.6 Officers were asked to ensure that the structure of the strategy remained short and clear with simple key messages that could be shared by all, Members, officers and volunteer.
- 3. How Public Affairs and Communications & Engagement will work together**
- 3.1 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).
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 It will be **supported by** our wider awareness raising and communications work as set out in the Communications & Engagement Strategy as agreed by the NPA in September 2012 and refreshed and taken to the P&R Committee.
- 3.4 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.
- 4. Measuring success**
- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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 strategy has been 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.
- 4.3 For our Communications & Engagement work going forward we will also present updates on progress against that strategy as part of the annual reporting cycle as an infographic with 10

or so key statistics that are currently being developed with the Projects & Performance Team.

5. NPA Considerations

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

6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	None – annual workplan and resources will be planned for in annual budget development, which is signed off by Members.
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 strategy. The equality implications of activities will be reviewed each time.
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.

*[If 'Yes' please explain – if a lengthy explanation is required this may need to become a separate paragraph]

7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 7.1 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	I. Public Affairs 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, Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2015–2020.