

Report to	South Downs National Park Authority
Date	22 March 2018
By	Director of Countryside Policy & Management
Title of Report Note	Summary and analysis of “A Green Future: our 25 year plan to improve the environment”

Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to note this report, the summary and analysis attached as Appendix I, and the potential implications of the 25 year plan for National Parks in general and the SDNPA in particular.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 After a number of iterations within Defra over the last couple of years, “A Green Future: our 25 year plan to improve the environment” was launched by the Prime Minister on 11th January. It was generally well-received in terms of the breadth of its scope and ambition, though many commentators wanted to see a clearer action plan to deliver these. Appendix I contains an SDNPA summary of its structure and content and draws out some potential implications for the SDNP and other protected landscapes.
- 1.2 The plan is substantial in its own right and highly relevant to the core business of the SDNPA, but needs to be taken into account alongside a raft of recent National Park-relevant policy announcements such as the Agriculture Command Paper *Health & Harmony*, the Housing White Paper, Industrial Strategy and review of the NPPF.

2. Policy Context.

- 2.1 The twenty-five year plan is wide ranging in scope and ambition – it is more like the 1995 sustainable development strategy “Securing the Future” than, for example, the more recent Natural Environment White Paper, as it covers issues like resource efficiency and international leadership. The main document runs to some 150 pages and an annex contains a further 145 pages of supplementary evidence. It is structured around ten 25-year goals (rather like the eleven outcomes in the PMP for the SDNP) followed by six overarching policies, each of which is split into up to six actions.
- 2.2 The ten goals are split into two groups, the *first six (quality of air, water, and wildlife; reducing environmental hazards like drought and flooding environmental hazards, resource efficiency, beauty, heritage & engagement)* being more about the intrinsic state of the environment whilst the *latter four (climate change, waste, chemicals and biosecurity)* are described as managing pressures on that environment.
- 2.3 There is plenty of scope for National Parks to contribute to the goals. Particularly relevant for us are the goals on: clean and plentiful water, thriving plants & wildlife, reducing harm from environmental hazards like flooding drought & coastal erosion, using resources from nature more sustainably, and enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.
- 2.4 National Parks also have something to contribute on mitigation and adaption to climate change, and enhancing biosecurity, though arguably less on clean air, managing exposure to chemicals or minimising waste. Of the statements against the actions there is again much to which National Parks can contribute, for example in relation to river basin management plans, surface and groundwater abstraction, protected sites and so forth.

- 2.5 Of particular note is the statement about “creating and restoring 500,000 hectares of wildlife rich habitat outside the protected sites network”. This idea of a Nature Recovery Network is expanded upon in Chapter 2 - see below.
- 2.6 The major part of the report (pages 31 to 128) is then set out as six chapters which describe the six policies and the various actions which sit behind them (see section 4 below). These chapters give more idea of the intended direction of travel and contain numerous commitments of all types.
- 2.7 The final part of the document (Section 2) shows how it will be put into practice. The headlines here are to consult on a new independent body to hold government to account and to develop metrics to assess progress: including a National Ecosystem Assessment type initiative beginning in 2022. There are further commitments to establish a Green Business Council and explore the potential for a natural environment impact fund. The plan is to be regularly refreshed, and leadership and delivery strengthened through better local planning.

3. Issues for consideration

- 3.1 Chapter 1 is titled “Using and managing land sustainably”. Headlines include embedding environmental net gain in housing and infrastructure and delivering a new environmental land management system (ie to replace the CAP).
- 3.2 Chapter 2 is “Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes”, which clearly speaks foursquare to the National Park experience. The headlines are the creation of a Nature Recovery Network, a review of National Parks and AONBs, and sustainable use of water. P56 acknowledges the designation of these protected landscape as amongst the outstanding achievements of the past 100 years, and the South Downs gets a mention as the newest in the family.
- 3.3 Chapter 3 is “Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing”. The headlines are about using greenspaces to improve health & wellbeing, encouraging children to be close to nature, creating green infrastructure (including one million urban trees), and making 2019 a year of action for the environment.
- 3.4 Chapter 4 is “Increasing resource efficiency and reducing waste and pollution”. The headlines here are targets for eliminating plastic waste by 2042 and all avoidable waste by 2050, tackling Air Pollution through the Clean Air Strategy and reducing the impact of chemicals.
- 3.5 Chapter 5 is “Securing clean, healthy, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans”. The headlines are to replace the common fisheries policy with a domestic version, and to achieve good environmental status including the completion of the network of marine protected areas,
- 3.6 Chapter 6 is “Protecting and improving our global environment”. The headlines here are to provide international leadership on climate change and biodiversity, help with disaster planning, protect forests and sustainable agriculture, and to leave a lighter footprint.

4. Options & cost implications

- 4.1 None directly, though the plan will have a major influence on the PMP review and the creation of our 2019-24 SDNP Corporate Plan.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 See above.

6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	See 4 above
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	N/A

Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	N/A
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	N/A
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	N/A
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	N/A
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	N/A
Are there any Data Protection implications?	N/A
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy	N/A

7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 7.1 The 21st century Hobhouse Review may presents both opportunities and risks for National Parks and AONBs, as it will look at financing and governance.

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Appendices I. Summary and analysis of "A Green Future: our 25 year plan to improve the environment"

SDNPA Consultees Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management

External Consultees None

Background Documents None