

**Agenda Item 11**  
**Report NPA14/18**

Report to	<b>South Downs National Park Authority</b>
Date	<b>26 April 2018</b>
By	<b>Communications &amp; Engagement Manager</b>
Title of Report	<b>Public Affairs Strategy</b>

**Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to:**

- 1. Agree the key messages for the three objectives of the Public Affairs Strategy, set out in sections 2.2, 3.2 and 4.2 of this report and note that these will be condensed as required for the purposes of wider external communication.**

**1. Summary and Background**

- 1.1 The Public Affairs Strategy sets out the 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 Five options were put before Members at the Policy and Resources (P&R) Committee in November 2017, and as requested by the Chair of P&R Committee, officers made a recommendation on the three areas that they felt were of greatest priority. Following a 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.
- 1.3 The top three issues agreed by the P&R Committee and subsequently approved by the full NPA in December 2017 are as follows:
  - Future of farming;
  - Sustainable tourism; and
  - Water.
- 1.4 It was agreed that focused messages would be developed for the three key issues to be used consistently by all over the period of the strategy until December 2019 to influence policy, practice and opinion across our key stakeholders.
- 1.5 The key messages have been developed taking input from recent Member Workshops, Task and Finish groups, working with the strategic leads in each of the areas and the Director of Countryside & Policy Management. The final agreed key messages will be taken away and condensed for use by Members, staff and partners.

**2. Future of Farming**

- 2.1 The goal of our future of farming public affairs work is that any new agri-environment scheme(s) gives an increased level of support to the environment as current schemes and to demonstrate that our farm clusters provide the ideal mechanism to test out potential schemes in lowland landscapes.
- 2.2 **Key messages:**
  - The future of the National Park's landscapes is dependent on the future of its farming.

- Farming in the UK is going through its greatest time of change within a generation.
- The South Downs National Park is the ideal place to pilot new schemes in lowland landscapes and be early adopters for any new policy.
- Sustainable, profitable farming and environmental protection can and must work in harmony.
- Our farm clusters are an ideal way to test mechanisms to achieve this.

### 3. Sustainable Tourism

3.1 The goal of our sustainable tourism public affairs work is for the South Downs National Park and its special qualities to be recognised as a major influence for attracting tourists to the area. The SDNPA would like to see an increase in brand alignment between the National Park Shared Identity and stakeholder brands, which will work together towards maximising benefits for the local economy, without spoiling the peaceful enjoyment of the landscape and the natural environment.

#### 3.2 Key messages:

- Tourism is a major economic driver across the South Downs National Park.
- The National Park designation adds value by attracting domestic and international tourists visiting the South East.
- Partnership working is critical in developing a strong unifying offer.
- The development of a sustainable visitor economy creates 'better places to live and better places to visit'.
- Access and information is essential for destination development – we must work together to make it easy to get here, enjoy and get around.
- The South Downs National Park Trust offers the perfect vehicle for businesses/ organisations wanting to demonstrate a commitment to give back to the environment and local communities on which their business depends.

### 4. Water

4.1 The goal of our water public affairs work is to improve the health of the rivers and water within the South Downs National Park.

#### 4.2 Key messages:

- 1.2 million people, wildlife and landscapes depend on water from the South Downs.
- Our rivers and aquifers are an integral part of the National Park landscape and they are in trouble.
- More sustainable land management, such as the use of environmentally friendly fertilisers, can improve water quality.
- In the Brighton Chalk Management Partnership (ChaMP) landowners, farmers and water companies are working together to reduce the nitrates and other pollutants getting into our water.

### 5. Next Steps.

- We will produce a fold out card with the key messages and key asks, to equip Members, staff and volunteers to act as ambassadors for these key issues.
- These key messages will be incorporated into the Public Affairs Strategy which will be brought back to the July NPA.

### 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 – 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 without clear messages consistently used by all, we will be unable to deliver on the three objectives of the Public Affairs Strategy.

## **RUTH JAMES**

### **Communications & Engagement Manager**

### **South Downs National Park Authority**

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 Appendices: None  
 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, Public Affairs Strategy

