

**Agenda Item 13**  
**Report NPA20/18**

Report to	<b>South Downs National Park Authority</b>
Date	<b>3 July 2018</b>
By	<b>Communications &amp; Engagement Manager</b>
Title of Report	<b>Public Affairs Strategy</b>

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

**1) Adopt the Public Affairs Strategy, set out in Appendix I of this report.**

**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 for the key issues were put before Members at the P& R Committee in November 2017. The Guiding Principles of the Strategy, the processes by which it will be delivered and the key stakeholders it addresses are described in the first four sections and the full detail in Appendix I. Following a detailed debate by Members, the Committee voted to agree the top three issues that they wished officers to develop further for consideration by the full Authority.
- 1.3 The top three issues agreed by the P&R Committee and subsequently approved by the NPA in December 2017 were:
- Future of farming;
  - Sustainable tourism; and
  - Water.
- 1.4 At the NPA in April 2018, key messages on each of these issues were presented and discussed. The broad shape of the messages was agreed and Members agreed that they should be further worked on, with input from a number of Members, and the Action Plan completed and presented to the NPA in July 2018 for final approval.
- 1.5 Working with the relevant Strategy Leads, it became apparent that some messages and asks were very specific to one stakeholder and so for Members and wider staff use, we have drafted separate ‘What do we want’ and ‘Why’ sections for each of the three issues. This meets the request for greater concision expressed when the last NPA decided on the issues, and subsequently confirmed by Member input.

**2. Future of Farming**

**2.1 What do we want?**

- To support sustainable and profitable farming that does not conflict with our purposes.
- To increase biodiversity in the National Park through maximising delivery of current agri-environment schemes

- To work with farm clusters in the National Park to increase knowledge and share learning
- To pilot new land management schemes in lowland landscapes including biodiversity, access and cultural heritage.

## 2.2 Why?

- Farming is an integral and important part of the South Downs landscape
- Sustainable, profitable farming can deliver environmental outcomes.
- We want to enhance the benefits of current Agri-environment schemes that cover approximately 60% of the National Park.
- Farmers in the South Downs want to work together – 70% of the National Park is now covered by the South Downs Farm Cluster Network and the benefits of collaborative working have been demonstrated.
- The Farm Cluster Network means we are ready and able to pilot any new schemes now.
- Estates and farms, through Whole Estate Plans, enable farmers and others involved in landscape management to build on their assets.

See Paragraph 6.1 on page 8 of the attached Public Affairs Strategy on Future of Farming (Green box)

## 3. **Water:**

### 3.1 What do we want?

- To improve the health of the rivers and quality of the water within the National Park
- Water companies, farmers and other National Park partners to reduce nitrates and other water pollutants
- Residents, visitors, businesses and land managers to use less water.

### 3.2 Why?

- Our iconic landscapes, wildlife and 1.2 million people depend on water from the South Downs and our waterways are in trouble with too much demand and declining water quality.
- Water quality can be improved through more sustainable land management and sustainable drainage systems which prevent nitrates and other pollutants getting into our water. E.g. The Brighton Chalk Management Partnership (ChaMP)
- The South East is an area of severe water stress. Average water use is 150 litres per person per day (PCC), against a national average of 135. We wish to work with the water companies to drive this well below the national average. The Government has set a target to reduce personal consumption to 130 l/h/d by 2030 and Southern water have a 25 year aspiration of 100 PCC.

See Paragraph 6.2 on page 9 of the attached Public Affairs Strategy on Water (blue box).

## 4. **Sustainable Tourism**

### 4.1 What do we want?

- We want our partners to work with us to use the National Park designation and special qualities to encourage people to spend more money and time here.
- To work with partners to increase rural investment based on sustainable tourism.
- To encourage use of the National Park shared identity to increase our appeal as a unique destination.
- Working together to ensure that people can explore, enjoy and get around the National Park easily, and understand how to protect the special qualities.
- To support visitor payback via the South Downs National Park Trust to conserve and enhance the National Park

#### 4.2 Why?

- Tourism brings money and employment into and around the National Park.
- The National Park designation adds value by attracting domestic and international tourists to the south east.
- A thriving visitor economy creates ‘better places to live as well as better places to visit’.
- Providing information to get here, enjoy and get around helps us to manage the impact of tourism.
- The South Downs National Park Trust offers the perfect vehicle for businesses/ organisations wanting to give back to the environment and local communities on which their business depends.
- One of the two core statutory purposes of the NPA is to increase opportunities for people to enjoy the National Park. So the more people we can encourage to come and enjoy the unique landscapes and wildlife, the better.

See Paragraph 6.3 on page 10 of the attached Public Affairs Strategy on Sustainable Tourism (yellow box).

4.3 As requested by Members, the Public Affairs Strategy now includes a definition of ‘sustainable tourism’. We have adopted the one used by National Parks England as it relates directly to protected landscapes. See paragraph 6.3 on page 10 of the attached Public Affairs Strategy (top of the yellow box).

#### 5. **Next Steps.**

- We will finalise the fold out card and get it printed and distributed to Members, staff and volunteers to equip them to act as ambassadors for these key issues. *Please note that the card will be designed as an aide memoir and is not intended to be distributed to others.*
- We will begin delivering the strategy and it will be brought back for review in July 2019.

#### 6. **Other Implications**

<b>Implication</b>	<b>Yes*/No</b>
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No at present. However, the Strategy will be brought back for review by Members in July 2019.
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?	The equality implications of activities arising from the strategy will be considered as they are developed. The actions arising from the Tourism objective would include addressing issues that make it difficult for people with protected characteristics to engage with the National Park and should therefore have a positive effect.
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. Many of the key messages emphasise the importance of sustainability.

## **7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

- 7.1 There is no risk to the agreed strategy, although positive, proactive communications will not satisfy every audience, clear messages consistently used by all will enable us to deliver on the three objectives of the Public Affairs Strategy. Without a strategy we will not be able to do so.

## **RUTH JAMES**

### **Communications & Engagement Manager**

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

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Appendices	1. 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, Public Affairs Strategy