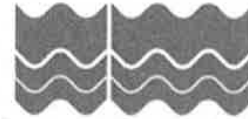


The redacted sections of this appendix are not for publication as they contain exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to the financial and business affairs of individuals, companies and other organisations, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exempt information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. This conclusion is reached on the basis that whilst there is a public interest in maintaining transparency of Authority proceedings in relation to commercial activities it is felt that on balance this is outweighed by the requirement of the National Park Authority to be able to discuss commercial activities and fully consider the implications of its actions or proposed actions without commercially sensitive information being released into the public domain.

## East Sussex County Council

East Sussex  
County Council



### Future Management of East Sussex County Council's Countryside Sites

#### Interest in Future Management of Countryside Sites

We will use this information to assess interest of third party organisation in the managing sites in the future across all sites. Any interest expressed is non-binding and can be withdrawn or modified at a later stage.

#### Part 1. Your Organisation

##### (1) Details

Name of Organisation: South Downs National Park Authority  
Address: South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH  
Contact Person: Alan Brough  
Email address: [alan.brough@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:alan.brough@southdowns.gov.uk)  
Telephone number: 01730 819202

##### (2) Legal Status

Type of organisation: SDNPA is a public sector organisation.

##### (3) Aims of organisation

Please provide your organisation's objectives:

SDNPA's objectives are prescribed by the UK Government, and are encompassed in two purposes and a duty;

Purpose 1: To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

Purpose 2: To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

Duty: To seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park in pursuit of our purposes.

##### (4) Current financial status

Please provide your audited financial accounts for the past three years including profit & loss and balance sheet. (Documents enclosed)

Are there any concerns about your organisation's present and future financial position? [No]

SDNPA is funded by a National Park Grant from Defra. This grant is currently protected by Defra and is not subject to cuts in government funding.

##### (5) Your Organisation's Experience in Managing Open Spaces

Do you have experience of managing rural and semi-rural open spaces? [Yes]

- For conservation [Yes] SDNPA, although a relatively new organisation, has experience in managing SSSIs including Chapel Common. SDNPA's Rangers and Farming Officer [Bruce Fowkes] provide advice and assistance to landowners and farmers across the National Park on conservation and public access and work closely with the South Downs Land Managers Group and a number of farm clusters. SDNPA plans to work in partnership with [REDACTED] in managing the iconic environmentally sensitive landscape of SSCP.
- For public access and visitor recreation [Yes] SDNPA manages the South Downs Way, a national trail from Winchester to Eastbourne, providing public access across the National Park. We have also worked with local landowners to design and construct shared use paths within the National Park (Egrets Way and Centurion Way). Furthermore, [REDACTED]
- Estate and property management [Yes] SDNPA has worked with a number of estates to produce Whole Estate Plans (WEP). Producing a similar WEP for Seven Sisters Country Park would be an early action in this project. We also manage our own freehold and leasehold offices throughout the SDNP.

## Part 2: Your Organisation's Interest in the Countryside sites

East Sussex owns and manages eight sites that have been identified as having potential for transfer to a suitable organisation. Please complete the following table to highlight the interest and preference of your organisation.

### How to Complete

1. Please complete the following table for each site that you have interest in. This means you should complete one row for each of these sites.
2. If you **do not** have a preference for 'freehold', 'leasehold' and 'collaboration' at each site that you have an interest in, just fill in 'yes' or 'no' for the three options ('freehold', 'leasehold' and 'collaboration') provided at each site of interest. If you have only one interest (e.g. freehold in a site, just fill this is with a 'yes' and the other two options as 'no').
3. If you **do** have a preference for 'freehold', 'leasehold' and 'other collaboration' at each site that you have an interest in, please indicate this by ranking the three options of 'freehold', 'leasehold' and 'other collaboration' for each site (1 = highest preference, 3=lowest preference).

Site	Options for Transfer and Future Management			
	Freehold	Leasehold	Collaboration with ESCC or other as owner	
	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	If yes to 'collaboration', state broadly what:
1A. Broomhill Sands				
1B. Camber Sands				
2. Chailey Common	N/A			
3. Ditchling Common				
4. Ouse Estuary				
5. Riverside Park	N/A			
6. Shinewater Park				
7. Seven Sisters	Yes			
8. Weir Wood	N/A			

Note: ESCC does not own the freehold of Chailey Common or Weir Wood and this option is not available for these sites. Riverside Park is a former landfill site and ESCC will retain the freehold of this site.

### Part 3: Plans for the Management of Each Site

- (1) Name of site: Seven Sisters Country Park
- (2) Vision – Seven Sisters Country Park is an iconic site of international importance. It is also the start of the chalk ridge that forms the backbone of the National Park. The vision therefore will be to create an outstanding habitat and world class visitor experience that together do justice to the landscape and the location. SDNPA wants to use the Country Park to tell the story of climate change and natural processes to a wide audience, starting with local schools and communities but extending to reach a national audience. We also want to exploit the opportunities available to increase the local economic impact of Seven Sisters, supporting rural businesses and providing incubation space for rural crafts and other local employment opportunities.

- (3) Benefits –

#### **Landscape / Habitat**

Cuckmere Haven Valley is less developed than most south coast estuaries and sits between the hills of the Seven Sisters and Seaford Head.

There is huge potential to create world class wetlands in Seven Sisters Country Park. SDNPA will apply best practice from other nationally and internationally significant sites, such as Rye Harbour (Sussex Wildlife Trust) and Minsmere (RSPB, Suffolk), to greatly enhance the flora and fauna. There is the potential for the area to be an exemplar for management of wet meadows and grazing marsh. Developing healthy wetland habitats will improve the visitor offer. Managing for increased bird populations throughout the year and creating stunning flower meadows will create much for the visitor to enjoy within the setting of this amazing landscape. Improved trails and bird watching facilities will enhance the visitor experience and make it a destination for wildlife watching.

We will also create an exemplar in the management of chalk grassland. Chalk grassland is the archetypal habitat of the Downs.

The chalk grassland habitat that was once extensive over the Downs has been reduced to tiny fragments mainly on steep slopes and the majority of this is in decline due to invasion by scrub and coarse grasses. Since the 1940s we have lost 97% of our chalk grassland.

Our vision for the remnant chalk grassland areas within the Country Park will be to bring them into excellent condition by reversing the invasion of scrub and implementing a targeting grazing regime on those areas to create outstanding chalk grassland. It is possible to restore chalk grassland on areas that have not been previously under the plough or treated in the past with artificial fertiliser. With the correct management of removing scrub, cutting and removing coarse regrowth and, most importantly, grazing, it will be possible to restore chalk grassland.

Chalk grassland is rarely seen on a scale that encompasses a landscape. The opportunity here is to have a slowly developing chalk downland over the hills that make up the Country Park and are continuous to the cliff top downland that stretches along the coast in both directions from the mouth of the Cuckmere. Rather than viewing the remaining distinct fragments of chalk grassland on the steep slopes, there will be continuous sheep grazed flower rich turf linking the present day species rich patches.

The vision for the landscape will be to recreate open downland with a sense of freedom and space to breathe and roam.

### **People (Visitors)**

Our aim is to create a world class visitor experience for those visiting Seven Sisters. To do this we must start with what visitors want from and love about this iconic place. Seven Sisters Country Park would sit at the heart of the visitor experience for the wider Sussex Heritage Coast. The stories we tell will emerge from the Special Qualities for the Sussex Coast currently being developed, in consultation with the public, by the 11 partners in the Heritage Coast Action Plan – including ESCC and SDNPA.

In addition, our enhancement of the visitor experience would very much work hand in hand with the landscape goals for the site – to improve the habitats at Seven Sisters to increase its wildlife, thereby moving from being a ‘stunning view’ to an enhanced natural and wildlife experience. To provide an inspiring visitor experience that helps visitors to understand the site, its habitats and challenges, we would focus on ‘Seven Species for the Seven Sisters’.

We will work in partnership to encourage visitors from a wide-range of backgrounds to visit the Country Park, reducing the barriers to access for those groups under-represented in the visitor profile. In addition, we will look to develop visitor experiences that support the health and wellbeing of both communities and individuals.

[REDACTED] we will use the landscape and stories of the Country Park to engage with a large schools audience, utilising the SDNP Travel Grant to enable schools from more deprived communities to access the learning opportunities it affords. We will promote the learning resources on the SDNP Learning Zone to reach wide schools audiences both locally and nationally. We will engage families in discovering, exploring, conserving and sharing their experiences of the Country Park through the John Muir Award in the SDNP and continue to use Forest Schools and Beach Schools to connect children with nature in this inspirational setting.

### **County Council**

Seven Sisters Country Park will remain in public ownership if this proposal is accepted. We would wish to publicly recognise the Council's contribution to the site and invite it to have a continuing presence and role within the Country Park. We recognise the expertise of the County Council in managing the assets to date and we would hope and expect to be able to buy into this expertise in the future. This would include both direct staff from the County Council in Property Management, Highways etc. and also, where possible, to share suppliers and contractors with the County Council.

We would expect to discuss the precise nature of any future role with the County Council over the coming months but would be open to a variety of ideas. SDNPA is also mindful of the contribution Seven Sisters makes to the other countryside sites owned or managed by ESCC and that those are run very much as a joint operation at present.

[REDACTED] and we would be interested in discussing with ESCC how we could ensure that there was no loss to the other sites resulting from any transfer.

#### **(4) Objectives and future management highlights –**

The vista overlooking Cuckmere Haven is undoubtedly spectacular, but the near landscape is less impressive either as a spectacle or as a wildlife habitat. Our plan will bring this to life with birds and insects. Although interesting bird species such as avocets do visit the Country Park they rarely stay. With expert management and creation of scrapes and pools managed in order to provide a rich food source for birds, this area will attract much larger numbers of birds.

As well as providing a home for breeding birds, areas like this on the coast can be very important stop-off points for migrating birds to fuel up before continuing their long flights. To see the skies above the

valley filled with thousands of waders coming down to busy themselves on the watery ground preparing to fly onwards thousands of miles will be an inspiration to visitors to Cuckmere Haven.

This will be our headline habitat initiative, to bring back the following species to the Seven Sisters and make them part of the landscape

### Seven Species for Seven Sisters

<u>Breeding lapwing</u>	Seeing the fluffy chicks of this bird would be the ultimate indicator of success in creating new wet meadow and grazing marsh.
<u>Adonis Blue</u>	This brilliant blue butterfly is the iconic species of species rich chalk grassland. To have the slopes bejewelled with large numbers of this butterfly in August will show that we have healthy chalk grassland.
<u>Redshank</u>	A common wader but there is little room for this species to breed in the Country Park. Space for this bird in the saltmarsh and wetter areas can be created.
<u>Meadowsweet</u>	Meadows filled with a hundred swaying flowers including the meadowsweet with its creamy white candyfloss flower heads.
<u>Ringed plover</u>	A tiny wader that lays its camouflaged eggs on the shingle, the return of this bird to breed will require careful management of the shoreline habitats
<u>Reed warbler</u>	A bird that relies on reed bed habitat brings alive the ditches with its insistent warble from deep within its secret home in the reeds.
<u>Wigeon</u>	Plaintive whistles will drift across the flooded winter meadows from flocks of hundreds of this chestnut headed duck feeding alongside other ducks and geese.

We will also focus firmly on improving visitor experience while managing demand on the landscape, rather than on increasing visitor numbers, through six key areas of work:

Providing an online gateway to the Seven Sisters Country Park that both inspires and provides practical information for those wishing to visit the Country Park, the wider Sussex Heritage Coast and Sussex, including how to travel by public transport, where they can eat and drink etc.

Creating a world class visitor experience in a fully staffed and managed visitor centre. The story at the visitor centre would focus on the Seven Sisters Country Park – its landscapes, habitats, wildlife, history and people – its place at the heart of the Sussex Heritage Coast Experience and as a gateway to the wider landscapes and experiences of the South Downs National Park.

Ensuring local food, drink and crafts are part of the enhanced visitor experience at the Country Park and giving back to the wider local economy.

Creating a strong sense of arrival for visitors to the site by public transport, car, foot or bike.

Using interpretation and signage to enable visitors to better move around the Country Park, enjoying and understanding its broader beauty and features, and relieving visitor pressure on the narrow channel down the sea.

Viewpoints, observation hides and interpretation of the wildlife and landscape will be included in a design for a world class visitor attraction.

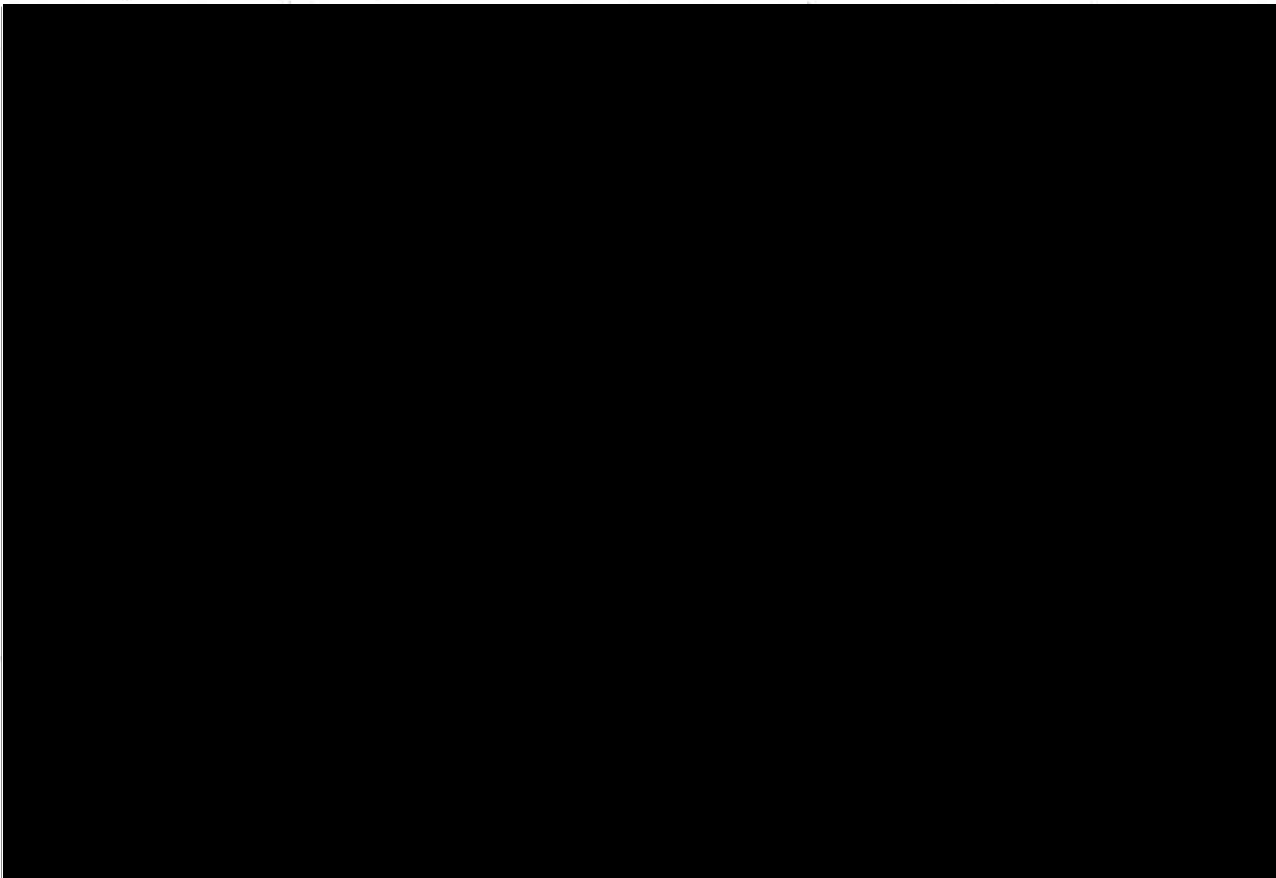
(5)

- (6) Discussions held with local stakeholders to the site: SDNPA has deliberately refrained from entering into discussions with tenants or neighbouring landowners, with the exception of those arranged with the knowledge and co-operation of ESCC. We have met [REDACTED] of Buzz Active and have ensured that any plans we have will enhance rather than detract from their operation and future ambitions for the service. We have also held discussions with the National Trust and all of our organisations are convinced that we can work together on the Heritage Coast.

Should we reach an agreement on the future of the Country Park it would be our intention to fully engage with the neighbouring landowners and the wider local community on our vision and plans for the future of the Country Park.

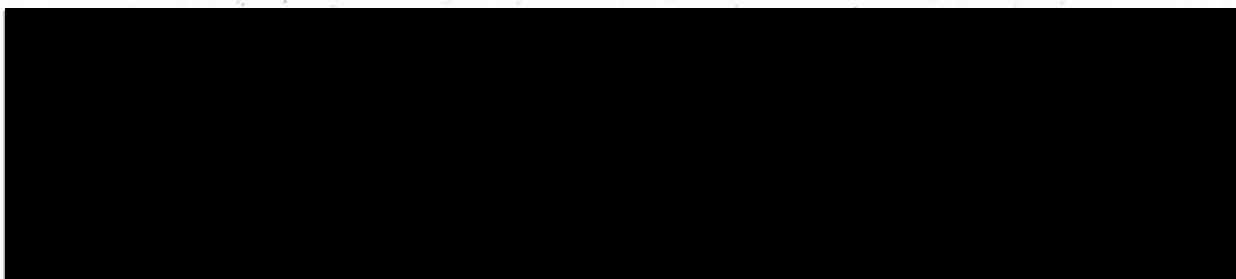
- (7) Issues, assumptions and risks related to the site and your organisation's plans: Taking on the freehold and management of Seven Sisters Country Park represents a significant financial, operational and reputational risk for any organisation contemplating such an acquisition. We believe that SDNPA as a public authority, dedicated to the enhancement and conservation of landscapes and the public understanding and enjoyment of them, is ideally suited to managing those risks. Specific risks related to the site include those around managing visitor numbers, either an unanticipated decrease, which might affect overall return on specific investments or indeed a similar increase in numbers, which would risk detracting from the overall visitor experience, putting pressure on the surrounding infrastructure and possibly damaging the fragile landscape. There are also risks related to climate change and global warming, particularly as it might affect sea levels, erosion of the chalk cliffs and the sea defences at the mouth of the Cuckmere.
- (8) Added value of your organisation: SDNPA is a relatively new National Park Authority and we already consider Seven Sisters Country Park to be one of the jewels in the crown of the National Park. This view would be reflected in a substantial investment of money and resources in the development and management of the Country Park, which would benefit the landscape, the overall experience offered to local visitors and those from further afield, and the local economy.





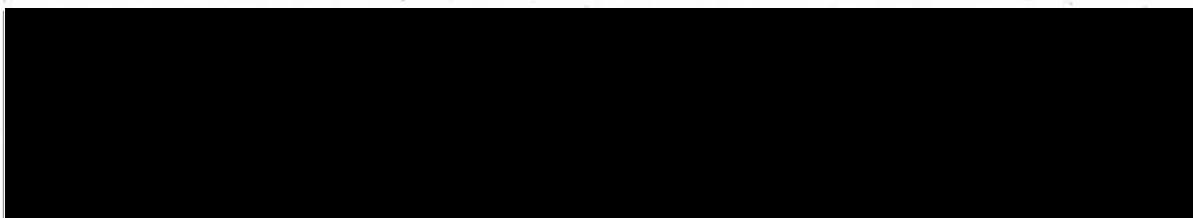
Note;

The Revenue Income and Cost Analysis in A represent the firm business case from SDNPA based on what we know at this time. This is therefore unconditional.



Staffing

Please give (a) an approximate indication of the number of staff you would employ to work on the sites and any relevant details (b) any relevant policies or considerations your organisation has in terms of fulfilling any TUPE obligations<sup>1</sup>. This should be no more than half a page.



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<sup>1</sup> TUPE = Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulation 2006.



## Part 5: Other Matters

- (1) Please highlight any future considerations for the transfer / development of collaborative arrangements that you wish to raise e.g. internal governance processes, legal aspects etc.:
- (2) Please state how you would meet the provisions of the Equalities Act 2010 in the context of the future management of the countryside site(s) of interest:

SDNPA has an Equality and Diversity Policy (included) and will follow this in any future management of the countryside site. The SDNPA Equality and Diversity Policy adds socio-economic factors to the eight protected characteristics covered by the 2010 Act. An Equality Impact Analysis will be carried out to ensure that any policies or practices adopted by SDNPA on a countryside site comply with the Act and the SDNPA policy.

- (3) Please highlight any environmental and sustainability policies of your organisation that have relevance to the management of the countryside site(s) of interest:

SDNPA has led the development of a Partnership Management Plan for the National Park. This document can be accessed by using the following link: <http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/key-documents/partnership-management-plan/>

We have also developed a Climate Change Adaptation Plan: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SDNPA-Climate-Change-Adaptation-Plan-Final-On-line-version.pdf>

At a more local level, SDNPA is a partner in the Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership and chairs the community consultative group on the management of the meanders.

- (4) Please highlight the 'social value' (i.e. the local impact on economic, social and environmental well-being) of the future management of the countryside site(s) of interest by your organisation:

### Economic

Our aim is not to increase overall visitor numbers to the Country Park. This would potentially provide a positive impact on the local economy but would also place increased stress on the road network and local infrastructure. Instead, our plan is to change the nature of the visits to the Country Park, making each visit longer and more immersive, and encouraging visitors to include other attractions within the area in their itinerary. Through this we will make an indirect contribution to the local economy.

In addition, we will make a direct contribution through our plans for the use of currently derelict or underused built assets on the site, creating opportunities for small craft businesses to establish themselves and benefit from the visitor footfall and other event space within the Country Park. We would expect to see upwards of twenty local jobs created within the Country Park over the next five years. This level of economic activity, carefully selected to be in tune with the landscape and to enhance the visitor experience, will inevitably generate wider indirect benefits to the local economy through the various supply chains established.

### Social and Environmental

It is at the heart of the ethos of National Parks in the UK that nature and open space should provide social and health benefits to every member of society. Although many millions of people in the UK do currently enjoy those benefits already in our 15 National Parks, many others could but do not because of real or perceived barriers that stop them doing so. It is often those who are most socially and physically disadvantaged who face the highest barriers.

SDNPA sees Seven Sisters as the ideal site to break those barriers down. The site is not physically challenging, has excellent transport links, is near to many urban conurbations, can be made very accessible to people of many abilities and is one of the best-known landscapes in the UK to people who do not visit landscapes. It is our intention to be pro-active in encouraging people from those urban conurbations to visit the Country Park and to provide guided walks etc. in a social setting and to treat this as a gateway for people to access other countryside sites across Sussex.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] to extend the work they do there, inspiring young people through direct contact with nature and creating ambassadors for the future. [REDACTED] would mean that we would be jointly managing volunteers on the site and creating new opportunities for volunteering within the Country Park diversifying both the types of volunteering roles available and the volunteers who participate in these.

#### **Completion**

Completed by: Alan Brough

Position: Head of Business Services

Date: 29 August 2018

Signed: [REDACTED]