



South Downs
National Park Authority

Agenda Item 14
Report PR08/19

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	28 February 2018
By	Director of Countryside & Policy Management
Title of Report	West Dean Whole Estate Plan
Decision	

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to endorse the West Dean Whole Estate Plan.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2015 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) introduced the idea of Whole Estate Plans, meeting with numerous Estates with significant land holdings within the National Park area (to date around 28 holdings have been engaged). A Whole Estate Plan (WEP) aims to enable collaboration between individual estates and the National Park Authority to achieve the ambitions of the Estate / Farm / School and the purposes of the National Park, and deliver the Partnership Management Plan. A WEP is a non-statutory plan which demonstrates the overall position and aspirations an organisation has as an estate and plans do not have to cover a specific time period, and may be updated to reflect changes in circumstance or withdrawn if appropriate.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 WEPs are a progressive and almost unique approach by a planning authority or National Park Authority in the UK as they look to foster good working relationships with key stakeholders and facilitate better understanding of the issues surrounding sustainable rural estate communities – of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They are not focused on or to be limited to planning matters but rather the whole husbandry of the Estate – farming, woodland management, conservation, access provision etc. This enables the Estate to demonstrate how they contribute to the policies and outcomes identified in the South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan.
- 2.2 An endorsed Whole Estate Plan (WEP) will be a material consideration in determining planning applications and will provide a solidly understood contextual background to any development proposals. The inclusion of a development proposal within a WEP however does not guarantee that planning permission will be granted and any proposal will still need to be comply with relevant development plan policies. A WEP can also be used to help guide and support funding bids, future neighbourhood plan production, agri-environment and forestry schemes and with other Natural Capital projects. Beyond the finished product, the WEP process also provides value in terms of relationship building; between the Estate and the SDNPA, as well as the local community.

3. Issues for consideration

3.1 A WEP is comprised of 4 elements:

- A Vision,
- An Asset Audit,
- Ecosystem Services Analysis, and
- An Action Plan.

Officers look at how all these elements relate to each other, i.e. is the Vision a genuine representation of the actions proposed, and are the actions evidenced by the Asset Audit and Ecosystem Services Analysis? Estates should also be able to demonstrate that they have engaged with the local community during the process of producing the WEP.

3.2 West Dean have been engaged in the WEP process from an early stage, attending early workshops and meeting with SDNPA Officers. A WEP for the West Dean Estate was submitted for endorsement in January 2019 (**Appendix 1**). It has been considered by officers from the Countryside Policy and the Planning Directorates and follows several meetings between officers and representatives of the Estate.

3.3 The Estate is located between Chichester and Midhurst and is mostly centred around the village of West Dean. The majority of the Estate lies to the north and west of the village, with the southern boundary falling largely between Bow Hill at Kingley Vale and St Roche's Hill near Goodwood. The northern boundary reaches Treyford Hill and the South Downs escarpment. West Dean Estate is bordered by Cowdray Estate to the north-east and Goodwood Estate to the east.

3.4 West Dean Estate as it is known today has formed around the beliefs and ethos set out by Edward James. This was to fulfil his desire to nurture music, traditional crafts and the visual arts. James established his Foundation (EJF) in 1964, with the College opening in 1971. West Dean College is at the heart of the Estate and all other activities link back to it in either supporting, economic or inspirational roles. The WEP has been developed to proactively link the aim and objectives associated with the Edward James Foundation to those of the National Park.

3.5 The WEP broadly follows the structure suggested in the SDNPA guidance, although has taken a different approach to the Asset Audit section, having structured the bulk of the Plan around 5 themes that correspond with the Edward James Foundation's organisational values; Creativity, Inspiration, Conservation, Stewardship and Excellence. There are also additional sections to support the WEP on the history of the estate and how the Estate supports the South Downs National Park's (SDNP) Special Qualities. This approach still captures all 4 of the necessary elements of a WEP and is considered to reflect a good level of the understanding by the Estate and its commitment to fulfilling the National Park's purposes.

3.6 The WEP has been well received by officers across the SDNPA, Some points of clarification have been suggested by officers, which are summarised in Appendix 2, and have been addressed within the final submission. In particular, matters around access and cultural heritage have been commended, as has the work carried out by the Estate's forester. The WEP reads very well and offers a fascinating insight into the Estate and how it performs with regard to the National Park's Purposes and Duty.

3.7 The following provides a summary assessment of each of the 4 elements that make up the WEP and the evidence of community engagement.

Vision

3.8 West Dean College of Arts and Education (the College) launched a 10-year strategic plan, entitled Vision 2027. Understandably, the focus of this is on education; there was a strong desire through the work undertaken to create the Vision to return to the fundamentals that were so important to Edward James when the Foundation was established. The College recognises the importance of the wider Estate in the delivery of Vision 2027.

Asset Audit

- 3.9 The Asset Audit provides a very thorough and interesting account of all the features, activities and services present on the Estate. This is well evidenced and supported by maps and photographs, which are successful in explaining and demonstrating how the Estate fits in the SDNP context and how diverse the Estate is. Case studies are used to demonstrate where projects and activities have been successful and provide a solid foundation for expanding or developing further projects later in the Action Plan.
- 3.10 Each section is summarised by a simple snapshot, informing readers of key facts associated with the topic and providing links back to the SDNP, for example p27 includes a summary of Estate properties comprising location and tenancies. It is considered that the Audit represents a comprehensive and holistic review of the assets on the Estate.

Ecosystem Services Analysis

- 3.11 The analysis of ecosystem services starts in the earlier sections relating to the EJF organisational values. This is interwoven through the text, and forms part of the case studies. The SWOT Analysis, which uses the ecosystem services headings to organise, provides a useful summary of previous points made and draws them all under each 'service' heading. It usefully also looks at combined strengths, threats etc under a combined heading for each section, for example a combined opportunity under Regulating Services is 'farm cluster to promote best practice'. The Estate has demonstrated a good understanding of what they have and the analysis that has been completed both here and in the earlier chapters is sufficient.

Action Plan

- 3.12 The Action Plan provides actions and identifies outcomes the Estate hopes to achieve under themes that link back to earlier sub-sections (e.g. cultural appreciation, work and employment). Within this table, p85-88, the SWOT response and relevant Partnership Management Plan outcomes are also stated to identify where the outcomes will be responding to and achieving these. This approach provides a very clear demonstration of how all the sections of the WEP are linked and evidences the understanding the Estate has of their relationship to the SDNP through relating back to the PMP outcomes, and their ability to fulfil the National Park's Purposes and Duty. Actions and outcomes remain broad and non-site specific, which is appropriate given the status of WEPs. This is achieved without diluting the clear aspirations of the Estate to deliver on their Vision.

Community Consultation

- 3.13 The Community Consultation section at p89 of the WEP summarises the actions that have been carried out by the Estate to involve the local community in the development of the WEP. This includes the stakeholder meeting held in January 2019. The Estate has demonstrated robust links to the community, through its relationship with the scouts, local school and through representation on West Dean Parish Council. It is considered that the consultation exercise is appropriate and reflects the requirements for endorsement.

4. Options & cost implications

- 4.1 There are no direct cost implications associated with the consideration of the endorsement of the WEP. There will be a likelihood once endorsed that the Authority may be expected to work with the Estate to realise some of the projects identified.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 If the WEP is endorsed, it will be placed on the SDNPA website and officers will be made aware that is now a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications.

6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No, although applications for grant funds or planning permission may be submitted for consideration relating to actions highlighted within the WEP.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No. If endorsed, the WEP will be included on the SDNPA website, however update and review of the document is the responsibility of the Estate. If the WEP is amended, it will need to be considered again by Officers and Members.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	N/A
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	No
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	This decision has no direct equalities implications. This document will be used to inform future decisions by the Authority, which will be subject to their own equalities impact assessments.
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 Data Protection implications?	None
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy: I.	The WEP has principles 1-3 at its core, which is evidenced by the Plan being set within the context of the SDNP Partnership Management Plan and to support the delivery of the draft Local Plan.

7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 7.1 There is the potential for a reputational risk for the SDNPA through failure of endorsement after an Estate has gone through the process of producing a WEP that meets the criteria for endorsement. There is also a risk of WEPs being misunderstood and considered as planning documents only, or being interpreted as a 'green light' for development. Both of these concerns can be mitigated by providing continued support to Estates, case officers and other

interested parties and providing guidance on the SDNPA website.

ANDREW LEE

Director of Countryside Policy and Management

South Downs National Park Authority

Contact Officer:	Vicki Colwell
Tel:	01730 819280
email:	Vicki.colwell@southdowns.gov.uk
Appendices	1. West Dean Whole Estate Plan 2. Summary of Consultation Responses
SDNPA Consultees	Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	SDNPA Whole Estate Plan Guidelines Producing a Whole Estate Plan - South Downs National Park Authority SDNP Partnership Management Plan 2014-2019 http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SDNP-Partnership-Management-Plan-2014-19.pdf

See separate pack for Appendix I – West Dean Whole Estate Plan

Summary of Consultation Responses

Comments from SDNPA Officers have been collated in the table below. Please note, these comments were provided to West Dean Estate and have been incorporated where possible into the WEP that is being considered by Policy and Resource Committee.

SWOT ANALYSIS	
General	<p>Could a comment about the strong connection (public transport and non-motorised user access) with Chichester be added?</p> <p>There is also potential to mention the functionality of Centurion Way in enabling people to access the College etc.</p> <p>Include the fact that so many business are supported by the Estate as a strength.</p>
Page 81 (Water cycling and Biodiversity) Page 83 (Water quality)	<p>Explain threat caused by badgers – without context and evidence we'd prefer badgers weren't listed as threats</p>
Page 81 (Nutrient cycling/Combined)	<p>Possible threat: changes to agri-environment schemes/Brexit</p>
Page 81 (Soil Formation)	<p>Strength is light, chalky soil. This makes for great margin strips around arable fields, which provides habitat for pollinators and cover for small mammals when the field is harvested. Especially a good opportunity around possible orchards.</p>
Page 81 (Biodiversity)	<p>Loss of blackthorn is a weakness in biodiversity, yet native hedgerows should contain a large percentage of this species. Opportunity to plant more native thorn hedges?</p> <p>Major opportunity for biodiversity is regenerating woodland and other habitats now that the Chilgrove shoot has ended.</p>
Page 82 (Genetic diversity)	<p>Possible strength: the Estate's trial on growing resilient strains of Ash trees</p> <p>The opportunity for trialling some Dutch Elm disease resistant Elm's is a major opportunity here (as well as biodiversity, disease and pests)</p>
Page 82 (no header)	<p>"tighter controls on shooting" – orphan statement (no header)</p>
Page 82 (water supply)	<p>This should have a much greater importance – there is an abstraction site on the Lavant just downstream of the Estate – therefore need to identify the role of the Estate in protecting the water supply</p> <p>Another opportunity for water supply, which would help to monitor the threat of pollution would be Riverfly monitoring where the Lavant runs above ground.</p>

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Page 82 (Combined)	A threat is that tenancy agreements are too short for people to manage the land with long-term ideals...if they re-write the tenancy to fit their aims, the new tenants will have to farm under these regulations. This might be too sensitive a matter to look at right now, but we wanted to flag for the future.
Page 83 (Air quality) Page 85 (Visitors and Tourism)	The fact that traffic is “speeding” does not make the air quality worse (unfortunately most cars are at their most efficient at 50-60mph)
Page 83 (Water flow and flood)	Possible threat: flooding issues caused by the Lavant in West Dean village (or have these now been addressed?)
Page 83 (water quality)	Use of slug pellets (weakness) links through with water supply in Provisioning services. As of 2020 these will be banned in the UK, so not an issue, The bigger issue will be if slugs grow a resistance to ferric phosphate.
Page 83 (pest and disease)	Natural regeneration would be a strength, however in the areas dying from Ash dieback, this regen will just be Ash again, which won't solve the issue of loss of woodland. To combat this, it will require re-planting with new species
Page 84 (Recreation and tourism services)	The final section (Threats) relates to affordable housing – what is the link here to recreation/tourism? Is this in terms of there not being suitable accommodation for key workers at the Estate, who support such services? This might then need picking up in the Action Plan.
Page 84 (Cultural Heritage)	A weakness under cultural heritage values is a lack of method for removing trees on archaeological features. If doing any forestry work on scheduled features, Historic England set out guidelines for this and advise on how not to damage the ground

ACTION PLAN	
General	<p>Make sure the balance between retaining the residential portfolio the Estate has (which is highlighted as a positive in the WEP) against converting some to student accommodation is recognised.</p> <p>Is there an opportunity to add anything about an improved pedestrian environment between West Dean Village and the Weald and Downland Living Museum?</p>
Page 88 (Heritage assets)	This section includes greater protection of historic buildings, but should also refer to archaeology (including non-designated archaeology identified on Lidar).