

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	06 June 2019
By	Communications & Engagement Manager and Head of Business Services
Title of Report Note	Entry Signage Pilot: Lessons Learned

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to note the lessons learned from the entry signage pilot scheme, which will be used to inform the development of any future entry signage schemes.

I. Introduction

- I.1 This paper sets out the lessons learned from the Entry Signage Pilot scheme. The lessons learned are intended to inform the planning and delivery of any further entry signage programme in line with the budget allocation.
- I.2 This was a complex, large-scale project in an entirely new area for the Authority. Members rightly chose for this first stage to be a pilot and this pilot has delivered an extremely high-quality project to budget to a very positive response from the public.
- I.3 All programmes of work, especially those that innovate, entail learning. The cross-departmental team who have delivered the pilot project have assessed each detail of the process to learn how, should members decide on a future phase of signage, that this can most efficiently and effectively be delivered.
- I.4 After a brief background this paper sets out lessons learned around process under a number of key headings:
 - Response from the public
 - Project management & procurement
 - Planning permission
 - Design & build quality
 - Health & Safety
 - Working with Highways Authorities
 - Decluttering and Parish signage

2. Background

- 2.1 In November 2016, following a recommendation from the P&R Committee, the National Park Authority (NPA) agreed to proceed with a pilot entry signage programme of up to 20 signs.
- 2.2 Following on from the NPA decision, officers used the Location and Design Principles agreed by Members to proceed with the planning and delivery of the pilot.
- 2.3 The agreed goals for the entry signage project were to:
- raise awareness/profile of the National Park as a place of national and international importance;
 - create a strong and positive sense of arrival;
 - support the duty of the SDNPA to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park;
 - enhance the 'sense' of place' and understanding of the National Park and its special qualities;
 - to encourage positive attitudes towards the National Park;
 - influence expectations and behaviour;
 - underpin our income generation work;
- 2.4 The entry signage is a key component of the SDNPA's wider package of brand and identity policies, including those being established in our draft Local Plan.

3. Response from the public, communities and businesses

- 3.1 The public's response to the signs is an important part of assessing the success of the pilot Phase. After the first batch of signs were installed in early spring, we issued a press release which resulted in 12 pieces of separate media coverage in print media across the three counties, with a reach of over 220,000 people. The coverage was all positive.
- 3.2 At the same time we went out proactively on social media and asked people "What do you think of our new bespoke entry signs?". We had a large response with over 1450 liking the post and well over 100 comments, all positive.
- 3.3 We have received only four negative comments – one of which liked the design but questioned the need for signs, one by someone who thought we shouldn't be a National Park at all and two who questioned the materials used.
- 3.4 The majority of the comments received have been extremely positive comments on the design, their appropriateness for this important landscape and quite a few comments referring to it being 'about time'.
- 3.5 We have been approached by a number of parishes excited by the project wishing to have an entry sign or a parish sign for their community.
- 3.6 The consultant leading on the Visitor Giving Scheme for the South Downs National Park Authority Trust has noted that a number of businesses approached have said that they would be keen to sign up once entry signage is in place.

4. Project Management & procurement

- 4.1 The project was led by the Communications & Engagement Manager with specialist input from the Head of Business Services, the Infrastructure Lead, Planning Officer and a number of external consultants and during the later installation phase, the Project Manager
- 4.2 Project meetings have been held throughout the project and a lessons learned, round up meeting was held on 7 May 2019.

- 4.3 The project was presented at:
- South Downs Partnership
 - SD Design Review panel
 - South Downs LAF
- 4.4 It was agreed that full planning permission should be sought before procurement commenced. After securing planning permission in June 2017, a full European tender was developed and sent out on the recommendation of the Head of Finance.
- 4.5 **Procurement timeline:**
- Tender sent out 14 July 2017
 - Preferred bidder selected on 19 September
 - Contract awarded on 2 October after the obligatory 10 day standstill period.
 - Contracts were signed 28 November 2017.
- 4.6 **Project timeline:**
- 28 November 2017 Contract signed
 - Original date for completion: June 2018
 - Project delayed until October 2018 due to additional safety assessments
 - This delay impacted on the contractor's resource plan. Combined with the complexity of the installation, this led to a delay until the first signs went in March 2019.

Figure 1.1 Iron triangle



- 4.7 We managed the project using the iron triangle of project management and the three crucial factors of quality, cost and time. We assessed that the priority was not to compromise on quality or cost as these were assessed as the most critical of the three factors.

4.8 **What worked well:**

- The delivery team's mix of expertise drawn from across the organisation with input from external consultants worked very well, ensuring that each aspect of the project was carefully considered to ensure high-quality designs deserving to signal entry to the UK's newest National Park.
- We consulted well with all relevant parties including parishes, Highways Authorities, land owners etc and built good working relationships with them. This thorough consultation meant that we were able to bring partners with us.
- The Design & Location Principles agreed by Members enabled the team to make key decisions on individual sites. For example, after hearing concerns from Clanfield about the location of a proposed sign, we looked at various alternative locations and designs. It was finally decided that we could not find a location that would not compromise the design and location principles agreed by Members that would also suit the parish council and so this sign was pulled from the pilot list.
- Presentations at the above groups allows widespread engagement with key partners.

4.9 **What didn't work well:**

- Had we fully understood the complexity of the project we would have allocated more contract management resource to this contract.
- As the project progressed it became clear that the complexity of the safety requirements, the liaison with four different Highways Authorities and the close management of the winning contractors required more project management time than had initially been anticipated to complete this complex project.
- Given this was a bespoke project and the first time that we had done a signage project on the highways, we did not build enough flexibility in the project timeline.
- The contractor showed their expertise to the construction of the signs. They did, however, like ourselves, underestimate the time and cost of liaising with four very different Highways Authorities.

4.10 **Action taken/future action:**

- When the additional project management requirement became clear, additional project management support was requested from the Chief Executive and granted, and a project manager joined the project team to assist in the day-to-day project management of the installation stage of the project.
- For Phase II, it would be recommended that the Communications & Engagement Manager provides project oversight as Programme Lead, and that the day-to-day management of production and installation is kept to time and budget by the Project Manager and that greater use is made of external consultants.
- Despite issues of slippage due to the complexity of the project, we worked closely with the contractors to ensure that the quality was maintained and that the installation phase was more accurately timetabled.
- Production and installation require very different areas of expertise. Any tender for any future phase would be better split into two distinct areas – production and installation - to ensure that the best external expertise can be secured. This still gives the flexibility for the contract to be won by and awarded to one contractor.
- Any tender for a future phase would require experience of working with at least one or more of the relevant highways authorities to ensure local knowledge and links are already in existence.

5. Planning Permission

5.1 Once Members agreed to go ahead with the pilot programme, a lead planning officer was identified and external consultants were used to pull together and submit the planning applications to come before the Planning Committee.

5.2 **What worked well:** Recommendation provided by Lead Planning Officer to submit planning applications by relevant Highway Authority rather than by individual sign. This also made it easier for the Highways Authorities.

5.3 **What didn't work well:**

- It is a lot harder and more complex to install signage when you are not the highway authority.
- This project has involved dealing with planners, those in charge of safety and traffic management at various stages of the project. As the project has progressed it has become clear that liaison is needed with a number of different departments in each Highways Authority.

5.4 **Action taken/future:** At the round up meeting for the Pilot Phase, the Lead Planning Officer recommended that for Phase II, Pre-Planning Applications Agreements be made with each of the four Highways Authorities. This would ensure that we had one lead contact in each Highway Authority who would liaise on the project across the various departments, avoiding any surprises or unexpected issues.

6. Design & build quality

6.1 It has been agreed throughout that the pilot entry signage project was not simply about making entry to the National Park, but to do so in a way that reflected the unique nature of the South Downs and that added value to people's experience of the National Park.

6.2 **What worked well:**

- The designs were presented to the Design Review Panel and received strong positive feedback for the quality and simplicity of the design and for the materials used.
- Site visits were made to the winning contractor's factory at various stages during the design process to ensure that build quality accurately reflected the design's vision. These visits were led by the external design agency who designed the signs and our shared identity, Peter Anderson Studios.
- Use of local timber in the signs has helped to ground the project very firmly in the local environment and has been seen as a positive by the public.

6.3 **What didn't work well:** On being awarded the contract, the winning contractor assessed the preliminary designs that had been submitted with the planning applications and made recommendations to amend the exact construction methods. This involved them producing a new set of drawings. This additional time to the schedule that had not been fully anticipated.

6.4 **Actions taken/future action:** Any Phase II would only include the agreed sign sizes and so no additional drawings would be required. We now have an agreed suite of nine sign types that are suitable for any location.

7. Health & Safety

7.1 The agreed signage for the South Downs was a bespoke design with 11 different variations designed to suit their chosen locations. This innovation has led to very positive feedback from the public but also entailed additional health and safety requirements.

7.2 **What worked well:**

- Throughout the process we were clear that we were unwilling to compromise on safety. We have ensured that we have done everything possible to ensure the safety of the

signs in terms of passive and structural safety, windloading and road safety. We used experienced external consultants to deliver the various safety aspects.

- A risk register was established to capture key post-implementation risks and ensure appropriate mitigations were put in place prior to the installation of the signage. This has provided reassurance that the ongoing management of risk associated with the installation of signage has been factored into the relevant teams workloads and will be used to inform any ongoing work in relation to potential future installations.

7.3 **What didn't work well:** A bespoke product and a commitment to prioritise health and safety means a lot more time than anticipated. As the winning contractor redid the construction drawings it was agreed with the Chief Executive that the passive and structural safety and the windloading safety assessments should be repeated with the revised structural drawings. This had not been factored into the original project plan and due to the contractor's workload and checks then requested from our legal advisors, there was a four month delay to the project.

7.4 **Actions taken/future action:** Passive and structural safety, and windloading assessments were redone on the revised structural drawings submitted by the winning contractors as described above. The proposal is that any future phase will use the agreed suite of nine sign types. This will mean only sign types that have already tested will be used, so no further structural, passive safety or windloading assessment will be required.

8. Working with Highways Authorities

8.1 **What worked well:** Initial meetings were held with all of the Highways Authorities to discuss the project and how they would like to work going forward. The relationship with the Highways Authorities was then maintained by the Infrastructure Lead. Site visits were arranged to each of the sign locations with the relevant Highways Authority.

8.2 **What didn't work well:**

- Each of the four Highways Authorities had different requirements for the planning applications.
- As mentioned previously, this complex project required liaison with a number of different departments within each Highway Authority which added to the project management load.

8.3 **Actions taken/future action:** As described above, the suggested way forward is to develop a Pre-Application Planning Agreement with each of the Highways Authorities so that there is one lead point of contact in each, making any future phase easier for both us and the Highways Authorities.

9. Decluttering and parish signage

9.1 When the entry signage project was first discussed, decluttering and parish signage were envisaged as part of the entry signage pilot. As the project has progressed it has become clear that these two areas are distinct pieces of work.

9.2 Decluttering remains a priority for the National Park but as outlined at a Member Workshop on 28 March 2019, decluttering is a Park-wide issue and should not be limited to the entry signage locations.

9.3 When we have spoken to communities and parishes it has become clear that when they mention parish 'signage', that they are speaking about much more than a sign, and are talking much more widely about improving the public realm within these communities.

9.4 **Actions taken/future action:** The Infrastructure Lead is best placed to take forward this area of work and she is leading the Authority in developing a cost-neutral approach working at the three levels of parish, county and Highways England.

9.5 A proposal will be brought to the National Park Authority in July 2019 for a Communities of the South Downs Project to be led by an external consultant, managed by the Infrastructure Lead, which will encompass parish signage.

10. Project costs to date and value for money

- 10.1 **Total budget:** £185,000 for pilot phase (£25,000 for design, safety, planning permission etc. and £160,000 for production and installation). A further £50,000 was allocated for 2018/19 and £50,000 for 2019/20.
- 10.2 **Spend to date:** £36,100 was spent on design, passive safety, road safety and windloading assessments. The manufacturing and installation of the 19 signs was subsequently sent out as a full European tender and awarded to the winning contractor at a value of £157,449. The total cost therefore included, not just the production and installation of the 19 signs, but all of the associated design and safety work for all of the signage.
- 10.3 **Remaining funding:** £90,000 of already allocated funds remains for any further phase.
- 10.4 It is always hard to estimate costs when you are innovating and creating a bespoke product. It was agreed that the quality of the signs and their safety was paramount and this meant investing in high-quality production and carrying out all available safety assessments.
- 10.5 Value for money was ensured by appointing a contractor following an open competitive process and ensuring the contractor delivered the specifications for the value quoted in the contract.

11. Summary and next steps

- 11.1 The entry signage pilot set out to add real value through bespoke entry signage that could only be of and for the South Downs National Park.
- 11.2 Innovation means there isn't always an exact roadmap to follow but the results of innovation are worth it.
- 11.3 Doing the first of anything means that not all eventualities can be planned for. However, the groundwork and learning from the pilot mean that much of the key work for Phase II has already been carried out.
- 11.4 It is crucial to have the right mix of internal and external consultants to maximise knowledge, ensure the project can stick to time and that the time required from staff is most effectively used.
- 11.5 There has been an extremely positive response to the signs and people want more.
- 11.6 The current intention on the basis of the lessons learned is to bring a proposal to the NPA in July 2019 for a second phase.

12. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No, this is a lessons learned paper. The current intention on the basis of the lessons learned is to bring a proposal to the NPA in July 2019 for a second phase.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	This paper is designed to ensure value for money in any future phase. See also paragraph 10.5
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	No
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality	Yes. The introduction of signage is not considered to have any equalities implications. The design and siting of the signs is such

duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	that they do not impact on access or visibility.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	No
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy	None

13. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 13.1 As this is a lessons learnt paper there are no direct risks arising from the recommendations contained in the paper. One purpose of this paper is to help address the risks associated with any future signage schemes, by ensuring that actions and mitigations developed during the pilot stage are captured and applied to any future stages.

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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 None