



South Downs
National Park Authority

Agenda Item 17
Report NPA19/20-08

Report to	South Downs National Park Authority
Date	2 July 2019
By	Communications & Engagement Manager
Title of Report Decision	Entry Signage for the National Park: Phase II

Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to

- 1. Agree Phase II of the signage project as set out at Section 5 of the report, using the design and location principles previously agreed by the Authority (Appendix I).**
- 2. Approve expenditure of up to £207k to be taken from strategic reserves.**
- 3. Approve the commencement of the proposed procurement exercises and delegate authority to the Chief Executive to award contracts for the above, following compliant competitive processes.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 As the UK's newest National Park, a priority for our communications and engagement work since our designation has been to raise the profile of the National Park among residents, visitors and within wider regional, national and international arenas.
- 1.2 The development of our shared visual identity that all could use to communicate about this special place was the first step. The entry signage is based on this shared visual identity.
- 1.3 It was a conscious decision not to create entry signs until the SDNPA was fully established and had developed its own identity, track record and distinctive policies. In November 2016, following a recommendation from the then Policy & Programme Committee, the National Park Authority (NPA) agreed to proceed with a pilot entry signage programme of up to 20 signs.
- 1.4 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 (see **Appendix I** for Design and Location Principles).
- 1.5 In June 2019 a Lessons Learned report on the Entry Signage pilot was brought to a non-quorate meeting of the P&R Committee. Those present commented that the project had been a success and passed their congratulations to the staff involved. Members said they were very proud to see the signs in place and to see and hear how welcomed they have been by communities and residents across the whole of the National Park.

2. Context: Agreed goals for Entry Signage

- 2.1 The National Park has over 600km of border with around 2,000 entry and exit points. It was therefore agreed that it was neither practical or of benefit to signpost every route. Instead,

the location principles set out the criteria for how the entry signage points would be identified.

2.2 The Entry Signage is about much more than physical signs. It is about creating a sense of place and positively impacting on people's understanding of the value of the National Park in the busiest region of the UK and in the wider national and international context. 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 (for example, responsible dog ownership, taking litter home etc.);
- underpin our income generation work.

2.3 The entry signage is a key component of the SDNPA's wider package of brand and identity policies.

3. Lessons learned from Pilot Phase

3.1 The Lessons Learned paper taken to the non-quorate P&R Committee in June assessed the pilot against the following criteria:

- **Did it achieve the goals agreed by Members?** Yes. A YouGov survey conducted since the signage has been installed has shown that 22% of those who recognised the shared identity had seen it on our entry signage. The presentation and discussion acknowledged the overwhelmingly positive response from communities and the public to the pilot signage.
- **Did it meet the three factors of quality, cost and time?** We managed the project using the iron triangle of project management and the three crucial factors of quality, cost and time. The Lessons Learned Paper highlighted that the priority was not to compromise on quality or cost as these were assessed as the most critical of the three factors. The paper acknowledged the delay to completed delivery of the pilot and set out the key reasons for the delay being additional safety assessment needed after design tweaks post tender and an underestimation as to the complexity of installing bespoke signs with four separate highways authorities.
- **What lessons could be taken forward to a future phase of entry signage?** Areas of learning identified in the Lessons learned paper have directly fed into the planning for the Phase II Proposal, particularly in the areas of procurement, liaison with Highways Authorities and project duration.

4. Parish signage

4.1 A separate paper called Communities of the South Downs, which includes parish signage, will be brought to Members later in 2019. Members of the P&R Committee commented on the topics it should cover and some proposals it should contain.

5. Phase II

5.1 **Quantity and locations:** Using the location principles, the gaps left by the pilot and the I I sign designs developed using the design principles, a group of cross-directorate officers carried out site visits to over 30 locations across the National Park. On the basis of this extensive exercise we are recommending a Phase II of between 30–32 signs.

- 5.2 This team has identified 32 possible signage sites spread across the National Park and the appropriate sign for each of these locations. Each of these locations requires more investigation to determine if they are suitable for a sign; including services searches, a road safety audit, and assessment by the relevant Highways Authority – all of which would be presented as part of a full planning application to the SDNPA Planning Authority.
- 5.3 **Cost:** Using the costs from the previous tender exercise we have arrived at an estimated project cost of £285,000. This includes 10% on top of production and installation costs to cover safety assessments, planning application fees and contingency.
- 5.4 There are funds amounting to £78,000 remaining in the Pilot project budget. We are therefore asking for an additional £207,000 to produce and install an additional 30–32 signs. As was the case with the original signage project this will be taken from strategic reserves.
- 5.5 **Procurement route:** During the pilot phase we sent out the full project in one tender as per our normal practice. Learning from the pilot phase we believe that the tender for Phase II should be split into two halves, production and installation. The specialised craftsmanship and production skills needed to make the high-quality bespoke signs is very different from the detailed experience needed to liaise with four individual highways authorities and to comply with each of their policies.
- 5.6 We are therefore recommending that two separate tenders be issued: one for production and one for installation.
- 5.7 **Planning:** Learning from the complexity of multiple sites across four different Highways Authorities we are recommending that we would again submit the signs in four groups – with one planning application per Highway Authority.
- 5.8 We will also look to create Pre-Planning Application Agreements (PPAs) with each of the four Highways Authorities so that we have one central point to liaise with in each Highways Authority, making it easier for both ourselves and the Highways Authorities to coordinate the different aspects of the project, including road safety, planning application consultation and installation.
- 5.9 **Maintenance:** We are currently in the process of putting in place a maintenance plan for the current signs and this would be extended to include all future signs from Phase II.
- 5.10 **Outline project timeline:** It is impossible to give exact dates due to the need to go out to tender. However, the proposed timeline is:
- Planning applications brought to September 2019 Planning Committee.
 - Tenders sent out post planning permission.
 - Contract awarded by end of 2019 and work to be completed by end of 2020.

6. Next steps

- 6.1 A full project plan will be drawn up and overseen by the Communications & Engagement Manager working with a cross-directorate team and project managed by the Authority's Project Management Officer.
- 6.2 The designs and locations will be subject to approval by the SDNPA Planning Committee.
- 6.3 Two tenders will be sent out post-planning. One for the production of the signs and one for their installation.

7. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any	Yes £207,000 see Section 5.3-5.4 above.

Resource implications?	Ongoing maintenance costs will be met from annual existing budgets.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Using existing designs means saving costs in terms of design and passive safety assessment. The lessons learned from the pilot phase will increase the value for money and impact of future phases.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	The introduction of signage will not have a positive or negative impact on any protected characteristics under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) but it will assist SDNPA's efforts to open up access to the National Park to wider and more diverse communities. The design and location of individual signage will be considered against the principles of the PSED to ensure any potential impacts are considered.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	Possible damage to signs which is being covered under the Maintenance Plan.
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	Only certain contractors are allowed to operate on highways road signage and we would ensure that the work is contracted to such a company. We also have completed passive safety, windloading and structural safety assessments for all of the sign types and will commission a road safety audit for all of the proposed signs.
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy:	Hybrid signs use locally sourced wood. One of the outcomes of the signage project should be a greater public identification with the National Park and its values which should support positive behaviour change and strengthen the market for local produce.

8. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

8.1 The following risks have been identified in relation to the introduction and further roll out National Park signage. As part of the pilot project a risk register has been developed to capture the risks associated with signage once in place. This includes risks related to installation, maintenance and safety. This risk register will be kept under review during Phase II of the project.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Introduction of limited signage creates widespread requests for indiscriminate signage.	Medium	Reputational damage	Clear location and design principles enable the inclusion or exclusion of sites based on their match to these criteria.
Accusations of increasing clutter	Medium	Reputational damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Highways Authorities to rationalise and declutter • Using any and all opportunities to double up/use exiting signage • Entry signage work feeds into our wider work on planning enforcement and declutter.

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Appendices
 I. Entry Signage Design and Location Principles agreed by Members in November 2016.

SDNPA Consultees
 Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services, Business Service Manager

External Consultees
 None

Background Documents
[Authority Meeting 29 November 2016 - South Downs National Park Authority](#)
[Policy and Resources Committee 6 June 2019 - South Downs National Park Authority](#)

Appendix I: Entry Signage Design and Location Principles

Agreed by members November 2016.

The Design and Location Principles agreed by Members in November 2016 and set out below have been used by Officers to

1. Design principles

- 1.1 A key principle of any entry signage project has to be not only the look of individual signs but the importance of the landscape and the impact that any signage would have on it, so a set of design principles will be used to determine how best to create signs that best reflects and respects the landscape:
- **Shared identity at core** – all signage will be based around the shared identity.
 - **Fit with the landscape** – a signage language or hierarchy will be created with a suite of options depending on the location. For example, a vertical sign will not work in an open landscape and a low horizontal sign would be more appropriate in this context. The shared identity will provide the unifying feature to connect the different styles of signs.
 - **Local materials and local craftspeople** – the signs will be made from natural materials using local craftspeople found within the South Downs, with the idea being that the signs never leave the South Downs. The preference is for wood but discussions would need to take place with the Highways' Agency about appropriate materials.
 - **Avoiding clutter** – where possible, we would seek to 'double up' with existing signs to deal with issues of clutter. For example, at certain locations signs could be combined with village or county signs and we could work with the Highways Agencies to use the back of existing signs. We would also look to work with the Highways Agency to identify any decluttering/rationalisation of signage in and around signage locations. We will ensure that this fits within the Authority's wider programme of decluttering and enforcement to improve the visual landscapes of the National Park.
 - **Clear, accessible design** – safeguarding against weather etc to ensure signs are always legible and a positive reflection on the National Park and the SDNPA.
 - **Cost effective and maintainable.** Initial design work has revealed that such signage entails detailed requirements including Highways requirements around passive safety and specialist contractors entitled to install signage on the roadside. It will cost £25,000 to create finalised designs, a maintenance plan for ongoing upkeep of the signage, to ensure we are meeting legislative requirements and to bring up to 20 signs to planning application. This has been factored into the budget as set out in Paragraph 9.

2. Location principles

- 2.1 Most National Parks have created signage at all key entry points. We propose a more strategic and staged process based on a set of key location principles:
- **Limited number** – no more than 20 sites in the initial phase.
 - **Exemplar sites** – sites chosen should say something, for example, key sites could be where people are emerging from urban areas into breathtaking views of the South Downs. This means that the sites do not need to be on the precise line of the boundary but will work within the wider landscape.
 - **Inspiring** – to create a sense of arrival and place we need to ensure that the signage inspires those who see it.
 - **Balance** – ensure that there is a good geographic spread.
 - **Avoiding clutter** – ensure that each location reduces rather than adds to clutter (as highlighted above under Design principles).