



**South Downs**

National Park Authority

**Agenda Item 15**  
**Report NPA19/20-17**

Report to	<b>National Park Authority Meeting</b>
Date	<b>1 October 2019</b>
By	<b>Communications &amp; Engagement Manager</b>
Title of Report	<b>Public Affairs Strategy</b>
<b>Decision</b>	

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

- 1. Note progress on delivery of the Public Affairs Strategy (PAS).**
- 2. Agree that the Public Affairs Strategy be reviewed in October 2020.**
- 3. Confirm that the current three issues set out in para 1.3 of the report will continue to be the Authority's public policy priorities until the review of the PAS has been carried out.**

**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. This does not mean they are the only priority issues for the Authority: rather, they are the key issues that can most be affected by public policy work.
- 1.2** Five options for the key issues were put before Members at the P & R Committee in November 2017. 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 meeting 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** In July 2018 the final messages were approved and a card aide memoire was printed and distributed to Members and staff. This paper summarises the actions that the whole organisation – Members, staff and volunteers – have taken to actively develop, deliver and promote these messages over the past year.

## 2. Future of Farming

### 2.1 What did we set out to achieve?

- 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.

### 2.3 What have we achieved?

#### 2.3.1 **Involvement in the DEFRA ELMs Tests & Trials:**

We are running a series of **farmer workshops** throughout the National Park to ask the farming community four questions on the ‘building blocks’ of the new scheme:

- What should the Land Management Plan include and how should it be used in scheme design and delivery?
- How should objectives be prioritised?
- What specialist advice will be required to develop and implement schemes?
- What is the role of Farm Clusters/landscape projects in scheme design and delivery?

We ran 3 workshops in September that were attended by 50 farmers/landowners/advisors, and are running another 4 workshops at the beginning of October. Once we have completed the workshops, we will compile a report of the feedback and send to DEFRA before the end of the year.

#### 2.3.2 We are currently developing a second DEFRA ELMs T&T proposal with the Farm Clusters and the Land App. The aspiration is for the Farms Clusters to use the Land App to assess and plan the delivery of key priorities (e.g. chalk grassland, access, resource protection) at a landscape scale. We aim to submit the final proposal in October and deliver the project over the winter (November 2019 to March 2020).

#### 2.3.3 We have contributed to national feedback on DEFRA proposals with the other NPAs and NPE through the England Agriculture and Rural Development Group (EARDG)

#### **2.3.4 Farm clusters within the National Park to become innovative test beds for potential agri-environment schemes in lowland landscapes**

- All six farm clusters in the South Downs are involved in our DEFRA Tests & Trials.
- All farm cluster group members and all farmers within the National Park have been invited to the farmer workshops.
- Involvement in the National Pilot (starting in 2021) has been discussed at Farm Cluster Steering Group meetings, which has been well received.

#### **2.3.5 More of the National Park is covered by the South Downs Farm Cluster Network so that more farmers have the opportunity to be part of a farm cluster**

The membership of each Farm Cluster has increased since they were first launched, for example:

- Eastern South Downs Farmers Group – 34 members (11,461ha) in 2016 to 45 members (15,671ha) in 2019
- Selborne Landscape Partnership – 17 members (4182ha) in 2016 to 22 members (4413ha) in 2019

2.3.6 Work is ongoing to look at the possibility of establishing new farm clusters. However, it is important that this is driven by the local farming communities in those areas as it is a very much bottom-up approach. Potential new groups include the Meon Valley and Chichester Plain.

2.3.7 We have worked with two Cluster Groups (Arun to Adur and Eastern Downs) to develop the Meet the Farmer initiative. We have now created 13 videos (6 Arun to Adur and 7 Eastern Downs) that have been viewed 10,221 times on twitter and 1,253 times on YouTube. Both the NFU and CLA have supported these projects which have provided a powerful new delivery method for the public affairs messages.

2.3.8 We have helped to raise the public profile and engagement of our farmers and farm clusters by establishing South Downs Farm Cluster Network Twitter and Instagram accounts to represent all six groups on the Downs. This provides an opportunity to share and promote the good work they are doing with the wider public.

2.3.9 We are developing a website, called South Downs Farming, which will provide a web presence for the South Downs Farm Cluster network. The site will contain information about farming on the South Downs and each of the cluster groups. It will also provide another opportunity to update and showcase the various work and projects that the clusters undertake.

#### **2.4 Media metrics for Future of Farming**

More than 25 separate pieces of coverage, with PR value of £9,700 and reach of over 2 million:

- Media campaign in 2018 and 2019 on the launch of Meet the Farmer videos along the South Downs Way – promoting the benefits of nature-friendly farming and the importance of farming to the landscape of the National Park.
- Media release on farm diversification in the National Park. Story also repurposed for National Park's planning newsletter.
- High-profile campaign around working with farm clusters and landowners – including filming for "Escape to the Country" and ITV Meridian at East Clayton Farm – to promote pollinator biodiversity in our Bee Lines campaign.

- Media release around working with farmers to promote biodiversity, including the installation of barn owl boxes at barns.
- More than 25 separate pieces of coverage, with PR value of £9,700 and reach of over 2m.

## 2.5 Is this topic still relevant?

The future of farming remains an area of great uncertainty. This remains a high-priority issue for the National Park Authority due to its landscape-scale coverage and impact on our Purposes and Duty.

## 2.6 What is coming up?

- Four remaining DEFRA ELMs Tests & Trials farmer workshops and then compiling and submitting a report on the findings.
- The National Pilot of ELMs provides a huge opportunity for the SDNPA (as well as the wider English NPs). However, but this is not due to start until 2021 and we have very little information to date to enable us to undertake any forward planning.
- Surrey Hills & Kent Downs AONB Test and Trials Study: While the SDNPA viticulture study will focus on 'the impacts' of viticulture in the South Downs National Park designated landscape context, the Kent Downs AONB is expecting (subject to final funding confirmation) to be leading a Defra funded Test and Trial which will be seeking to explore 'the opportunities' presented by Viticulture in a protected landscape. This study is expected to commence in September 2019 with the main aim to establish ELMs investments that could enhance the landscape and environmental performance of vineyards. SDNPA has agree to work in collaboration with Surrey Hills and Kent Downs AONB as part of the impact study by liaising closely with the managers of the Test and Trials study and broadening the research area of the SDNPA Viticulture Study to explore opportunities for investment that might mitigate any negative impacts identified that might come within the scope of ELM investment.

## 3. **Water:**

### 3.1 What did we set out to achieve?

- 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.

### 3.3 What have we achieved?

3.3.1 Changes in water quality as a result of interventions can take a long time to feed through. However, next year the Environment agency will publish the latest assessment of Water Framework Directive ecological and chemical status which will help to show where improvements are being made. As paragraph 3.3.4 below shows, it is possible to measure reductions in the inputs. For example, cover crops have been shown to reduce the quantity of Nitrate leaching by up to 90%. Below are set out the three key areas in which we have focused our efforts.

#### 3.3.2 **Water Resource Management plans:**

We have actively engaged with all 3 water companies on the content of these plans and they have:

- increased the planned level of investment in catchment management and working with landowners in their water resource and business plans for the next five years;
- set challenging targets for per capita consumption; and
- also begun looking at innovative ways to promote water efficiency through partnerships.

#### 3.3.3 **Trialling new land management methods:**

- The water companies have been running a series of trials of land management that reduces the nitrates that reach ground water and surface waters. Trials include the use of cover crops, no till, precision farming and Foliar Nitrogen feeds.
- Cover crops have been very successful in reducing winter leaching of nitrates by up to 90% (Porous pots were used to collect water samples from different crop mixes and a control of bare stubble) and have now been rolled out more widely. We are in close touch with other continuing trials.

#### 3.3.4 **Be more water efficient:**

- We have worked with water companies and catchment partnerships to provide information on water efficiency, including 2 Wild Chalk events which engaged with over 2,200 people.
- We are also working with developers to build more water efficient homes and our Local Plan sets a per capita consumption (PCC) target of 110 for all new built properties.
- Through the ChaMP project we have engaged with Highways England and local authorities to improve water quality and develop SUDs projects, advised parks and gardens teams and golf courses. We are currently producing a golf course good practice case study and will be running an awareness event.

### 3.4 Media metrics for water

More than 20 separate pieces of media coverage – national and regional - with reach of 164,000 and PR value of over £7,600.

- Media release for World Water Day on March 22 and follow-up article for World Water Week in August 2019 on how to help protect water of National Park – all content repurposed across all our comms channels.
- Other associated media releases linked to water quality:
  - Recovery of otters due to improve water quality on the River Meon.
  - Publicity of our Wild Chalk event and raising awareness of the Brighton aquifer through ChaMP.
  - Year of Green Action encouraging young people to save water.
  - Youth Action Days on River Rother

- Forthcoming media push planned for World Rivers Day on September 28 – including a river restoration project and profiles of the National Park’s rivers.
- Targeted media releases and publicity about the work of ChaMP, including the importance of SUDS, monitoring slugs to help reduce water pollution, and a soil quality workshop for local farmers.

### 3.5 Is this topic still relevant?

Water also remains a high-priority issue across the National Park due to its landscape-scale coverage, important ecosystem services and impact on our Purposes and Duty. Seeing real change will also take time.

### 3.6 What is coming up?

- Through ChaMP continued development of work with Local Authorities to develop SUDs projects, promotion of good management to other and managers such as golf courses, parks departments and allotments.
- Further work with farm clusters to get water quality and water efficiency measures on their agendas. .
- Work with the water companies to promote water efficiency to businesses, land managers and the public.
- Proposals from water companies for new infrastructure such as Havant Thicket reservoir and water transfer schemes.

## 4. **Sustainable Tourism**

### 4.1 What did we set out to achieve?

- 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.

### 4.3 What have we achieved?

- 4.3.1 **Gatwick Gateway:** Investment from partners (Experience West Sussex Surrey Hills AONB, West Kent, SDNPA) total around £8,000, plus in kind funding from Gatwick Airport, to support the development of joint marketing campaign, including visuals in 2 terminals, [development of 13 itineraries](#), webpage on the Gatwick Airport website, ambassador training and social media presence
- 4.3.2 **Sussex Modern:** Development of marketing campaign promoting cultural attractions, vineyards and the landscape. Production of leaflet, [website](#), social media campaign and media visits.
- 4.3.3 **English National Parks Experience Collection (ENPEC):** very successful launch of English National Park Experience Collection including [website](#) and printed directory (January 2019).
- 4.4 Media metrics for sustainable tourism
- Over 25 separate pieces of coverage, with PR value of £14,660 and reach of 2.4m.
  - Media release for English Tourism Week, focusing on the launch of the National Parks Collection experiences, including a hit in The Times and key trade platforms such as Travel Daily. Content repurposed across all comms channels.
  - High-profile billboard campaign and media push on Going Out Out campaign, encouraging young people to discover protected landscapes. Poster campaign showcased at Gatwick Airport and seen by tens of thousands of commuters.
  - Media campaign to promote the launch of Ranger Experiences – including a press review visit on August 30 and coverage on BBC South East.
  - A range of media releases and blogs promoting sustainable tourism opportunities in the National Park including:
    - Discovering the archaeological/cultural heritage gems of the National Park.
    - The launch of Visitor Giving partnerships with businesses such as the Hydro Hotel in Eastbourne.
    - Access stories such as promoting Disabled Access Day and the Rambler Bus.
- 4.5 Is this topic still relevant?
- Tourism remains a key employer and contributor to the rural economy across the South Downs. There is much partner interest in this area and real opportunities coming up for the National Park to have major impact.

- 4.6 What is coming up?
- **South East Tourism Zone proposals:** We are talking to local partners, including the LEPs, Local Authorities and Gatwick Airport about partnering on the development of a South East Tourism Zone – part of the central Government announcement on the Tourism Sector Deal <https://www.visitbritain.org/tourism-sector-deal-highlights> . Government funding for tourism will be channelled through these zones, however we will need to bid for a zone against other UK destinations so funding isn't guaranteed.
  - **ENPEC Legacy:** Discover England Funding ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> September. The English National Parks are looking at options to continue the legacy of the Collection and the possible broadening to other UK National Parks. Proposals due by end of September 2019. South Downs to hold Business development sessions to be held on 25/26 September for businesses in the Collection.
  - **SDNPA Viticulture Growth Impact Assessment:** Data from the WineGB report (*Looking to the Future*, Dec 2018) coupled with the increased number of new vineyards and expansions of existing plantations in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) (27 in

2016 to 43 in 2019) has led us to decide to undertake a growth impact assessment to identify exactly what the impacts of such growth are in three key areas; environmental impact, economic impact and social impact. The impacts will be compared against land use most likely to be lost or replaced. The findings will ensure an informed, consistent approach and viewpoint on viticulture growth inside the National Park. This will also generate information to produce a technical advice note and provide key information and data to enable SDNPA to produce a Natural Capital Account for Viticulture both scheduled to follow on in 2020. Work is commencing this October.

## 5. Conclusion and Next Steps.

- 5.1 The existing three issues and associated key messages have served us well over the past year and have sustained considerable media coverage and response from partners. They do, however, need more time to become fully established and for partners to develop and promote them as asked in their plans and delivery going forward.
- 5.2 We therefore feel that the Authority should maintain the three current issues and continue to push for delivery on our objectives in these areas.
- 5.3 Reports can be made back to the NPA as relevant and an update of progress and proposed strategy moving forward can be brought to the October 2020 NPA.

## 6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
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 October 2020
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	No



proposal?	
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	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

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Appendices I. 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

