

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	26 September 2019
By	Learning, Outreach and Volunteer Lead
Title of Report (Note)	Youth Engagement and Volunteering Update

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to note this report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on youth volunteering as requested by P&R Committee on 19 July 2018. It outlines the current initiatives that are underway and summarises the proposed next steps.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The key initiatives highlighted in this report contribute to Outcomes 5-8 in the draft Partnership Management Plan (2020-2025). They focus on youth volunteer development and youth engagement outside of formal education settings and do not include our wide-reaching learning approach, work-related learning provision or events engagement¹.
- 2.2 The SDNPA [Volunteer Development Strategy](#) outlines how we will work to diversify volunteer roles and the people who choose to engage with them. Evidence indicates that young people are currently significantly under-represented in the volunteer profiles of both the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (SDVRS) and other organisations supporting volunteering across the SDNP. Volunteers aged 16-25 make up 4% of the volunteer body, compared with 70% being aged 55-74.
- 2.3 This local picture contrasts with Defra's [Research to understand environmental volunteering amongst young people](#). This survey found 71% of 16-24-year olds based in England indicated that they have taken part in some form of volunteering in the past. Of these, 26% have taken part in some form of environmental volunteering. Given this picture, raising participation by young people in volunteering within the SDNP should be achievable given national participation rates.
- 2.4 The Defra 8-point plan for National Parks, 2016, has ambitions to 'Connect young people with nature by doubling the number of young people to experience a National Park as part of National Citizen Service by 2020;
- 2.5 In addition the 8-point plan identifies that our National Treasures should be 'Everyone's National Parks'.

¹ Our South Downs Learning model engages a network of 890 schools and 150 outdoor learning providers to promote learning outside the classroom in the SDNP. This includes the South Downs Curriculum, learning network meetings, school conferences, newsletters, training, direct teaching delivery, hosting work experience and delivering teacher CPD. Youth engagement events include Boomtown, Big Bang events and careers events.

- 2.6 The 25 year Environment Strategy calls for more people from all backgrounds to be involved in projects to improve the natural world. It has specific targets around young people to make 2019 a year of action for the environment, to help children and young people from all backgrounds to engage with nature and improve the environment. In particular the [#iwill](#) campaign is calling for organisations to enable social action to become the norm for young people up to the age of 20.
- 2.7 In 2018 the Europarc Federation launched the [Europarc Youth Manifesto](#) which “is a source of ideas and inspiration for decision-makers in Protected Areas and rural communities to ensure the involvement and empowerment of young people”. This provided a catalyst for the creation of the SDNPA Youth Ambassadors.

3. Issues for consideration

- 3.1 To encourage wider participation in volunteering by young people (aged 16-25) a number of key initiatives have been developed this year including:
- 3.2 **Youth Ambassador Volunteer roles:** Following the Europarc Youth Manifesto call for action for young people, the SDNPA created a new volunteer role specifically for young people, that of Youth Ambassador. Two young conservation volunteers from within the SDVRS were recruited to this role and have been busy driving forward the direction for the SDNPA in engaging with more young volunteers. This model is based on youth empowerment and challenges the SDNPA and its partners to think creatively about how to engage young people with volunteering activity and to create opportunities that are relevant and accessible to this under-represented cohort. To date the Youth Ambassadors have represented the SDNP at Careers Fairs and public events, delivered a talk at a Brighton University symposium on youth engagement, presented to colleagues across the Countryside and Policy Management Directorate as part of the corporate planning process, led a social media take-over of SDNPA accounts to promote microvolunteering opportunities, have spoken to the wider South Downs Volunteering Network (SDVN), written articles for print, online and internal media, and inspired organisations to consider adopting this model of youth empowerment. They have supported organisations such as Berwick Church project with social media content and advice on how to engage more young people.
- 3.3 **South Downs Youth Action:** this summer a pilot programme of Youth Action days has been delivered to champion the next generation of custodians who care about our protected places and want to make a difference in our National Park. These youth volunteering events are open to anyone aged 16-25 with a passion for environmental action and a desire to learn practical skills for helping us to conserve and enhance the South Downs National Park. A total of four action days, all with a different theme and in a different location within the National Park took place this summer. An additional day was scheduled but postponed due to bad weather. Following the great success of this pilot we are looking to extend this to the wider SDNP Volunteer Network and offer an extended programme across the year with the next five sessions scheduled for October 2019.
- 3.4 **Microvolunteering Day:** Evidence indicates that young people are looking for alternative models of volunteering outside of the traditional longer term commitments to one or more organisations. Microvolunteering is an alternative approach that enables people to give their time to a cause they are interested in on their terms, often without registering with an organisation and as part of their day-to-day lives. The Youth Ambassadors took part in a SDNPA social media takeover to encourage more young people to do the same by completing as many microvolunteering opportunities as they could in one day across the SDNP.
- 3.5 **National Citizen Service:** We developed a wide package of work this summer delivering nine NCS sessions across the SDNP area. In East Sussex we worked with Medway Youth Trust (MYT) who provide NCS across the Lewes Area supporting sessions at Sussex University as part of their ‘phase 2’ residential visits. In the Western Downs we worked with Personal Best Education (PBE) to deliver ‘phase 3’ social action projects on Butser Hill and we supported the Southampton NCS programme through sessions on our Dark Night Skies

work. These NCS sessions are part of our commitment to supporting the commitment in the Defra 8-point plan to double the number of young people engaged in NCS in national parks. They also form a valuable stepping stone into youth volunteering and participants in all of these NCS activities were signposted to our summer Youth Action programmes of activity.

3.6 **South Downs Volunteering Network (SDVN):** this is a park-wide network of organisations supporting volunteering relevant to SDNP purposes. The SDNPA Volunteer Development Officer coordinates and leads the network with 4 physical meetings per year and interim newsletter communication. The network requested support in developing their youth volunteering offer and this year we have run training at network meetings with the support of the SDNPA Youth Ambassadors.

3.7 **Action for Conservation:** we are working with Action for Conservation, a charity who empower young people to become the conservationists of the future, by supporting their conservation camp programmes in the SDNP.

4. **Options & cost implications**

4.1 The work described above has come out of the existing volunteer development and learning & outreach budgets. Future plans described below are in the SDNPA Corporate Plan and/or the PMP Delivery Plan.

5. **Next steps**

5.1 Work is underway to extend the South Downs Youth Action programme with dates agreed for October 2019 which will include more variety of tasks and a weekend session. We are also working with partners in the SDVN to add additional partner led days to the programme.

5.2 The Youth Ambassadors role will be extended so there is representation across the SDNPA areas. The current Youth Ambassadors are working with the Volunteer Development Officer to form a longer-term plan for this work.

5.3 We will investigate the options for including young people on SDNPA committees and panels such as the SCF Panel, South Downs Local Access Forum and the South Downs Partnership to ensure we are achieving real youth voice. We will also investigate youth representation on the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service Committee.

5.4 We will write a South Downs National Park pledge for the #iwill campaign and work with colleagues in the NPUK Educators and Outreach Officers group to devise a joint pledge from this group.

5.5 Working with the Heathlands Reunited (HeRe) project we are developing Heathland Hosts – a training week for people aged 16-25 to deliver engagement activities for different age groups on the HeRe project sites.

5.6 We will continue work with the SDVN to share knowledge, understanding and skills on youth volunteering with specific partnerships with organisations such as Action for Conservation.

5.7 We will continue to support NCS activity across the SDNP linking the social action elements to the wider South Downs Youth action programme.

5.8 We will explore opportunities for development of new youth opportunities linked to the acquisition of Seven Sisters Country Park.

5.9 The work described above will be included in the budget process for work next year and we will seek additional funding as appropriate through the Outreach and Engagement Themed Programme Board.

6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Low budget cost but resulting high levels of engagement from this under-represented group within the SDNP visitor and volunteer profiles equates to good value for money.
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?	Yes
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?	No
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	No

Amanda Elmes
LEARNING, OUTREACH AND VOLUNTEER LEAD
South Downs National Park Authority

Contact Officer: Amanda Elmes
 Tel: 01730 819248
 email: amanda.elmes@southdowns.gov.uk
 SDNPA Consultees Director of Countryside Policy and Management;
 External Consultees None
 Background Documents SDNPA Volunteer Development Strategic Review
 Defra 25 Year Environment Plan
 Defra 8-point plan
 Europarc Youth Manifesto