

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	28 November 2019
By	Countryside & Policy Manager Eastern Team
Title of Report (Note)	Update on People & Nature Network – Green Infrastructure in the South Downs National Park and Wider South East

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Note the further work carried out to date on the People & Nature Network – Green infrastructure in the South Downs National Park wider south east**

I. Introduction

- I.1 This report is to update members on the development of the Green Infrastructure Framework (GIF). It is proposed this should be known publicly as the *People and Nature Network* to reflect public benefit and the link to the Nature Recovery Network promoted in the Defra 25 Year Plan and the Environment Bill.
- I.2 Green Infrastructure is defined as ‘A network of multi-functional green and blue space, urban and rural which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.’ (*National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) para 20 point d*)¹
- I.3 Development of the GIF commenced in 2014. It was conceived as a planning framework for ecosystem services and green infrastructure across the framework area. This covers the National Park and the full extent of Local Authority areas beyond the boundary. Members will recall the workshop in February 2017 when the GIF was discussed and members considered the study and underpinning evidence base.
- I.4 The GIF was not publicly launched by SDNPA in 2017 due to the varying degrees of support for the framework in the SDNPA partner planning authorities. Nonetheless, since then the evidence included in the GIF has been used internally to inform a range of work streams by SDNPA and externally for wider initiatives with partners. The GI approach has also been strongly embedded within the SDNP Local Plan (reflecting its raised profile within the updated NPPF see footnote 1) and the new Partnership Management Plan. The Principles have also now been adopted by our South East England Protected Landscape (AONB) colleagues.
- I.5 It has been agreed that the framework documents should be published on the SDNPA website and made available for partners to download. Accordingly the document has been refresh to align it with evolving national policy. This has also resulted in suggested title of a “people and nature network” which reflects the wording and spirit of the Defra 25 Year Plan and Environment Bill. The phrase Green Infrastructure has history and traction in the planning profession and will also continue to be used.
- I.6 The following cascade is used to explain the relationships between the principles set out in

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

the 25 Year Plan:

- **Natural Capital** is a valuation of the natural assets,
- **Ecosystem Services** are the flow of natural services that those assets provide, and
- **Green Infrastructure planning** is a tool by which these assets and natural processes can be enhanced, extended, connected into a network and incorporated with human activity.

2. Policy Context.

- 2.1 The GIF is highly regarded as ground breaking work for the South East and it is clearly aligned with both the Defra 25 Year Plan (2018)² and the revised NPPF. It also reflects a lot of the initiatives and intent behind the Glover Review³. The GIF is relevant to many work streams: from tackling health and well-being issues, to identifying measures to address climate change adaptation and to planning for Defra's Nature Recovery Network⁴
- 2.2 The SDNP Local Plan takes an ecosystem services approach which is readily delivered through GI planning and for which the framework document was conceived. Delivery of the ecosystem services interventions by planning applicants are examples of green infrastructure measures and this approach is set out in the SDNPA Local plan technical guidance documents.⁵
- 2.3 Green Infrastructure is referenced in both the existing SD Partnership Management Plan (pages 1, 25, 76 & 95) and the emerging PMP for 2019-2024, where it is one of the priority programmes for Outcome 1 (Landscape Character and Natural Beauty);
 - 2.3.1 Priority Programme 1.2: *Improve green and blue infrastructure to deliver nature recovery networks and connect people to nature within and around the SDNP.*
- 2.4 Green Infrastructure is included in the SDNPA Corporate Plan 2019/20 as delivering a key priority for Purpose 1 - 'Developing a Natural Capital Approach for the SDNP' through agreeing 'an integrated work programme for ecosystem services, natural capital and green infrastructure delivery'
- 2.5 The Principles in the Framework have now been shared with our South East England Protected Landscape (AONB) colleagues and agreement reached that they form a consistent set of principles to be used across the protected landscapes (meeting in June 2019).
- 2.6 The extensive evidence base behind the framework has also directly fed into the work of the Sussex Local Nature Partnership in the development of the *Natural Capital Investment Strategy for Sussex*. This will lead to a framework for securing Biodiversity (and hopefully in the future, Environmental) Net Gain.

3. Key messages of the GIF

- 3.1 The GIF looks at the National Park within a *regional setting* and identifies the high level issues across the framework area.
- 3.2 *The Outcomes* of the study approach are;
 - A series of themed *strategic principles* based around maintaining and creating biodiversity networks, addressing climate change, access to nature for all, factoring Natural capital into the local economy, and sustainable lifestyles & access and;

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf

⁴ <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/nature-recovery-network>

⁵ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Core-06-Ecosystem-Services-Technical-Advice-Note-householder.pdf>

- 12 Investment areas (hotspots) where development, land use and ecosystem services (Nature) are in conflict but there is high potential to drive improvements. (Map included in **appendix 1**).

3.3 The GIF is a tool to co-ordinate the work of partners to ensure that;

- The SDNP and its setting are well planned to create an integrated network of green and blue infrastructure;
- The SDNP does not become the default GI for new development beyond its boundaries;
- Accessible multi-functional green space is created within walking distance of existing and new communities

4. Looking ahead

4.1 SDNPA will continue to use and develop the approaches set out in the Framework. There are 3 main work areas in the forward plan for Green Infrastructure Planning, these will develop the approach over the five years of the new Partnership Management Plan (2019-2024):

Complete during FY 2019/20

- Make the Framework available on the website in the form of a summary document (draft attached at **Appendix 2**), a single A4 high level flyer and the full Evidence Report. Work is underway but timings have been adjusted to align with the PMP review and publication, and the forthcoming ten year anniversary programme of activities.

Start during FY 2019/20

- Create a communications plan for the project which will help identify and engage wider audiences, beyond planning authorities, within the region.
- Internal communications and engagement to ensure a joined up approach across the SDNPA.

Develop going forwards from FY 2019/20

- Continue to use the existing GIF evidence, for example on Neighbourhood planning, planning consultations with neighbouring authorities
- Work with neighbouring authorities on joint initiatives. This include the East of Winchester Study, work with Chichester District Council and Chichester Harbour AONB, and work with Eastbourne Borough Council
- Disseminate guidance on green infrastructure and ecosystem services more broadly to partners, stakeholders and communities.
- Delivery of green infrastructure throughout the framework area through the identification and prioritisation of new projects, delivery of pilot strategies which develop the spatial targets and refinement of the detail and content in each of the identified targeted areas. This work is likely to be triggered by other pressures – eg infrastructure development in neighbouring areas, or health & wellbeing objectives.
- Work with other SE protected landscapes (eg Chichester Harbour, High Weald and Surrey Hills AONBs) using the new Green Infrastructure national metrics to be developed by Natural England as part of the Defra 25 Year Plan
- Develop evidence to inform the decisions of other infrastructure planning groups – eg Transport for the South East.

5. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	The GIF covers a wide area of work. Future GI projects will come forward as part of the work programme of the Landscape & Biodiversity Theme Programme Board.

Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	Staff time to complete Framework design, publication and launch. Budget for design and publication has been identified. Future project resources will form part of the annual budget bid of the Theme Programme Boards.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	This work plan will take forward the original investment made by SDNPA in the preparation of the GIF. Green infrastructure is also inherently about delivering multiple benefits so will cut across all/most of the PMP Outcomes.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	There are no Social Value implications associated with this paper. If future project work requires procurement then there may be implications at that time.
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	The project will explicitly help in delivering against equality requirements as it brings green infrastructure to the doorsteps of a wide cross-section of society including many with protected characteristics
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	The Framework network advocates, as part of its remit, the provision of safe, secure and accessible greenspace within towns and cities with passive surveillance and active streets to discourage crime and antisocial behaviour
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy.	Five principles are: Living within environmental limits, Ensuring a strong healthy and just society, Achieving a sustainable economy, Promoting good governance, Using sound science responsibly. The Framework is compliant with all of these issues.

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Appendices

1. Map of Green Infrastructure investment areas
2. Draft People & Nature Network – Green infrastructure in the South Downs National Park and wider South East summary document

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

Natural England

Background Documents

[Draft South Downs Green Infrastructure Framework Evidence Report](#)

