

Agenda Item 18
Report PRI9/20-29

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	28 November 2019
By	Chief Executive/Project Management Lead
Title of Report (Note)	Seven Sisters Country Park- Project Progress update

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Receive and Note the progress with regard to the Seven Sisters Country Park project.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report outlines the progress made on the Seven Sisters Country Park project by the joint Member/officer Project Board. A brief summary of the project is included in the Quarter 2 Project Update report elsewhere on this agenda. Since, however, this is the first project progress update to the Policy and Resources Committee a brief introduction to the project management process is included in this paper.
- 1.2 The Project Board is working to the tight remit established by the NPA. Its membership includes the Chair of P&R and one of the Committee's Deputy Chairs as well as the Deputy Chair of the Authority and other members from the P&R and Planning Committees. It will provide a report to every P&R meeting in the standard format attached to this paper. This will be a Part 1 report wherever possible, although it may occasionally be necessary to move the item to Part 2.

2. The Project Background

- 2.1 In May 2019 the NPA agreed to the potential acquisition of the Seven Sisters Country Park. This decision provided the mandate for the SSCP project to proceed within the framework established by the Business Plan. Any significant change from that Business Plan would need to be approved by the NPA.
- 2.2 On the 17 June 2019 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) announced the SDNPA as their preferred bidder for the acquisition of the Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP).
- 2.3 At its first meeting the Project Board adopted the PRINCE 2 methodology to manage the project. Project Board members were drawn from the Enterprise Task and Finish Group (EITFG), which undertook the initial work on the proposals, and supplemented by additional members who have specific skills or experience that would enhance the work of the Board.
- 2.4 The project team is structured with Trevor Beattie as the overall Executive, with the Project Board members including Ken Bodfish, Sebastian Anstruther, Russell Oppenheimer, Vanessa Rowlands, Ian Phillips, Andrew Lee and Tim Slaney, Jo Carr is also on the Project Board to represent the SD Trust. Alan Brough is the Project Assurance Officer and in charge of the overall business case, Liz Gent is the Project Manager and oversees all the work streams to deliver the project.

- 2.5 It was agreed with the EITFG that the project work streams would be split into specific categories as follows:
- 2.5.1 **Development and Infrastructure**- this work stream will manage the main capital works, architect and planning and principal contractor.
 - 2.5.2 **Visitor Experience**- this work stream includes exploration of the visitor retail, tourism accommodation offer at the foxhole cottages and camping barn and signage and interpretation works. The commercial elements of this will be considered in the further commercial activity business case to be presented to the NPA.
 - 2.5.3 **Landscape**- this work stream includes the development of a landscape management plan, working with stakeholders to directly manage the additional 280ha of SSSI and chalk grassland habitats.
 - 2.5.4 **HR**- a specific work stream relating to HR and the potential TUPE of staff.
 - 2.5.5 **Legal**- a work stream to ensure Heads of Terms and contract documents for the transfer of the SSCP asset to the SDNPA has a secure legal footing. This work stream will also review existing tenancy arrangements and, where necessary, help to negotiate and draft new ones to support our aspirations onsite.
 - 2.5.6 **Operational**- this work stream is about the day to day operational workings and policies we need to consider and plan for in relation to running a country park. This will include considerations of staff, volunteers, services, health and safety, visitor management, car parking etc.

3. Progress to Date

3.1 Work completed to date includes the following:

- Project Delivery Plan approved by Project Board
- Project Timeline completed
- All surveys commissioned to support architect and planning application
- Funding EOI submitted to HLF in October. Decision postponed until after general election.
- Site visits undertaken with interpretation consultants
- Brand designs for SSCP completed
- Visitor survey completed.
- Decision on Access proposals made and fed back to ESCC for inclusion in Heads of Terms
- Meetings held with key stakeholders including tenant Farmer, Environment Agency and Natural Environment and Buzz Active
- Support for SDNPA contribution to emergency works on shingle bank at mouth of Cuckmere to try and alleviate flooding later overtaken by agreement of EA to undertake work.

3.2 Work proposed over the next reporting period includes:

- Update business case and issue revised report to ESCC as preferred bidder
- Work stream delivery continuing
- Heads of Terms completion (early Jan) and Lead Member decision 20th Jan 2020
- Brand/Identify work continuing
- On completion of ESCC Lead Member decision set meetings up introductory with Tenants.
- Advert out for new Park Manager role at appropriate time.
- Draft paper on Trading Company to NPA in December
- Signage and Interpretation planning consents
- Landscape consultant spec and ITQ out on Wed 20th Nov.
- All forensic surveys to support planning due for completion before Christmas.
- Programme updates to reflect ESCC timeline

4. Programme & cost implications

- 4.1 The SSCP Programme is a complicated one, as it is largely driven by ESCC. At present we are preferred bidders. We are in the process of completing and agreeing a Heads of Terms with ESCC. This will then be put by ESCC to their Lead Member on 20 January 2020 for their final decision. Following this the Secretary of State then needs to approve the transfer before it can be considered final. Therefore, the overall programme for transfer of SSCP ownership to the SDNPA is liable to movement.
- 4.2 The Project Board proposes to complete the work in three phases. Phase 1 will start when the SDNPA takes ownership of the SSCP. Currently this date is outlined as May 2020. Initial works are proposed to include signage, refurbishment and interpretation works only until we have completed some necessary planning and ecology surveys in August 2020. More significant refurbishment and construction work will then take place over the winter period.
- 4.3 Phase 2 will complete the initial construction work specified in the Business Plan, and is likely to run for 2-3 years. Its details will be finalised at the end of Phase 1.
- 4.4 Phase 3 has been identified as the longer term aspirations of the project, but these elements are currently outside the business case and would require additional funding to deliver and a further approval from the NPA. We have currently registered an expression of interest for phase 3 with the Heritage Lottery Fund which would provide a substantial funding contribution, and we await to hear if we have been shortlisted.

BUDGET MANAGEMENT	Total funding:	TREND (RAG)	
		Current	Previous
Spend for Q2:	12,300		N/A
Total SDNPA spend for FY 2019/20:	12,300		N/A
Total SDNPA spend to date:	12,300		N/A
Comments on Budget			
Schedule of works and budget spreadsheet completed. Please note capital works costs are estimated based on Savills report but will be confirmed by Architects and QS in pre-construction.			

- 4.5 A business case was presented to the NPA in May 2019, this overarching business case is currently unchanged. We propose a capital loan of £1.4 million to be invested into the SSCP. This will be subject a further decision by the NPA, as part of its budget setting process. The current spend for the project is outlined in the table above.

5. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	Yes, the Project Board oversees the project decisions. Further NPA decision required are outlined above
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No. Resource commitments to the SSCP project have been identified for each work stream and an agreement has been reached with the directors of CPM and planning on their staffs time inputs to this project. Where additional resourcing is required to deliver the work streams these elements have been accounted for in the work packages and budget.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The overall SDNPA business case outlines the proposed outgoings and potential income over the initial 1-3 years. This is the business case on which the NPA based their decision to acquire the SSCP.

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 project update raises no specific equalities issues. Equalities issues are being considered within each project work stream to ensure compliance with the Authority's duty.
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?	None
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy	None. This paper supports the principle of Promoting good governance.

6. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

6.1 A separate risk register is being maintained as part of the overall project documentation.

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Appendices I. Monthly Project Update – November 2019