

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	27 February 2020
By	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 made in the Seven Sisters Country Park project.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report outlines the progress made on the Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP) project by the joint Member/Officer Project Board. A brief summary of the project is included in the Q3 project update report in **Appendix I**.
- 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 provides a report to every P&R meeting in the standard format attached to this paper.

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 ESCC announced the SDNPA as their preferred bidder for the acquisition of the Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP).
- 2.3 On 20 January 2020 ESCC Lead member confirmed the proposed transfer to the SDNPA of SSCP. This decision is now subject to approval by the Secretary of State. The exact date of transfer is currently unknown as the timeline for this approval is not within our control.

3. Progress to Date

- 3.1 **Appendix I** shows the recent progress report for Q3 for the Seven Sisters Project. Since the last reporting period to P&R in November 2019 (report links included in Background Documents), the project has progressed at a fast pace.
- 3.2 Technically the end of Q3 is December 2019 but the progress report provides an up-to-date summary of the Seven Sisters Project. The key aspects that have progressed since November include the following:
- 3.2.1 The Architect and Quantity Surveyor have now been appointed;
- 3.2.2 All forensic and planning surveys have been completed to inform our Phase I designs and overall masterplanning of the site.

- 3.2.3 The project team has started on a very comprehensive but condensed design journey to start drafting our proposals for a Phase I planning application which is expected by the end of March 2020.
- 3.2.4 Two public consultation events have been held with local residents at the Seven Sisters Visitor Centre where 250 people attended to provide their thoughts and comments on the future of Seven Sisters Country Park under the ownership of the SDNPA. These events were extremely successful and will help inform the Phase I plans currently being finalised. Discussions have also started with existing tenants.
- 3.2.5 Funding updates from the HLF application- we were unsuccessful in our bid for the £13m application but have been encouraged to reapply for a smaller funding amount. Alternative funding sources are also being sought and applied for.
- 3.3 During Q4 significant works proposed on the project include the finalisation of Phase I plans and the submission of the planning application. A further update on the project will be provided at June P&R Committee.
- 4. Programme & cost implications**
- 4.1 The SSCP Programme is subject to legal conveyancing and Secretary of State approval. Therefore the overall programme for transfer of SSCP ownership to the SDNPA is liable to movement. However our Phase I works are proposed for construction between October and May 2021.
- 4.2 Phase I works include the signage, refurbishment and interpretation works in the Visitor Centre with improved toilet facilities at Exceat. Improved catering and retail is also proposed at Exceat to support the SSCP approved Business Case. Additional works in Phase I include renovation of the Foxhole cottages into self catering holiday accommodation and a renovation of the Camping Barn and Facilities to provide a robust holiday offer to visitors.
- 4.3 Phase 2 and 3 are part of the developing masterplan for the entire site and will include our landscape management plan delivery, as well as longer term aspirations for the site. A wider masterplan for the site is envisaged by June/ July 2020 and will be brought back to P&R committee in this report.

BUDGET MANAGEMENT	Total funding:	TREND (RAG)	
		Current	Previous
Spend for Q2:	174,065		N/A
Total SDNPA spend for FY 2019/20:	186,365		N/A
Total SDNPA spend to date:	186,365		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.			

- 4.4 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. Potential 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 on their staff's 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	

6. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

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

LIZ GENT

Project Management Lead

South Downs National Park Authority

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 Appendices I. Seven Sisters Q3 Progress Report
 Background Documents [Seven Sisters P&R Update November 2019](#)
[Seven Sisters Q2 Progress Report](#)

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Project:		Seven Sisters			Date: Q3 2019/20 (Q3 reporting from October to end of December 2019)	
KEY AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE:				AUTHORS/OWNERS: Liz Gent		
Nr	Critical Path Issues for Pre-ownership	Programme Status				
		Start Date	Completion Date	% complete	TREND (RAG)	
					Current Month	Previous
1	Heads of Terms	01/06/2019	31/01/2020	80		
2	East Sussex Completion of Handover	01/06/2019	01/02/2020	50		
3	Secretary of State decision	01/02/2020		0		
3	Planning Surveys	01/10/2019	16/02/2019	100		
4	Architect Commission	21/10/2019	02/12/2019	100		
5	Signage and Interpretation works for Day 1	01/11/2019	02/03/2020	10		
6	Signage Day 1 planning application	01/01/2020	13/04/2020	0		
7	Phase 1 drawings	09/12/2019	03/02/2020	30		
	Residents Consultation workshops phase 1	05/02/2020	07/02/2020	10		
8	Planning Application Submission	02/03/2020	20/09/2020	30		
9	Operational requirements for Day 1	06/01/2020	01/05/2020	5		
10	Completion Pre-ownership phase	01/05/2020	01/05/2020	Not Started		
	Critical Path Issues for Phase 1					
11	Contractor Engagement	02/03/2020	01/06/2020	Not Started		
12	Start of Site Shut Down/ Essential works	01/09/2020	05/10/2020	Not Started		
13	Visitor Centre Refurb:- Final Design construction	05/10/2020	24/05/2021	Not Started		
14	Toilets Fit out:- Final Design construction	05/10/2020	24/05/2021	Not Started		
15	Grab n Go Coffee/ Ice Cream Kiosk: Final Design construction	05/10/2020	24/05/2021	Not Started		
16	Camping Barn and associated facilities construction	05/10/2020	24/05/2021	Not Started		
17	Foxhole Cottage 1 construction	05/10/2020	24/05/2021	Not Started		
18	Foxhole Cottage 2 construction	05/10/2020	24/05/2021	Not Started		
19	Foxhole Cottage 3 construction	05/10/2020	24/05/2021	Not Started		
20	Prep of work packages for Phase 2	01/03/2020	01/05/2021	Not Started		
21	Completion Phase 1	01/05/2021	01/05/2021	Not Started		
Progress made since last report:						

Work completed this period:

1. All surveys completed to support architect and planning application
2. Funding EOI feedback received from the Lottery- unsuccessful for £13m application. New application to follow.
3. Retail consultant report provided about audiences and spend of tourists.
4. Exceat bridge meeting held to discuss ESCC proposals
5. Meetings held with Farmer to discuss tenancy
6. Meeting held with Buzz Active 11/09/2019
7. Invitation to Quote for consultancy support for the development of the landscape management plan undertaken with a successful appointment of a consultant made on 14/01/20.
8. Architect contract awarded to Pritchards 19/12/19
9. Accommodation proposal drafted on how to staff and operate holiday accommodation.

% project complete overall: 7

Overall RAG status for the project:

Actions During the Next Reporting Period:

- New funding strategy and applications considered including CIL application by 31st Jan
- ESCC decision by Lead Member
- Project board meeting proposed for 4th Feb to feed into phase I plans
- Project board feedback on accommodation proposal in March.
- Residents workshops proposed for 5th and 7th Feb to feed into phase I plans
- Heads of Terms completion needed including redline boundary
- Following decision on 20th meetings needed with Café tenants,
- Following decision on 20th meetings to be held with park rangers regarding current operational requirements of the site.
- Brand/Identify work continuing
- Further decisions on Granary Barn? Alan to pursue with the Bank
- Draft paper on Trading Company to PB in Feb/March to NPA
- Landscape consultant commissioned 14/01/2020

Key Decisions Requiring Input from Project Board:

1. 4th Feb meeting with PB to feed into Phase I planning
2. March meeting with PB to discuss accommodation proposals for operational considerations
3. 24th Feb decisions on Trading Company

Work Stream updates- All work packages drafted by teams

Workstream	Work completed This Month	% Comp	Issues	Any variation to WP?
HR	JD's completed for proposed staff structure including TUPE staff	40	New posts can't be advertised until HoT completed. Risk to operational timelines.	No
Legal	Heads of terms discussions, Access land issues and legal discussions on tenancies underway.	20	ESCC timeline impacts delivery of work stream	No
Landscape	Consultant to support the landscape workstrand appointed	10		No
Visitor Experience	Retail consultant appointed and report received. Accommodation proposal drafted for operational considerations and business case implications.	10	Retail outlines significant footprint needed to make ££ outlined in business case. Not in line with existing interpretation brief so a new approach to visitor centre needed by project team.	No
Comms	Interpretation work continued but on hold pending discussions with Executive about VC. Some variation may be needed due to building improvements needed.	10	Discussion and decision needed on what is required for day 1 as full scale interpretation may not be possible in VC due to construction works needed.	No
Development and Infrastructure	After a successful ITT process Pritchard Architecture have been appointed as the architect for Phase I.	10	No issues.	No

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	<p>Pritchard's will also be managing MEA who have been appointed to provide QS services for the project. All planning validation evidence is now complete. Forensic evidence is complete with 2 additional areas of work due to take place in Jan 2020. Existing building surveys and plans have been produced. We have requested 3 further buildings be surveyed. Due Jan/ Early Feb.</p> <p>Alternative funding sources have been/ are being explored:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAFRD SELEP EOI has been submitted requesting £170,000 • CIL submission due in Jan • Renewable Heat Incentive • Changing Places Toilet <p>Work towards two public consultation workshops is ongoing. Workshops provisionally booked in for the 5th and 7th Feb.</p> <p>3 design sessions have been scheduled with the team for 15th Jan, 29th Jan and 11th Feb with a view to submitting our planning applications towards the end of February.</p>			
Operational	<p>Recruitment advert will be issued after Jan 20th decision by ESCC lead member.</p> <p>Discussions to be held with existing Park Rangers after the 20th about operational requirements.</p>	0	No work package outlined or resources to deliver at present	

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Total SDNPA spend to date:	186,365		N/A
Total project spend to date (inc partners/stakeholders):	Same as above		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.			

MONITORING & EVALUATION	
Please describe any monitoring activities undertaken since last quarter to provide evidence against project objectives.	<p>Due to the size and importance of this project, and the potential to use it as a pilot, an annual evaluation will be carried out to monitor performance. This will be carried out by an external evaluation agency. The first evaluation will cover the first year of ownership, with an annual evaluation thereafter (year 2, year 3 etc.). The approximate cost of this will be £10k per annum.</p> <p>A full, detailed M&E plan will be developed separately.</p>

CHANGE LOG (a separate decisions log is being used to capture decisions on the project):	
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Nr	Description of Change	Comments	Implications
1	Andy Beattie no longer Operational Work Package Lead	Andy couldn't commit resourcing to be the lead for this work strand. Staff being recruited (aiming for Jan/Feb) and will then lead this work package. In the meantime Kate Miles will support with Mark Alden on any operational queries that may arise.	No cost implications, small increased risk on delivery IF Day 1 is end of April.
2	2 residents consultation days are taking place on 5 th and 7 th Feb to ask people to feed into Phase 1 proposals.	This is our first opportunity to engage with a wide variety of stakeholders in the area after the ESCC decision on the 20 th . Its primary focus is to ask for input into the phase 1 plans due for planning submission at the end of Feb/early march.	Minor cost implication for postcode drop to advertise events.
3	Partnership working with NE potentially renting space at SSCP for 2 staff. Additional office space therefore brought forward into phase 1 (was outlined for phase 2) to enable the space to be available.	This provides an opportunity for close partnership working with NE at the SSCP. NE would rent the office space from us for their staff instead of basing them at their Lullington Heath office.	Additional surveys needed for extra buildings and cost implications to phase 1. This work was part of original business case but proposed in phase 2.
4	Farming Tenancy changes- shorter notice period requested by farmers to ESCC and request for financial compensation to ESCC for flooded pasture land.	ESCC have confirmed position of farming tenancy. SDNPA no problem with reduced tenancy notice period. Any financial compensation by ESCC should not affect SDNPA income.	Shorter notice period.
5	Visitor Centre was assumed as fit for purpose in original business case so no refurb costs allowed. This scope of works has now changed due to new information so visitor centre needs to close during construction work and have full heating/lighting fit out.	New temporary visitor centre proposed in Turkey Barn during construction period. Additional costs needed to cover the temporary interpretation works and the Visitor Centre refurb works.	Additional cost and Turkey Barn needed for temporary visitor centre.

RISKS & MITIGATION STRATEGY:

Nr	Risk	Risk Score	Previous	Mitigation Strategy/update
1	Moveable ESCC timeline for completion makes signage and interpretation install challenging.	5	5	Need to allow for installation after ownership, so could do public launch 4 weeks after 'keys' and agree with ESCC on timeline.
2	As timeline for ownership unknown, it could happen before we are ready with respect to setting up our new staff in their roles.	6	4	Discuss with existing rangers the current operational requirements and advertise for new posts as soon as decision is made by ESCC on 20 th January.
3	Implications to visitor centre- Bats, no heating, not appropriate for staff or retail or some interpretation material due to 'external conditions' in the building. Additional works needed but might be during construction period limiting what we could do for 'ownership' for interpretation and retail.	6	5	Bat surveys needed to determine implications of works to Visitor Centre building. Architects to extend scope to include the VC and identify solutions. Further evidence survey needed which could delay planning submission for VC proposals. Might have to submit as a secondary application.
4	If staff not in place for 'ownership' might have to use existing rangers and volunteers until new staff	5	5	Ownership date is out of our control and not identified. Staff to be recruited as soon as HR have met with TUPE staff to discuss proposals with them.

	recruited and trained.			
5	Exceat Bridge proposals by ESCC may speed up traffic flow in Exceat. Currently no solution to pedestrian crossing at Exceat Bridge or Exceat centre, so H&S could be higher risk for people if the bridge increases traffic speed.			SDNPA are working with ESCC highways to try and deliver a collaborative solution at Exceat Bridge.
6	Once the SDNPA are owners of SSCP we will also be the riparian owners of the river banks along the Cuckmere estuary. There are responsibilities associated with being a riparian owner.			Detailed review needed of riparian ownership responsibilities and work with legal and landscape teams to understand these and incorporate implications in the landscape management plan as well as operational considerations for the park.