



South Downs

National Park Authority

Agenda Item 12

Report NPA20/21-17

Report to	South Downs National Park Authority
Date	17 December 2020
By	Director of Countryside Policy & Management
Title of Report Decision	South Downs Partnership

Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to agree:

- 1. The terms of reference for the South Downs's partnership attached at appendix 4;**
- 2. The revised stakeholder engagement framework and the format for the new South Downs Partnership set out in appendices 2 and 3;**
- 3. To delegate authority to the Director of Countryside and Policy Management, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, to select and appoint the chair and members of the South Downs Partnership and to determine the basis of that appointment including the terms and conditions for the Chair and members of the partnership.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The original South Downs Partnership (see **appendix 1**) hereafter referred to as the SDP, was established in 2010. Its function was as a high level group to support the SDNPA, the establishment of the National Park and the creation of its overarching policy documents such as the State of the Park Report 2011, the first Partnership Management Plan 2014 and the Local Plan 2019.
- 1.2** The original SDP included representatives from a variety of sectors - especially where these complemented the knowledge and experience of the Authority itself, for example bringing in the voice of landowners, conservation bodies, volunteers, business or access groups. It was chaired by the SDNPA Chair.
- 1.3** The SDP was just one part of a stakeholder engagement framework which included a South Downs Forum, Land Managers' Group, Network and Learning Partnership. Technical Advice Groups, developed by the Strategy Leads when the first PMP was being created, underpinned this by bringing together specialists in specific areas such as access, education or cultural heritage
- 1.4** The SDP continued through various configurations until 2019, and was involved, particularly in the earlier stages, with the review of the PMP. It added significant value over the years through strategic advice and support, and many of its members gave freely of their time and found the meeting a good mechanism for networking. However, over time it became less effective and the rapid turnover of roles in many sectors meant that continuity was difficult to achieve.

- 1.5 This report proposes a new South Downs Partnership, informed by discussion with the Chair of the Authority and the Committee Chairs/SMT group

2. Policy Context.

- 2.1 In the Landscapes Review 2019, Julian Glover said

“The way we protect and improve our landscapes needs to change radically..... If their natural beauty is to be in a better condition 70 years from today, even better to look at, far more biodiverse, and alive with people from all backgrounds and parts of the country, they cannot carry on as they do now”.

“We need to reignite the fire and vision which brought this system into being in 1949. We need our finest landscapes to be places of natural beauty which look up and outwards to the nation they serve. In essence, we’ve asked not ‘what do national landscapes need?’, but ‘what does the nation need from them today?’”.

“more must be done for nature and natural beauty. More must be done for people who live in and visit our landscapes. And a lot more must be done to meet the needs of our many fellow citizens who do not know the countryside, or do not always feel welcome in it, but should be able to enjoy it. Our landscapes are open and free to all, but can seem exclusive”.

- 2.2 The Glover Report challenged National Parks and AONBs to raise their level of ambition and urged Government to put stronger tools and resources in place to make this possible. We await the response from Defra, but at the heart of the matter are the landscape management plans (of which our PMP is the local example) and the strength and effectiveness of the partnerships which support their delivery.
- 2.3 Closer to home, the Heritage Insider review of our approach in developing the new PMP development includes the following statement: *“Partnership working is business critical to a PMP and requires a high calibre of influence, advocacy and co-ordinated partner liaison. This is the area which partners feel should be a core competency of SDNPA in to bring people together. SDNPA is the ‘glue’ which sticks people together and needs to have the capacity and systems to support this in quite a sophisticated way if it is to maximise the potential of partnership working”*
- 2.4 These reports help set the context in which the new model for the South Downs Partnership is recommended to the Authority.

3. Issues for consideration

- 3.1 **Appendix 2** shows a revised stakeholder engagement model, which includes the new SDP, linked to the delivery groups which already exist, along with other mechanisms including a proposed biennial forum.
- 3.2 **Appendix 3** is the recommended format for the new SDP. This has been designed to reflect the NPA’s Purposes & Duty, to enable fresh issues to be represented (for example young people, health & wellbeing, communities outside the NP) and provide the opportunity to bring in people from different backgrounds and experience. 14 members will be appointed; each one will lead of the identified sectors.
- 3.3 An Independent Chair is proposed. This is a significant change from the old model, which was set up when the SDNPA was still forming. It has been successfully used by other NPAs and it is felt appropriate given the fact that the SDNPA is now well established. The Authority is asked to delegate authority to the Director of CPM in consultation with the Chair the Authority to undertake an exercise to select and appoint a chair of the partnership. Once appointed the Chair will work with the Director and Authority Chair to identify and appoint the other members of the partnership and to determine the basis on which these appointments are made.
- 3.4 **Appendix 4** sets out proposed terms of reference for the SDP. These have been drafted to ensure the focus of the partnership is on championing and delivering against the PMP. For clarity the partnership will have no role in commenting on planning matters or other issues relating to the NPA, outside of that which relates directly to the delivery of the PMP.

4. Options & cost implications

- 4.1 In developing this proposal consideration has been given to the approach in other Protected Landscapes and a series of alternatives have been explored. These include: having no overall partnership, making it delivery focused (only those significantly investing in projects in the PMP), or basing it on formal organisational representation. Given the sheer size of the SDNP, and the complexity and multiplicity of potential stakeholders (e.g. three LEPs, three Water Companies, two regions of all the Statutory Agencies), no obvious model from elsewhere fits the bill.
- 4.2 Setting up and supporting the new SDP will require significant officer time, particularly from the Director of Countryside Policy & Management and some of his staff, and the Governance Team. However, none of this is new as the SDNPA successfully supported the old SDP for many years and delivery of the PMP is our core business.
- 4.3 It is proposed that a means of payment be made available to assist removing potential barriers to participation for members of the partnership. Whilst it is not intended to pay each member of the partnership for their participation, it is important that a mechanism is in place to support participation should such support be required. The basis of individual appointments will be determined by the director of CPM in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, but could include, for example, a consultancy contract or similar.
- 4.4 In addition, Partnership members /Chair will be able claim the travel and subsistence in line with rates payable to volunteers

5. Next steps

- 5.1 It is anticipated that the new Partnership will be publicly relaunched during the summer of 2021.

6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	See section 4 above. A budget line of c£15k has been allocated to support this work, however it is anticipated that not all of this will be required.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Upfront investment of time and modest budget to relaunch the SDP will secure significant dividends in broadening ownership of the PMP and enhancing its delivery across all fronts.
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. A key characteristic of the ToR for the new SDP is a more explicit commitment to broadening and deepening engagement. The model proposed creates opportunities to appoint individuals from hitherto underrepresented groups.
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?	Management of information related to the SDP members will be handled in strict accordance with DPA 2018
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	Yes. The proposed model for the new SDP brings together individuals with knowledge and experience of environmental, social and economic issues

7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Unable to attract candidates of sufficiently high calibre.	Medium	High	Creating a strong package and a clear proposition for SD Chair and members. Proactively using our extensive networks to identify potential candidates.
New SDP departs from its remit and becomes unconstructively or publicly critical of SDNPA	Low	High	Careful selection of independent chair, strong reporting lines, regular liaison between SDP Chair and SDNPA Chair

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Appendices

1. Original stakeholder engagement model
2. New stakeholder framework
3. New SDP model
4. Draft Terms of reference

SDNPA Consultees

Chief Executive; Director of Planning; Monitoring Officer.

External Consultees

None

Background Documents

None

Appendix I: Original SDNP stakeholder engagement framework (2010)

I. South Downs Partnership

- High level stakeholder group
- Established 2010

Ia. South Downs Land Managers' Group

- Established before NP
- Represents farmer and landowner interests

Ib. South Downs Network

- Successor to South Downs Campaign Group
- Coalition of over 100 environmental and amenity groups

Ic. Learning Partnership

- Grouping of universities and academic institutions

Included
some
individuals
from:

2. South Downs Forum

- Wider stakeholder group
- Launched with 250 people in Stanmer Park 2011
- Evolved to become an online community of interest
- Grew to c1100 participants
- Eventually disbanded in 2017 due to dominance of small number of individuals

(Citizens' Panel now in place instead)

3. Technical Working groups

- Biodiversity
- Cultural Heritage
- Access
- Education
- Tourism etc.
- These developed as mechanisms to develop the State of the National Park Report and the original PMP



Appendix 2. Proposal for new stakeholder engagement framework

1. New South Downs Partnership

High level group of no more than 15 individuals plus chair

1a. South Downs Land Managers' Group

1b. South Downs Network

These are independently constituted groups so not under the control of the SDNPA

2. PMP Delivery Groups (eg)

- Biodiversity
- Forestry Partnership
- Access Forum
- Learning Network
- Volunteering Network
- Farm Cluster Group
- Tourism Partnership
- Research Network etc.

NB: current ad hoc structure which has evolved from Technical Working Groups. Format should remain flexible to suit different issues / partners.

3. Biennial Conference

A broadly based event bringing together a wide range of stakeholder and communities to celebrate and inspire.



Appendix 3. New South Downs Partnership

Purpose 1

Biodiversity

(Could come from conservation NGOs, statutory agencies etc)

Landscape (As above)

Water

(Could come from EA, Water Companies, Catchment Partnerships etc)

Farming & forestry

(Could come from farm clusters, large estates etc)

Cultural Heritage

(Could come from heritage attractions, county networks, Historic England etc)

Purpose 2

Volunteering

(Could come from VRS or volunteer from any body working in National park or around)

Access & sustainable transport

(Could come from highways authorities, user groups, bus or rail partnerships etc)

Health & Wellbeing

(Could come from public Health England, local health project, user groups, NHS, Counties etc)

Formal education

(Could come from schools inside or working with NP, universities, agric colleges etc)

Young people

(could come via youth ambassadors or from groups working with young people)

Duty

Rural Economy

(Could come from LEPs, local authorities, business networks etc)

Community Development

(Could come from Action in Rural Sussex or Action Hampshire, local organisations etc)

Tourism

(Could come from Tourism SE, a DMO, county networks, a large business etc)

Neighbouring Communities

(Could come from MOSAIC champions, community activists, user group)

TOTAL:

15 individuals as a lead from each identified area (to include an independent Chair)



DRAFT Terms of Reference for the new South Downs Partnership

Name of group	South Downs National Park Partnership
Purpose	<p>Champion the Outcomes in the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Being a strong partnership in pursuit of common goals across the diverse landscape and communities of the SDNP and its environs</i> ○ <i>Working alongside the NPA and other partners to drive and monitor continual improvement across the landscape and communities of the National Park</i> ○ <i>Embedding the PMP as a vehicle for change across the National Park</i> ○ <i>Providing ‘integrated thinking’ and seeking to resolve issues arising when there is a conflict between competing policy objectives;</i> ○ <i>Providing a forum for those with a stake in delivery of the PMP</i>
Outcomes & Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate the PMP as a vehicle for positive change; • Strengthen engagement by bringing in new audiences and underrepresented groups; • Work with the SDNPA to drive and monitor overall delivery across sectors, and recommend to the SDNPA and other bodies how this can be improved; • Act as a sounding board for the SDNPA on strategic issues and overall direction; • Work alongside the NPA to oversee reviews of the PMP, ensuring strong engagement with stakeholders and partners (in line with statutory requirements); • Report, at least annually, to the SDNPA, partners and the public on overall progress of PMP delivery across the whole plan (alongside any separate reporting by the NPA) • To make recommendations to the SDNPA and other bodies on how delivery of the PMP may be improved/expedited/enhanced
Duration	<p>Not time limited.</p> <p>Individuals will be appointed to for a period of three years with the option of an extension of three years.</p>
Membership	<p>A Chair will be appointed, who is independent of the sectoral representatives</p> <p>14 Sector representatives will be identified through external advertising and all available means to ensure a diverse group</p> <p>The SDNPA will support the Chair in this process.</p>

Accountability	<p>The SDP Chair will work alongside the SDNPA Chair to further the purposes of the National Park via the PMP</p> <p>The SDNPA will act as a secretariat for the SDP and is statutorily accountable for the creation of and periodic reviews of the PMP</p>
Review	<p>Changes to these Terms of Reference may be recommended, by majority agreement of the SDP, to the NPA</p>
Working methods & meetings	<p>The SDP will meet at least quarterly - in person or via electronic means at the discretion of its Chair</p> <p>If a Quorum is required, this will be the 8 members</p> <p>A joint meeting with the NPA will be held at least annually where the SDP will report on its activities and give an overview of progress in delivery of the PMP outcomes.</p> <p>External attendees may be invited at the discretion of the SDP Chair</p> <p>Meetings of the group will be administered by the SDNPA working closely with SDP Chair</p> <p>Meetings may take the form of formal business, workshop sessions, tours or visits. (to be agreed with SDNPA if its resources are required to deliver such activities)</p> <p>Senior members and officers of the SDNPA may be invited to attend SDP activities or meetings at the discretion of the Chair.</p> <p>The SDP will not normally be required to take votes, if required in exceptional cases decisions will be taken by a majority vote, with each partnership members having one vote</p> <p>The SDP will be made up of individuals selected for their expertise, background and experience, so substitutes will not be allowed</p> <p>Continued non-attendance (i.e. non-attendance at 3 consecutive partnership meetings) will result in the seat being allocated to another representative for the sector</p> <p>The Chair may create sub groups to focus on priority areas or address specific issues (the resources for which to be agreed with the Authority</p> <p>Those appointed to the SDP will abide by the principles of public life and sign up to a code of conduct that enshrines these principles.</p>
Resources	<p>SDP partners will be entitled to claim expenses for their participation and may, in certain circumstances receive a payment for their participation on the partnership.</p> <p>Where appropriate and by mutual agreement, in kind support for the SDP will be provided by the SDNPA governance team and the Director of Countryside Policy & Management and his teams.</p>
Amendment, modification or variation	<p>Amendment, modification or variation of these Terms of Reference can only be made by resolution of the SDNPA.</p>