

Agenda Item 15
Report NPA20/21-20

Report to	National Park Authority Meeting
Date	17 December 2020
By	Communications & Engagement Manager
Title of Report Decision	Public Affairs Strategy

Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to

- 1. Agree the Public Affairs Strategy as set out at appendix I to include the three priority areas of Future of Farming, Nature Recovery and Engaging young people with nature, for the period January 2021-December 2023;**
- 2. Delegate Authority to the Chief Executive to make the necessary final changes to the strategy to reflect the priority areas agreed by the NPA;**
- 3. Agree that the annual delivery plan will be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Authority; and**
- 4. Note that the measures for each objective, as set out in the annual delivery plan will be reviewed by SMT on an ongoing basis.**

I. Introduction and Background

- I.1 With a new Partnership Management Plan in place and a fast-changing external environment, the time has come to review our current Public Affairs Strategy which was agreed at the NPA in December 2017, with a progress review brought to the NPA in October 2019.
- I.2 This revised Public Affairs Strategy (**Appendix I**) sets out the necessary framework to enable the National Park Authority to influence public policy, build and maintain a strong reputation and find common ground with stakeholders on key issues that impact on our statutory purposes and duty, and special qualities, over the coming two years.
- I.3 It is **one** of, but by no means the only, mechanisms by which we can achieve the large-scale objectives of the *Partnership Management Plan*, the *Local Plan* and the *Corporate Plan* that sit outside of our direct control.
- I.4 The starting point was to review of the Strategy to determine if the objectives were still valid.
- I.5 The next step was to identify any additional issues on which we could potentially focus our public affairs work over the coming two years.

- 1.6 Public affairs can be time consuming and resource intensive, therefore, as with the previous strategy, we are asking Members to prioritise **three** issues so that we can ensure that we do not attempt to spread ourselves too thinly and have the resources needed to achieve our objectives.
- 1.7 In determining what to choose as our public affairs objectives it is important to remember that these are the issues that we determine can most be influenced by public affairs work (i.e. influencing policy, practice and opinion) and is not an indication of the prominence of these issues over others.
- 1.8 These objectives do not indicate organisational or delivery priorities, which are set in the Corporate Plan nor wider Communications & Engagement priorities which will be set in the revised Communications & Engagement Strategy.
- 1.9 The first step of this review has been to look at the priority issues from the current Public Affairs Strategy with the subject relevant technical leads and managers. Discussions were then held with experts from across the organisation to identify and hone potential priorities, and a draft of the key issues and objectives was presented to SMT/Committee Chairs in November 2020 for additional input.

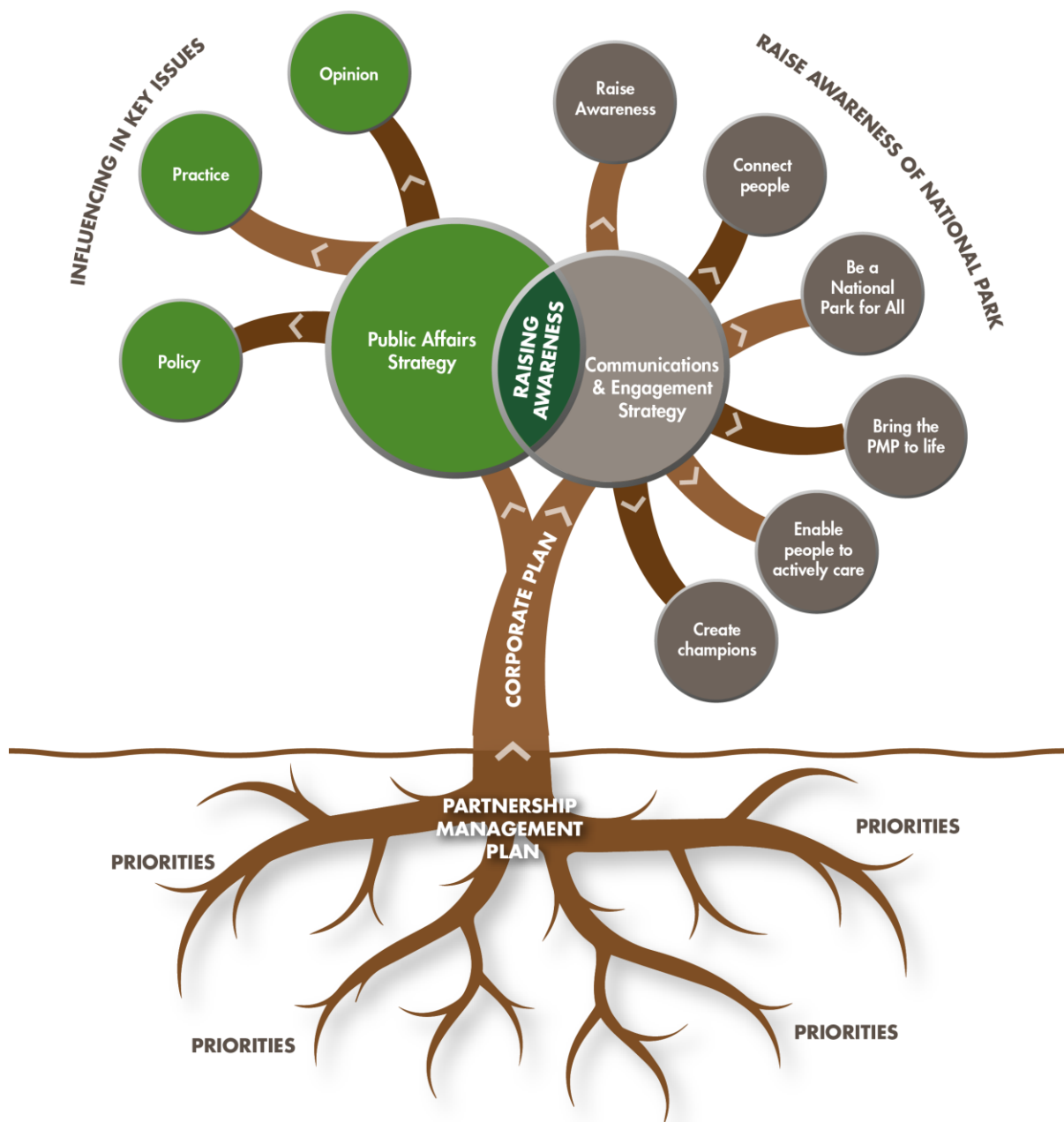
2. Aims of the Public Affairs Strategy

- 2.1 The Public Affairs Strategy for the SDNPA has three key purposes:
- To ensure a coordinated approach to our public affairs work to enable the Authority to influence policy and decision making on agreed strategic issues affecting the National Park.
 - To identify the top three public affairs issues that we will proactively work on over the next two years.
 - To set out guiding principles for how we can effectively and quickly deal with emerging issues so that the Authority can respond to challenges and be ready to grasp opportunities.

3. How Public Affairs and Communications & Engagement will work together

- 3.1 Public affairs is one aspect of our wider communications and engagement work. The Public Affairs Strategy will sit alongside the Communications & Engagement Strategy but does not replace it (see Figure 1).
- 3.2 The Public Affairs Strategy is all about **how we will influence changes in policy, practice and thinking** and will identify three key priority issues, as agreed by Members, for what we will focus our proactive public affairs work on.
- 3.3 It will be **supported by** our wider awareness raising and communications work as set out in the Communications & Engagement Strategy as presented to the NPA today.

Figure 1: How Public Affairs and Communications & Engagement work together



4. Reviewing the current Public Affairs Strategy

4.1 The Future of Farming

4.1.1 *Our identified objective:*

- To ensure that any new scheme(s) gives the same or better support to the environment as current schemes, and are expanded to include cultural heritage, access and education.
- Farm clusters within the National Park to become innovative test beds for potential agri-environment schemes in lowland landscapes.
- More of the National Park is covered by the South Downs Farm Cluster Network so that more farmers have the opportunity to be part of a farm cluster.

4.1.2 *Has the objective been achieved?*

- Farmer workshop ELM Test & Trial (T&T) completed and final report submitted to Defra

- Farm cluster/Land App ELM T&T completed and final report submitted to Defra
- National ELM PPD response submitted through NPE
- Four farmer breakfast/supper meetings to update attendees on general ELM and SDNPA T&T progress
- 125 attendees, representing all farm clusters, involved in farmer workshop ELM T&T
- 4 facilitators and 20 farmers involved in Farm cluster/Land App ELM T&T

4.1.3 *Is this still a priority issue?*

YES. Having reviewed this issue through the three key tests of whether we have a key role to play, whether we have the ability to influence and whether it is time critical, we strongly recommend that The Future of Farming continues to be a priority public affairs objective.

4.2 Water

4.2.1 *Our objective:*

To improve the ecological and chemical conditions of the rivers and aquifers within the South Downs National Park.

4.2.2 *Has the objective been achieved?*

- We have actively engaged with all 3 water companies on the content of these plans and managed to successfully influence them.
- The water companies have run a series of land management trials.
- We have worked with water companies and catchment partnerships to provide information on water efficiency
- We are also working with developers to build more water efficient homes and our Local Plan sets a per capita consumption (PCC) target of 110 for all new built properties
- Through ChaMP continued development of work with Local Authorities.
- Launch of TAP (Champ 2) for the next 5 years in partnership with Southern Water, EA and BHCC.

4.2.3 *Is this still a priority issue?*

NO. When the Public Affairs Strategy was agreed in December 2017, all three of the water companies operating in and around the National Park were in the process of drawing up their 5 Year Action Plans. This made it an opportune time to influence policy, practice and opinion. While water remains a key issue for the National Park, we do not feel we currently have either the ability to influence or that it is time critical, and we therefore recommend that water does not remain a priority issue for our public affairs.

4.3 Sustainable Tourism

South Downs National Park is a premier sustainable tourism destination unified under the South Downs National Parks shared identity.

4.3.1 *Has the objective been achieved?*

- **Gatwick Gateway:** Investment from partners (Experience West Sussex Surrey Hills AONB, West Kent, SDNPA), plus in kind funding from Gatwick Airport, to support the development of joint marketing campaign.

- **Sussex Modern:** Development of marketing campaign promoting cultural attractions, vineyards and the landscape.
- **English National Parks Experience Collection (ENPEC):** very successful launch of English National Park Experience Collection
- We have been successful in securing funding for a **ENPEC Part II** aimed at the national market.
- **Local Plan** has a policy on Sustainable Tourism.
- **Getting Out Out Campaign:** The joint campaign with other South East Protected Landscapes to celebrate 70 years of protected landscapes (<http://going-outout.co.uk/>) ran in 2019 and reached c250,000 people.
- **Visitor Payback scheme:** South Downs Trust Visitor Giving programme seven partners and we are in discussions with the Brighton Biosphere about a combined Visitor Giving offer.
- **19 boundary signs** using the shared identity have been installed and phase II for an additional 31 is in progress.
- **Digital gateway to the National Park.** New more visitor-focused website launched in April 2020 including a new Discovery Map. Traffic to the site increased substantially with an increase of 148% in individual users visiting our website in the last year. Our social media following grew by 45% between 2018/19 and 2019/20.

4.3.2 *Is this still a priority issue?*

NO. Sustainable tourism and the wider rural economy remain key issues for the National Park as part of our partnership Management Plan and while we still have a key role to play, now is not the time when there is an ability to influence through public affairs.

5. **Key issues**

5.1 Working with colleagues across the organisation, we have identified five existing and new key issues that could provide the strongest potential for positive change through targeted public affairs work over the next two years. These key issues are set out in full detail in the attached strategy, but in summary:

5.2 Future of Farming

5.2.1 *What is the issue?*

The future of farming continues to be a hugely impactful and unresolved issue, with both policy and practice currently being designed for a post-Brexit world. With 75% of the National Park farmed, this has a huge and Park-wide impact.

5.2.2 *Objective:*

- To ensure that any new scheme(s) gives the same or better support to the environment as current schemes, and are expanded to include cultural heritage, access and education.
- Farm clusters within the National Park to become innovative test beds for potential agri-environment schemes in lowland landscapes.

5.3 Engaging Young People with Nature

5.3.1 *What is the issue?*

Few other groups have been so affected by the knock-on effects of Covid-19 as young people, and there is a real opportunity to engage a whole generation with nature and the

National Park, with South Downs Youth Action providing the perfect vehicle to engage and seek commitment from key stakeholders. Young people have emerged at the forefront of the global conservation and climate action movements. If we are to enable the next generation of conservationists in the South Downs, we must invest in connecting young people to nature and engage with the National Park.

5.3.2 *Objective:*

Opportunities for young people to engage with the National Park

- Partner organisations to sign up to South Downs Youth Action:
 - provide opportunities for young people to engage with nature;
 - create youth volunteer or apprenticeship roles; and
 - provide opportunities for youth voices in their Governance
- Further education sector to sign up to South Downs Youth Action and commit to sharing information and guiding young people towards the three Youth Action opportunities.

5.4 Nature Recovery

5.4.1 *What is the issue?*

Nature is increasingly under pressure, and we urgently need to reverse the decline in nature and give it a chance to recover. Nature also holds the key to successfully responding to climate change. Local authorities are required to produce county-based Local Nature Recovery Strategies

5.4.2 *Objective:*

- Local authorities in and around the National Park to:
 - (alongside other key partners) sign up to the South Downs People and Nature Network (PANN);
 - commit to enhance their public open space for the benefit of nature and access/people using the PANN evidence to target the areas that offer the greatest benefits;
 - work with the National Park to develop and implement county-based Local Nature Recovery Strategy(ies);
 - “call for sites” for biodiversity net gain to be included in the county-based Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- Defra to define a single carbon metric for all habitat types.
- Launch a public and funder facing campaign to raise awareness of nature recovery in the South Downs National Park and secure the funding necessary for its roll out.

5.5 Climate change

5.5.1 *What is the issue?*

There has been increased levels of public concern around the impacts of Climate Change and the existential threat it poses. In recognition of this the UK Government declared a climate emergency in May 2019. It has committed the UK to becoming a ‘Net Zero’ economy by 2050.

5.5.2 *Objective:*

- Our Local Authority partners within the National Park to:
 - sign up to the National Park Authority's emerging Climate Change commitments and Action Plan to deliver Net-Zero with nature by 2040. – with an emphasis on the SDNPA leading on the nature-based solutions element of this;
 - develop clear action plan for how they will support local communities to become more resilient and to make a rapid transition to zero-carbon.

5.6 Health and Wellbeing

5.6.1 *What is the issue?*

While the link between the benefits of nature and green space to both health and mental health is well known, barriers remain to many of those who most need the natural health service of the National Park.

5.6.2 *Objective:*

More social prescribing opportunities linked to or in the National Park:

- A refreshed national Accord with Public Health England
- A new accord with local NHS organisations which commits them to increased investment in social prescribing opportunities linked to or in the National Park
- Partners to create more social prescribing opportunities linked to or in the National Park

6. **Recommendations**

6.1 With a new PMP in place, we have ten clear broad objectives that we want to achieve. Each of these ten outcomes is underpinned by four overarching issues: nature recovery, climate change, health and well-being and rural economy, and these will be key to all aspects of our work from communications to planning to cultural heritage and more. As stated earlier, public affairs is not simply about our messaging or engaging people. In choosing public affairs objectives it is important that we identify objectives that will lead directly to changes in policy, practice and opinion. Each objective has got to pass three crucial tests as agreed by Members:

- Do we have a clear leadership role to play?
- Do we have a genuine ability to influence?
- Is the issue time critical?

6.2 We must also look at our available resources and our ability to be able to deliver on our objectives. Successful public affairs take time and needs adequate resourcing and technical expertise and leadership. We are therefore recommending no more than 3 priority issues be chosen. Members will be asked to make a decision on no more than three final public affairs issues.

6.3 Based on all of these factors the recommendation is that we take forward no more than three public affairs issues, and the three issues we recommend are:

- 1) Future of Farming
- 2) Nature Recovery
- 3) Engaging young people with nature.

- 6.4 These three issues have been chosen as they most clearly meet the three tests as set out in paragraph 6.1.1 above. All three fit with current Government priorities and all three are areas in which we have strong or strongly emerging networks, partnerships and influence.
- 6.5 Both the future of farming and nature recovery will have wide-scale impacts across the National Park, and the policy and practice that will determine their future is happening now. Our farm clusters provide a strong network to test policy and practice and we already have an inroad to the decision making table.
- 6.6 Nature recovery is a crucial issue as it is *the* issue, perhaps more than any other, that people want and expect us to be able to take action on. People's connection with nature has strengthened exponentially during the Covid Crisis and the time to engage people with the work of the National Park is now, on the issue they value and feel is our core remit. We are planning to launch a large-scale nature recovery public awareness and fundraising campaign in the coming months and this will provide an excellent lever to support our public affairs as people – as voters, constituents, can have a powerful impact on policy decision making.
- 6.7 Both health and engaging young people with nature clearly deliver on purpose 2. It can be tempting to focus on the issue that affects the most people rather than focusing on a specific audience. However, work across the advocacy sector shows that targeting specific audiences can be the most effective way to create the desired change. So, for example, it has been proven that in terms of development, “Investing in women, literally, has proven the most effective way to increase individual family expenditures on health and education, improve nutrition and food security, protect against emergencies, and begin the slow process of tackling the gender inequalities that hinder development in so many countries around the world”¹.
- 6.8 In investing in connecting young people with nature we are not only setting a whole generation on the path to using the natural health service for their physical and mental health, we are enabling the next generation of conservationists in the South Downs who can and must continue the work being discussed today.
- 6.9 Climate change is undeniably a huge issue not only for us but for the whole world. Our approach to tackling climate change, as set out in our emerging Climate Change commitments and Action Plan, centres around nature-based solutions and focusing on nature recovery. Focusing on our more advanced work on nature recovery would enable us to advance both our nature recovery and climate change agendas. We must also ask are we ready to position ourselves as leaders in climate change?
- 6.10 It is important to note that, if we have learnt anything in the last 12 months it is that the external environment can quickly shift and so it is proposed that the strategy and its three key objectives are reviewed by SMT on an ongoing basis to ensure that they remain the top three priorities.
- 7. Delivery – a shared responsibility**
- 7.1 Delivering Public Affairs is a shared endeavour between staff, senior management and Members, who must all play their part in influencing at their respective levels in a targeted and planned manner.

¹ McCarter, Elissa, “Women and Microfinance: Why We Should Do More”, *University of Maryland Law Journal of Race, Religion, Gender & Class*

7.2 Once the three topics have been chosen by Members today, the strategy will be finalised and a delivery plan will be developed and agreed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Authority.

8. Measuring success

8.1 The specific impact of individual public affairs activities is notoriously difficult to measure as it can be, at times, impossible to attribute a change in behaviour, policy or practice to one particular activity. We have identified some baseline information for each of the issues. Once the strategy has been agreed and a delivery plan developed, we will work with the Projects & Performance Team to confirm measures for each objective that will be reviewed by SMT on a six-monthly basis and reported back to Members as part of the reporting cycle.

9. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No. Final action plans will be agreed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	None – annual work plan and resources will be planned for in annual budget development, which is signed off by Members.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Effective strategies ensure targeted use of the funds allocated for this work.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	N/A
Has due regard been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	No implications arising from the strategy. The priority areas identified , especially engaging young people with nature , will help drive improvements across a range of protected characteristics (not just age) and support wider engagement across the national park, and will specifically assist individuals who have previously been identified as hard to reach for the National Park Authority.
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 Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	Contributes to principles 2 and 4 of the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy.

10. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 10.1 There is a risk that the Authority does not have mechanisms to identify and respond to emerging issues. The Public Affairs Strategy mitigates this risk.

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South Downs National Park Authority

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Appendices	1. Public Affairs Strategy
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	PMP, Corporate Plan, Communications & Engagement Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

South Downs National Park Authority
Public Affairs Strategy
2021-23

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Introduction

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) must make decisions about when and where we need to act in order to fulfill our statutory purposes and duty, and to protect the special qualities of the National Park. One key way in which we do this is through public affairs.

Public affairs can be defined as seeking to influence policy, practice or opinion through stakeholder management.

The Public Affairs Strategy for the SDNPA has three key purposes:

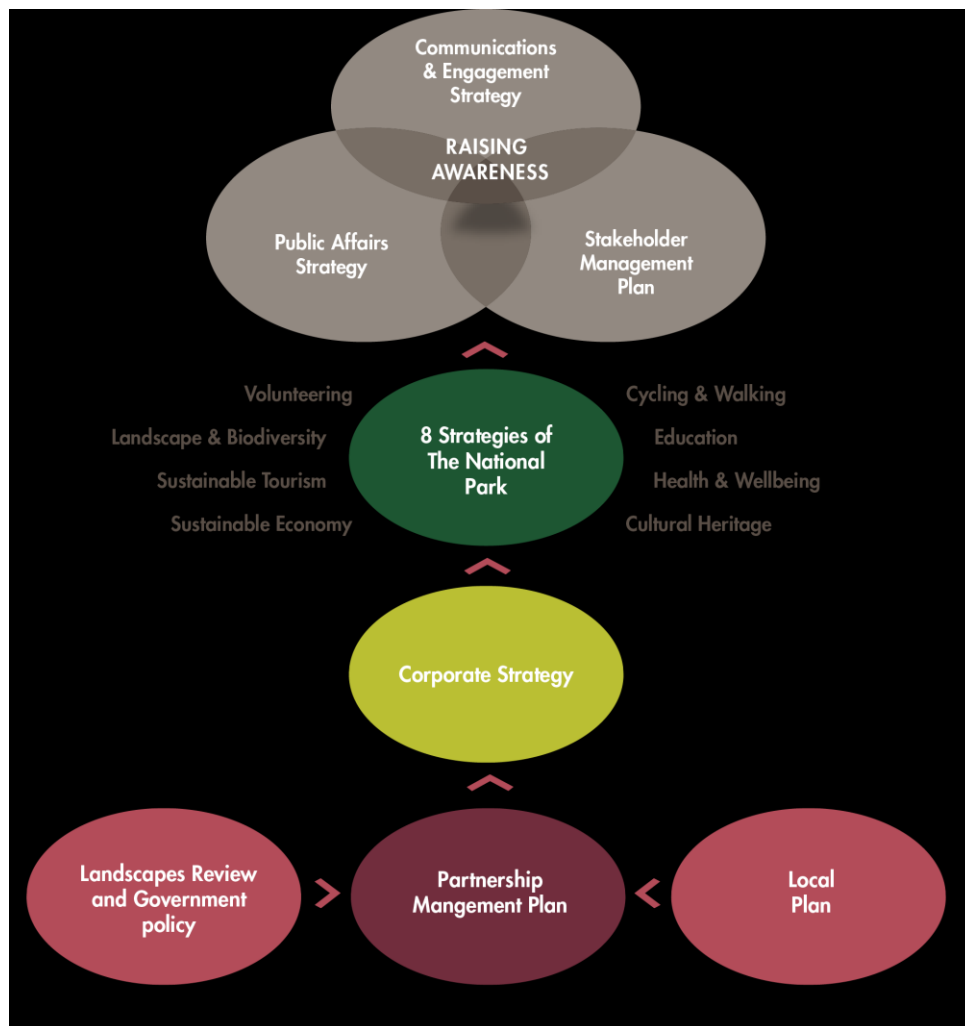
- To ensure a coordinated approach to our public affairs work to enable the Authority to influence policy and decision making on agreed strategic issues affecting the National Park.
- To identify the top three public affairs issues that we will proactively work on over the next two years. (please note Members are being presented with 5 options and at the 17 December 2020 NPA, will agree which three objectives will be included in the final strategy)
- To set out guiding principles for how we can effectively and quickly deal with emerging issues so that the Authority can respond to challenges and be ready to grasp opportunities.

It is **one** of, but by no means the only, key way by which we can achieve the large-scale objectives of the *Partnership Management Plan*, the *Local Plan* and the *Corporate Plan* that sit outside of our direct control.

This Strategy has clear links to a number of key strategic organisational documents and strategies (see Figure 2 below). It does not duplicate the objectives set out in any of them.

The Strategy is for 2021-23 and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by SMT to ensure that emerging issues and a changing external policy environment are adequately reflected.

Figure 1: Context of the Public Affairs Strategy



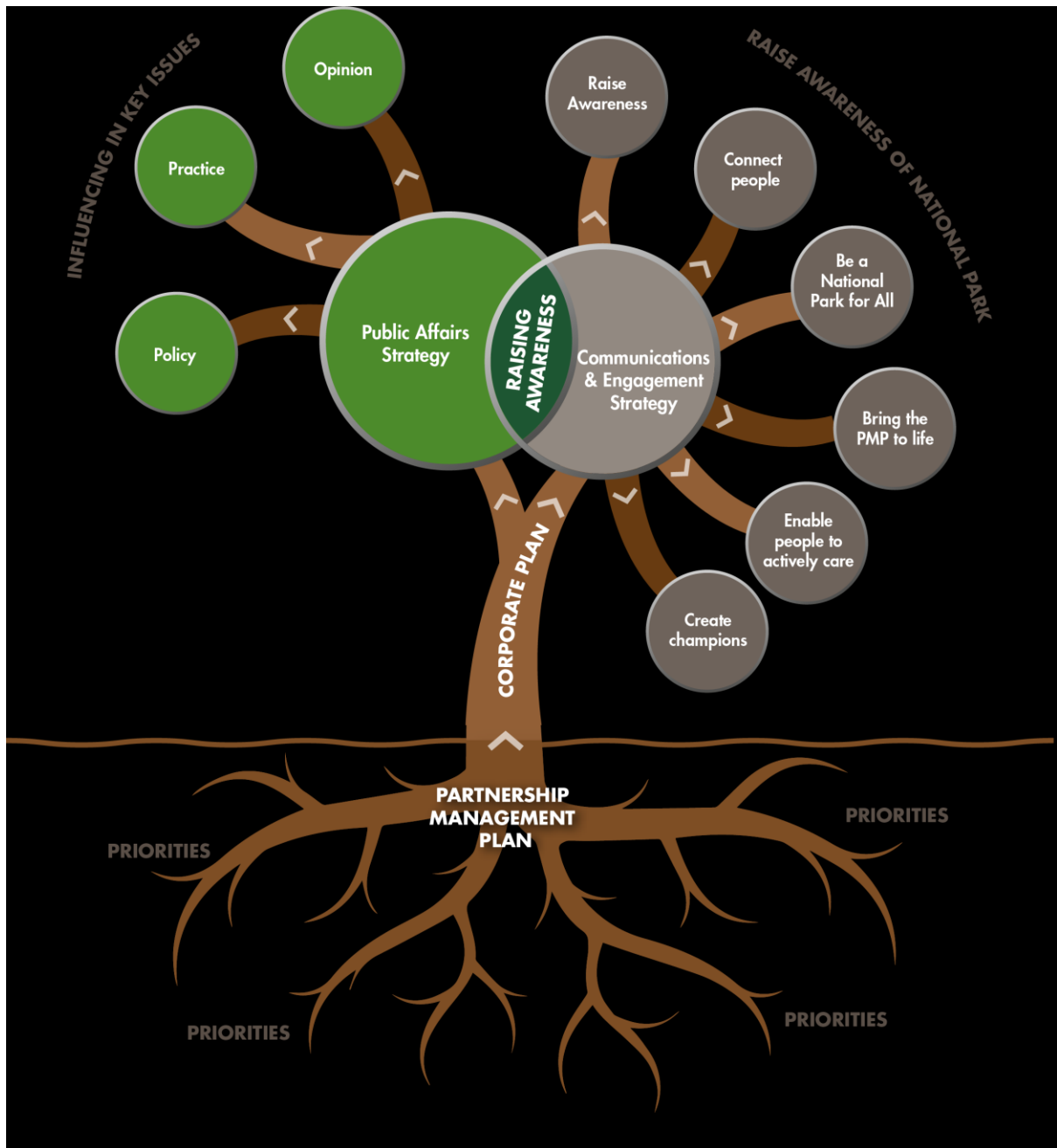
How our communications and public affairs will work together

Public affairs is only one aspect of our communications and engagement work. The Public Affairs Strategy sits alongside the Communications & Engagement Strategy but unlike the Communications & Engagement Strategy it:

- does not cover the day-to-day detailed communications about the projects and wider work of the National Park and our partners;
- it is not about ongoing communication with stakeholders – this is covered in the Stakeholder Management Plan in Appendix 1; and
- it is also not the sole expression of our corporate or budget priorities.

See Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Public Affairs Strategy and Communications & Engagement



Guiding principles

This strategy sets out the strategic issues that our public affairs work will focus on in the coming two years. To choose which issues to prioritise for our public affairs work, we have used the guiding principles set out below. These guiding principles will also be used to decide on whether any emergency or urgent issues should be of high priority.

We prioritise issues:

- that play a major role in the delivery of the Purposes for which the National Park has been designated and the duty of the Authority
- where the special qualities of the South Downs are at risk
- that directly relate to the priorities set out in the Government's plans for National Parks, including the issues raised in the Landscape Review.
- that are likely to generate significant interest and concern among the communities of the National Park
- that are likely to generate significant media interest; and

We will then vet each of these issues against three crucial tests:

- where we have a clear leadership role to play;
- where there is genuine ability for us to influence; and
- where the issue is time critical – ie, when there is a specific policy debate/practical development that means the window of opportunity to influence is now.

Key issues and objectives

The Partnership Management Plan sets out 10 key outcomes for the National Park over the next five years. Our Communications & Engagement Strategy is set out to support delivery of the Partnership Management Plan and covers all of the 10 key outcomes, as well as our Local Plan and Corporate Plan. This public affairs strategy focuses on the key issues that can best be influenced by public affairs work – **ie where we can influence policy, practice or opinion**. The issues included are no reflection of the relative importance of these issues over other issues in the Partnership Management Plan.

To ensure adequate focus and resources, three key issues are chosen to focus our public affairs work on. The strategy will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team to ensure that emerging issues and a changing external policy environment are adequately reflected.

Please note Members are being asked to choose 3 from the following 5 options only to focus our finite resources.

The Future of Farming

What is the issue?

More than 75 per cent of the National Park is farmed and over two-thirds is currently managed through some form of agri-environment scheme.

A post-Brexit future without the European Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) represents the biggest change to how we think about farming in decades. Much detail of the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMs) remains undecided and uncertain.

WHY THIS ISSUE?

Key role to play: The future of farming is the future of the National Park's landscapes and now is exactly the right time to ensure that is shaped in a way that supports our Vision for 2050. The National Park has submitted two successful test and trials – one on farmer workshops and one on farm cluster Land App, and is ideally placed to test approaches for lowland landscapes.

Our Ability to influence: The SDNPA is well placed to develop further pilots that will influence post-Brexit plans that will shape the future of the National Park for many decades to come. Such pilots will have great relevance for other lowland landscapes.

Time critical: Many post-Brexit decisions remain to be taken that will shape the future of land and environmental management in the UK.

OUR OBJECTIVES:

- To ensure that any new scheme(s) gives the same or better support to the environment as current schemes, and are expanded to include cultural heritage, access and education.
- Farm clusters within the National Park to become innovative test beds for potential agri-environment schemes in lowland landscapes.

Barriers: Lots of competing priorities for government mean that the current level of funding for agriculture, environment and rural development may not be maintained.

What do we want?

- To support sustainable and profitable farming that does not conflict with our purposes.
- To increase biodiversity in the National Park through maximising delivery of current agri-environment schemes.
- To work with farm clusters in the National Park to increase knowledge and share learning.
- To continue to pilot new land management schemes in lowland landscapes including biodiversity, access and cultural heritage.

Why?

- Farming is an integral and important part of the South Downs landscape
- Sustainable, profitable farming can deliver environmental outcomes.
- We want to enhance the benefits of current Agri-environment schemes that cover approximately 60% of the National Park.
- Farmers in the South Downs want to work together – 70% of the National Park is now covered by the South Downs Farm Cluster Network and the benefits of collaborative working have been demonstrated.
- The Farm Cluster Network means we are ready and able to pilot any new schemes now.
- Estates and farms, through Whole Estate Plans, enable farmers and others involved in landscape management to build on their assets.

Engaging Young People with Nature

What is the issue?

No other group has been so affected by Covid-19 as young people, and there is a real opportunity to engage a whole generation with nature and the National Park, with South Downs Youth Action providing the perfect vehicle to engage and seek commitment from key stakeholders.

- There is a growing disconnect between young people and nature
- Young people (16-24) are under-represented in the SDNP visitor profile
- There are few volunteers under 25 across the SDNP – nearly half of all organisations in the SDNP Volunteer Network have no volunteers in this age group
- If we are to secure the future of the National Park we must support young people to learn about and care for nature, so that we are enabling the next generation of conservationists
- 4% of SDVRS are aged 16-24; Across the Volunteer Network, 48% of all organisations have no volunteers aged 16-25 (SD Volunteer Network Survey 2019).

WHY THIS ISSUE?

Key role to play: The SDNP Learning and Volunteering Networks are well established and well respected and South Downs Youth Action is becoming established as a brand for engaging young people across the SDNP.

Our Ability to influence: The SDNPA is well placed to extend the successful pilot on South Downs Youth Action to influence the adoption of this approach across these networks

Time critical: Covid has had a disproportionate impact on young people and youth mental health has declined significantly. Enforced restrictions on accessing the SDNP have exacerbated the disconnect between many young people and the SDNP.

OUR OBJECTIVE:

Opportunities for young people to engage with the National Park

- Partner organisations to sign up to South Downs Youth Action:
 - provide opportunities for young people to engage with nature;
 - create youth volunteer or apprenticeship roles; and
 - provide opportunities for youth voices in their Governance
- Further education sector to sign up to South Downs Youth Action and commit to sharing information and guiding young people towards the three Youth Action opportunities.

Barriers: Lack of employment opportunities, work-related learning, volunteering roles and awareness of what the SDNP can offer

What do we want?

Young people will have greater opportunities to engage with nature and the National Park

Why?

- The Glover report calls on National landscapes to “...develop ambitious targeted plans for helping those who currently fail to benefit from our most special places”. It also expects National Landscapes to produce as part of their management plans “... ambitious strategies to increase the diversity of access for marginalised groups”.
- The 25 year Environment Strategy has targets to: Encourage children to be close to nature, in and out of school, with particular focus on disadvantaged areas. This includes making it easier “for schools and Pupil Referral Units to take pupils on trips to natural spaces on a regular basis where they can combine learning with feeling healthier and happier.
- 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”.
- Young people have emerged at the forefront of the global conservation and climate action movements. If we are to enable the next generation of conservationists in the South Downs, we must invest in connecting young people to nature and engage with the National Park.

Nature Recovery

What is the issue?

Nature is increasingly under pressure, and we urgently need to reverse the decline in nature and give it a chance to recover. Nature also holds the key to successfully responding to climate change.

WHY THIS ISSUE?

Key role to play: Purpose 1 of National Parks is to Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

We are in an ideal position to bring partners together to help deliver the ambitious regional People and Nature Network (PANN) which aims to create a connected network of “green infrastructure” across the South East that makes havens for wildlife, supports local economies, helps to mitigate climate change and gives local people all the health and well-being benefits of a better natural environment.

Nature-based solutions provide the basis of the National Park Authority’s response to climate change. Climate Minister Lord Goldsmith has this week said that “nature-based solutions are being utterly neglected in the global climate agenda and wrongly so.”

Our Ability to influence: We have a strong ability to influence at national level as part of the protected landscapes family, which forms a key element of the Government’s NRN Strategy. At a local and regional level we have the partner relationships to bring key stakeholders from across the region to work together towards nature recovery.

Time critical: Nature is in trouble and action is needed fast if the Government is to meet its NRN target to restore 75% of protected sites to favourable condition so that nature can thrive.

OUR OBJECTIVE:

- Local authorities in and around the National Park to:
 - (alongside other key partners) sign up to the South Downs People and Nature Network (PANN);
 - commit to enhance their public open space for the benefit of nature and access/people using the PANN evidence to target the areas that offer the greatest benefits;
 - work with the National Park to develop and implement county-based Local Nature Recovery Strategy(ies);
 - “call for sites” for biodiversity net gain to be included in the county-based Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- Defra to define a single carbon metric for all habitat types.

Barriers: Planning pressures in the area and a lack of active engagement with nature recovery from some local authorities.

What do we want?

Our People and Nature Network bringing partners together and sitting at the heart of successful nature recovery in the South East.

Why?

Nature and the issues facing it do not recognise administrative boundaries. A regional response to nature loss is needed if we are to restore nature for the benefit of biodiversity and people, and to provide nature-based solution to climate changes that the National Park and the wider South East is already experiencing.

Climate Change

What is the issue?

There has been increased levels of public concern around the impacts of Climate Change and the existential threat it poses. In recognition of this the UK Government declared a climate emergency in May 2019. It has committed the UK to becoming a 'Net Zero' economy by 2050.

WHY THIS ISSUE?

Key role to play:

- The National Park Authority approved its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in March 2020. Amongst other actions, the plan commits the SDNPA to:
 - Achieving a target of becoming a 'Net-Zero' Organisation by 2030;
 - Working towards the South Downs National Park becoming 'Net-Zero with Nature' by 2040;
 - Working with our constituent Local Authorities and sector partners, in particular communities and landowners, to respond effectively to the climate and nature emergency;
- National Parks England (NPE) have recently refreshed its Climate Change & Energy Group. The intention being to improve co-ordination and joint-action across the UK National Park family. 8.2 The group are currently working on a new 5-year delivery plan. The intent is to achieve a 'step up' in terms of delivery. The main aim is for the NPAs to lead in efforts to tackle climate emergency.
- Our partnership based model is the ideal convening means to bring new partnerships together to adopt and implement nature-based solutions to climate change.

Our Ability to influence: The 25-year Environment Plan references the ability of National Parks to work together at a landscape scale.

Time critical: The Government has made a commitment to become a Net Zero economy by 2050, and the National Park Authority has set the goal of the National Park becoming net-zero with nature by 2040.

Many of the local authorities within the National Park have declared climate emergencies.

OUR OBJECTIVE:

- Our Local Authority partners within the National Park to:
 - sign up to the National Park's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan to deliver Net-Zero with nature by 2040. – with an emphasis on the SDNPA leading on the nature-based solutions element of this;
 - develop clear action plan for how they will support local communities to become more resilient and to make a rapid transition to zero-carbon.

Barriers: Local authorities rely on national data-sets compiled by the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to set and monitor their targets. At present this data is not cut to National Park areas.

What do we want?

To achieve Net Zero with Nature for the entire National Park by 2040, in line with the Authority's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

Why?

Achieving Net Zero for Nature in the National Park by 2040 will require the commitment of local authorities and local communities.

Health and wellbeing

What is the issue?

While the link between the benefits of nature and green space to both health and mental health is well known, barriers remain to many of those who most need the natural health service of the National Park.

WHY THIS ISSUE?

Key role to play:

The National Park, as part of the English National Parks, is part of an Accord with Public Health England to use National Parks to improve people's physical and mental wellbeing.

The National Park has developed its first Health & Wellbeing Strategy which identifies health and wellbeing priority areas in and around the National Park.

Lockdown has caused an increase in health and mental health issues and more people are relying on green space to support their health and mental health needs.

Our Ability to influence:

We already have an accord in place with Public Health England as part of the family of English National Parks.

Time critical:

Physical and mental health is high on the agenda for both the public and Government.

Our objective:

More social prescribing opportunities linked to or in the National Park:

- A refreshed national Accord with Public Health England
- A new accord with local NHS organisations which commits them to increased investment in social prescribing opportunities linked to or in the National Park
- Partners to create more social prescribing opportunities linked to or in the National Park

Barriers: Lack of information about how to access green space for health and wellbeing and lack of access to some communities in and around the National Park to local green space.

What do we want?

The National Park to provide a free natural health service, with particular emphasis on those communities in and around the National Park who suffer from poor physical or mental health.

Why?

We want more people to benefit from the free natural health service that the National Park offers to everyone.

How we will deliver

Our greatest strength as an Authority is the knowledge and passion of our people. This Public Affairs Strategy will only be achieved through the coordinated and joint efforts of officers and members. The strategy goes on to set out how we will work with key stakeholders on our objectives, and we will develop an annual delivery plan that will set out the officers and Members that will be mobilised to achieve the prioritised objectives.

Key stakeholders

The SDNPA cannot create change on key issues for the National Park on its own. The PMP brings together the key stakeholders to identify the objectives that we collectively want to achieve and makes a commitment to working in partnership through a shared delivery plan.

Every kind of stakeholder needs coordinated relationship management and communication, ranging from an occasional 'light touch' to detailed, frequent updates.

Our public affairs work relies on our ability to effectively manage our relationships with key stakeholders in two ways:

- on an ongoing basis; and
- on specific issues at specific times.

Successful engagement on specific issues relies on relationships built up with the stakeholder on an ongoing basis. Keeping the right people informed at the right time, with the right amount of detail is critical to making stakeholders feel valued, involved, and heard and to ensuring that when important issues arise, relationships management is ongoing and a level of communication is already in place.

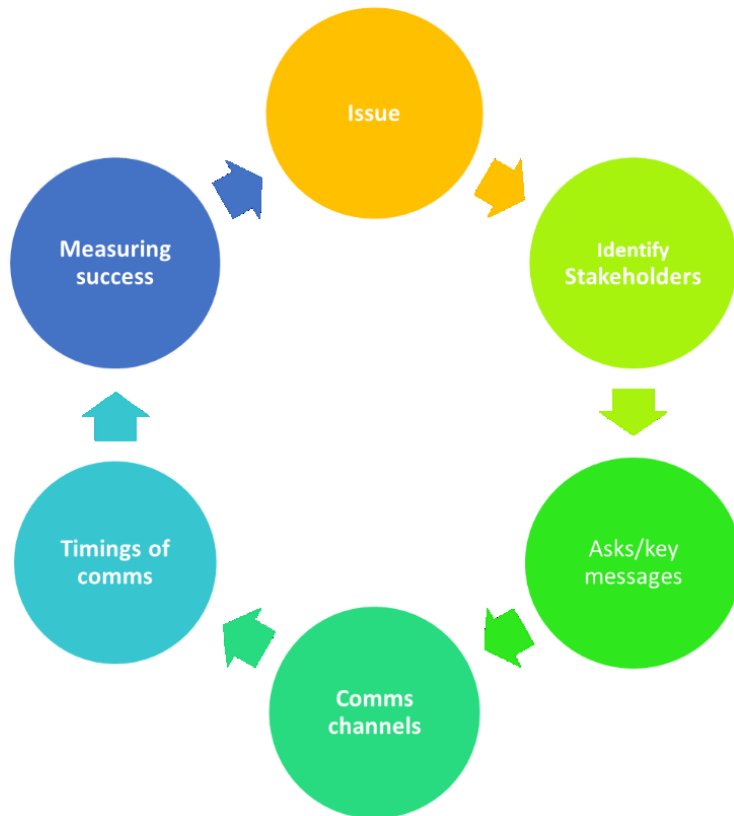
Ongoing stakeholder management:

Working with stakeholders on specific issues must sit on a foundation of ongoing Stakeholder Management that identifies key stakeholders and sets out how we will engage effectively with them throughout the lifecycle of the Partnership Management Plan in order to achieve its key outcomes. See Appendix I for more detail.

Stakeholder management on specific issues:

This strategy goes on to propose a number of priority issues for the National Park over the next two years and the specific objectives and asks we want to achieve during that period. For these and future specific issues we will identify the issue, our 'asks', the key relevant stakeholders, how we will communicate with them and how we will measure success.

Figure 3: Process for public affairs



Identifying the key stakeholders for each issue will be done by applying four criteria:

1. **Contribution (value):** Does the stakeholder have information expertise on the issue that could be helpful?
2. **Influence:** How much influence does the stakeholder have and who with?
3. **Willingness to engage:** How willing is the stakeholder to engage?
4. **Necessity of involvement:** Is this someone who could derail or delegitimise the process if they were not included in the engagement?

Channels: We have many communications and engagement channels that we can use in pursuit of our public affairs objectives. Once key stakeholders have been identified we will look at the best channels to use to connect with/influence them. It is most likely that we will use a combination of different channels for each stakeholder. Our communication channels include, among others:

- Digital: website, social media etc
- Printed publications
- Events: Both in person and virtual.
- Media: Proactive and reactive media in print, radio and TV
- Leadership channels:
 - High-level meetings between leaders/chairs
 - Member interactions with their own bodies, local authorities, parishes etc
 - Director level meetings with partners
- Peer-to-peer channels:
 - Meetings at officer level
 - Interactions between officers and volunteers and public etc
- Strategic groups:
 - South Downs Partnership
 - Land Managers Groups
 - LEPs etc

Conclusion

This Public Affairs Strategy is designed to enable us to carry out coordinated public affairs work on some of the key issues facing the National Park. It sits alongside the wider Communications & Engagement Strategy. The issues chosen are in no way a reflection that other areas are of lesser priority, rather, they are the three issues through which we know our public affairs work can have the most impact. By focusing on three issues we are ensuring that we will use our finite resources to best effect.

DRAFT

Appendix 1: Public Affairs Annual Delivery Plan template

Please note this Action Plan will be completed once the three issues have been chosen by Members and will be signed off by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair. It is a living document and will be added to and updated as opportunities arise.

PMP	Theme	Objectives	Key messages	Opportunities	Key stakeholders	Asks	Channels	SDNPA staff resource	Timeline	Measures of success
Local PI										
Corp PI										

Appendix 2: Stakeholder Management Plan

Please note this Stakeholder Management Plan will be completed once the three issues have been chosen by Members and will be signed off by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair. It is a living document and will be added to and updated as opportunities arise.

- A.1 The following Stakeholder Management Plan identifies our key stakeholders and how we will manage our interactions with them on an ongoing basis. As a National Park committed to working in partnership we have a wide array of stakeholders and this can be challenging in terms of resources and managing stakeholder expectations.
- A.2 The Stakeholder Management Plan is a means by which we maximise our ability to engage with and successfully work with our stakeholders/partners. It is therefore important that the stakeholder management plan is realistically achievable.
- A.3 As with the specific priority issues set out in the Public Affairs Strategy, we will use the following criteria to prioritise engagement:
- **Contribution (value) (C)**
 - **Influence (I)**
 - **Willingness to engage (WtE)**
 - **Necessity of involvement (NoI)**

Stakeholder	Our engagement Objective	Issues, opportunities and risks	Communications channels	Frequency	Key SDNP Contact	Measures of success/desired state of relationship
NATIONAL/POLICY LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS						
Defra Relevant criteria: C/I/WtE/NoI	Influence policy and practice development across key strategic issues	<i>Issues:</i> High turnover of staff, lack of clear direction due to Brexit uncertainty <i>Opportunities:</i> NPE policy papers/APPGs/Ministerial visits/relationship development with PSs <i>Risk:</i> Substantial time input without guarantee of success	<i>Leadership:</i> CE and Chair attendance at NPE and other meetings Director level meetings <i>Peer-to-Peer</i> Liaison with Protected landscape and Press teams on visits and joint initiatives	As needed	Chair/CE managed through PAs and Communications & Engagement Manager	South Downs consulted on and included in Defra initiatives related to National Parks
MPs Relevant criteria: Varies between different MPs C/I/WtE/NoI	Influence policy and practice development across key strategic issues	<i>Opportunities:</i> matching right MP to the right issue can <i>Risks:</i> MPs positions may differ with ours	<i>Leadership:</i> Six monthly catch ups with Chair	As needed	PAs to Chair & Chief Executive working with Communications & Engagement Manager	MPs within the National Park are well briefed on key issues impacting the National Park and are using their influence to further its purposes and duty
Statutory orgs, such as the Forestry England,	For them to engage fully with delivery of the PMP and for the	<i>Issues:</i> Pressure on these organisations to cut costs so less resource available to	<i>Leadership:</i> CE/Regional Director meetings	Partnership meetings (quarterly)	Director of Countryside & Policy Management and team	National Park features in all strategic plans

Stakeholder	Our engagement Objective	Issues, opportunities and risks	Communications channels	Frequency	Key SDNP Contact	Measures of success/desired state of relationship
<p>Natural England and English Heritage</p> <p>Relevant criteria: //Nol with differing levels of WtE</p>	<p>National Park to be a factor in their policy and practice decision making within the South Downs</p>	<p>engage with the National Park</p> <p><i>Opportunities:</i> Joint initiatives to deliver on shared objectives</p> <p><i>Risk:</i> Substantial time input without guarantee of success</p>	<p><i>Strategic meetings:</i> Lawton Group, South Downs Partnership</p> <p><i>Peer-to-Peer:</i> Joint project work, and on the ground work with ranger teams, and partnership groups such as the Heritage Coast Group</p>			<p>relating to the South Downs</p> <p>Increase in number of joint initiatives</p>
ORGANISATIONS THAT IMPACT ON PRACTICE						
<p>Local, Regional and National orgs with specialisms focusing on our seven special qualities and whose values and priorities are in line with those of the SDNPA</p> <p>Relevant criteria: C// Nol varying levels of WtE</p>	<p>Influence strategic planning and asset/land management within the National Park</p> <p>Partners to use the shared identity</p>	<p><i>Issues:</i> For national organisations many key decisions are made at a centralised, rather than South Downs level.</p> <p><i>Opportunities:</i> Joint working on shared goals, for example on HeRe, Heritage Coast</p> <p><i>Risks:</i> Possible competition over funding or project opportunities</p>	<p><i>Peer-to-Peer:</i> Strategic groups, project delivery groups, and on-the-ground delivery teams such as ranger teams</p> <p><i>Digital and print:</i> Cross promotion on digital and print platforms, where applicable, for example, events promotion in South Downs View</p>	<p>Partnership meetings (quarterly)</p> <p>Lawton Group meetings</p>	<p>Director of Countryside & Policy Management and team</p>	<p>National Park features in all strategic plans relating to the South Downs</p> <p>Shared identity more widely used by partners</p> <p>Increase in number of joint initiatives</p>

Stakeholder	Our engagement Objective	Issues, opportunities and risks	Communications channels	Frequency	Key SDNP Contact	Measures of success/desired state of relationship
Local authorities - including county councils and district councils	National Park status is a material consideration in all of their strategic decisions	<p><i>Issues:</i> Limited SDNPA resource</p> <p>LA Members on NPA may have conflict between their NPA and LA direction</p> <p><i>Opportunities:</i></p>	<p><i>Leadership:</i> CE and Chair catch up with Leaders and CEOs</p> <p>Director level meetings for planning</p> <p><i>Peer-to-Peer:</i> Devolved planning management arrangements</p> <p>Highways liaison</p> <p>On the ground work between rangers and land managers</p>	<p>Quarterly/ six monthly</p> <p>3-4 times annually</p> <p>Ad hoc</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>Twice yearly and leaflets ongoing</p>	Chair and SMT (manged through PA team) and LA Members on the NPA	TBC
Land managers and farmers	<p>Increase sign up to farm clusters</p> <p>Continue to work with land managers on ELMS.</p> <p>Provide support through farm cluster network to</p>	<p><i>Issues:</i> Post-Brexit uncertainly among farmers about ongoing financial viability</p>	<p><i>Peer-to-peer:</i></p> <p>Farmers Breakfasts</p> <p>Ranger/farmer liaison</p> <p><i>Leadership:</i></p> <p>SDLMG meetings</p>	<p>Annual</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	Farming Officer/Countryside & Policy Manager (NJ)	More farmers signed up to farm clusters

Stakeholder	Our engagement Objective	Issues, opportunities and risks	Communications channels	Frequency	Key SDNP Contact	Measures of success/desired state of relationship
	enable farmers within the South Downs Farm Cluster Network to change public perception of farming and how it can deliver environmental benefits					
LEPs	Increase funds available to deliver on PMP objectives		<i>Peer-to-peer:</i> LEP steering group meetings	Quarterly meetings	Countryside & Policy Manager (NH) Director of Countryside Policy & Management	Increased funds available to fund PMP objectives
Transport companies	Increase public transport opportunities within the NP Increased visibility at train stations of arriving in NP	Issues: Any branding at station sees as advertising	Face-to-face meetings Joint initiatives with Community Rail Partnerships	As needed Annual day in London and ad hoc as needed	Access Strategy Lead Director of Countryside Policy & Management Communications & Engagement Manager	tbc
Local businesses	Greater use of shared identity Increased use of NP as a selling point for local businesses	<i>Opportunities:</i> Discover England Phase II Dark Skies Welcome initiative	<i>Digital:</i> Website/Communicating South Downs Enewsletter <i>Peer-to-peer:</i>	Ongoing Monthly	Economy & Tourism team Communications & Engagement Team	Increased use of shared identity Sign up to visitor giving scheme

Stakeholder	Our engagement Objective	Issues, opportunities and risks	Communications channels	Frequency	Key SDNP Contact	Measures of success/desired state of relationship
	<p>To enable and encourage sector uptake of sustainable tourism principles through design, build and operations of businesses</p> <p>To encourage increased linkages, promotion and purchase of local produce, goods and services.</p> <p>To encourage support of visitor payback scheme to conserve the special qualities and the environment and local communities on which tourism businesses depend are supported.</p>	<p><i>Risk:</i> not enough staff resource to support growing use of shared identity</p>	<p>Liaison with Tourism Strategy Lead</p> <p>Events:</p> <p>Dark Night Skies Festival etc</p>	As needed		Sign up to Walkers & Cyclists Welcome
Further Education institutions	Provide more opportunity for young people to engage with nature and nature based careers					

Stakeholder	Our engagement Objective	Issues, opportunities and risks	Communications channels	Frequency	Key SDNP Contact	Measures of success/desired state of relationship
Higher Educations Institutions	Increase number of research projects contributing to delivery of PMP objectives	<i>Opportunities:</i> Research conference Research projects by students	<i>Peer-to-peer:</i> Research conference Regular meetings with Research Team	As needed	Performance & Research Lead	Increased number of research projects on PMP objectives
Specialists in their field, for example local historians, archaeologists, ecologists	Use local expertise in the development of our projects and	<i>Opportunities:</i> Involvement in externally funded projects	<i>Pee-to-peer:</i> Through strategic leads <i>Digital:</i> enewsletter	As needed	Relevant Strategic Leads	Greater involvement of specialists to add expertise to projects
INDIVIDUALS/ORGANISATIONS LIVING IN OR VISITING THE NATIONAL PARK						
Residents	Inform and engage local residents in key issues affecting their National Park	<i>Issues:</i> High number of residents in and around the National Park <i>Risks:</i> Lack of resource to liaise with and engage residents	<i>Digital:</i> Enewsletter Planning enewsletter Consultations Website Social media Print: South Downs View Leaflets <i>Events:</i> Our events Partner events	Monthly 3 times a year As needed Ongoing Ongoing Biannual Ongoing Annual events	Communications & Engagement Manager	Better recognition of National Park in South East and among Citizens Panel

Stakeholder	Our engagement Objective	Issues, opportunities and risks	Communications channels	Frequency	Key SDNP Contact	Measures of success/desired state of relationship
				programme including our DNS Festival NP Week Chalk Festival Secrets of the Heath Heath walks Seafront/town centre/car park pop ups		
Town/parish councils	Inform and engage parishes in the key issues affecting their National Park	<p><i>Issues:</i> Continuing lack of understanding of what being in a NP means in some parishes</p> <p>Some parishes are both inside and outside the NP.</p> <p><i>Opportunities:</i> To engage communities through specific projects including those that we can support through the SCF</p> <p><i>Risks:</i> With 183 parishes it is difficult to meet the, at times, unrealistic</p>	<p><i>Peer-to-peer:</i> Parish meetings</p> <p>Communities Lead Ranger interactions Planning team interactions</p> <p>Parish Member interactions</p> <p><i>Digital:</i> Enewsletter Planning newsletter</p>	<p>Biannual parish meetings</p> <p>Ad hoc</p> <p>Parish meetings and ad hoc</p> <p>Monthly 3 times a year As needed</p>	Parish Members and Communities Lead	Positive feedback from parish meetings

Stakeholder	Our engagement Objective	Issues, opportunities and risks	Communications channels	Frequency	Key SDNP Contact	Measures of success/desired state of relationship
		expectation of engagement in some parishes	Consultations Website Print: South Downs View Leaflets	Ongoing Biannual Ongoing		
Visitors	Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public. Visitors to stay longer and spend more	<i>Risks:</i> Decrease in investment in tourism in local authorities in NP <i>Opportunities:</i> Discover England Fund	<i>Digital:</i> Enewsletter Website including Discovery Map Social media Print: South Downs View Leaflets <i>Events:</i> Our events Partner events	Monthly Ongoing Ongoing Biannual Ongoing Annual events programme including our DNS Festival NP Week Wild Chalk Festival Secrets of the Heath Heath walks Seafront/town centre/car park pop ups	Communications & Engagement Manager/Sustainable Tourism Strategy Lead	Increases awareness of National Park in Visitor surveys dates tbc Increased spend per visitor

Stakeholder	Our engagement Objective	Issues, opportunities and risks	Communications channels	Frequency	Key SDNP Contact	Measures of success/desired state of relationship
				Annual events programme including our DNS Festival NP Week Chalk Festival Secrets of the Heath Heath walks Seafront/town centre/car park pop ups		
PROTECTED LANDSCAPE FAMILY						
NPE/NPUK	SDNP presence in all communications and policy outputs and decisions	<p><i>Risks:</i> Potential lack of agreement on key issues</p> <p>Comms from NPE not coordinated with NPs and without comms expertise</p> <p><i>Opportunities:</i> Comms & Engagement Manager on Steering Group for NPUK Comms</p>	<p><i>Leadership:</i> MP Chairing of NPE and Chairs and NPO meetings</p> <p>Communications & Engagement Manager line management of NPUK Communications & Marketing Manager</p> <p><i>Peer-to-peer:</i></p>	<p>Quarterly (TBC)</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Annual/bi-annual</p>	Chair/Chief Executive/Communications & Engagement Manager	SDNP presence in all communications and policy outputs and decisions

Stakeholder	Our engagement Objective	Issues, opportunities and risks	Communications channels	Frequency	Key SDNP Contact	Measures of success/desired state of relationship
			<p><i>Subject specialism groups including Communications, Education, Tourism etc</i></p> <p><i>Publications:</i> Contribution to NPE policy papers and NPUK communications</p> <p><i>Digital:</i> Shared social media. Web presence on NPUK website</p>	<p>As needed</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)	Increase joint working with AONBs	<p><i>Issues:</i> Not enough resource on either side to fully engage</p> <p><i>Opportunities:</i> Big Chalk project</p>	Peer-to-peer: strategic specialists	Ad hoc	Director of Countryside Policy & Management	tbc

