

Report to	Planning Committee
Date	14 April 2022
By	Director of Planning
Title of Report	Planning Position Statement Update
Purpose of Report	Introduce the Planning Position Statement Update

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the Planning Position Statement Update set out in Appendix I for publication subject to any changes proposed by the Committee**
 - 2) Delegate authority to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee to make any minor changes to the draft Planning Position Statement Update**
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1. Summary

- The Planning Position Statement Update (PPSU) seeks to ‘build back better, greener and more local’ as we emerge from the global COVID-19 Pandemic.
- It builds on the original PPS produced by the Authority in October 2020, which sought to help local businesses during the pandemic in line with our socio-economic duty.
- This Update is broader and strives to deliver on the single set of high-level targets for our Corporate Plan namely nature recovery, climate action and a national park for all.
- Planning has an essential role to play in achieving these targets through policy making, development management and major projects. The PPSU sets out three sets of actions we could take namely the planning process, financial factors and policy interpretation
- If approved, the PPSU will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications both by the SDNPA and local authorities acting on our behalf through hosted arrangements.

2. Background

- 2.1 The PPSU explains how Planning at the Authority is delivering on climate action, nature recovery and a national park for all. For example, in regard to climate action, we are implementing Local Plan Policy SD48: Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources and the Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). We are also working closely with the rest of the organisation, for example, by implementing our Climate Change Action Plan.
- 2.2 In regards to the planning process, we are offering to work pro-actively with small and micro businesses in our three key sectors of farming, forestry and tourism. This is particularly important when they are applying for grants or funding that must have planning permissions in place prior to submission of their full funding application.
- 2.3 The main financial opportunity we are suggesting is free pre-application advice for a number of developments including small scale renewable energy projects.

2.4 In regards to policy interpretation we are making two suggestions. Firstly, we will continue with the flexibility on marketing requirements for change of use applications set out in the original statement. Secondly, we will allow some market housing on rural exception sites to encourage more of these schemes to come forward and thus increase the delivery of much needed new affordable homes in the National Park.

3. Going forward

3.1 If Planning Committee approve the PPSU, it will be published on our website and will be a material consideration that will be taken into account by decision makers when determining planning applications within the National Park.

3.2 The measures set out in the PPSU will be kept under review and reported on in our Authority Monitoring Report.

4. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No
Has due regard been taken of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes, due regard has been taken of the equality duty in the preparation of the TAN. This document follows on from and seeks to implement the South Downs Local Plan for which a full equalities impact assessment was carried out.
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 Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy: 1. Living within environmental limits 2. Ensuring a strong healthy and just society 3. Achieving a sustainable economy 4. Promoting good governance 5. Using sound science responsibly	The PPSU seeks to implement the South Downs Local Plan for which a full sustainability appraisal was carried out.

5. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Don't publish PPSU	Low	Low	Explain to Members the function of the PPSU to and its use to help us build back better, greener and more local

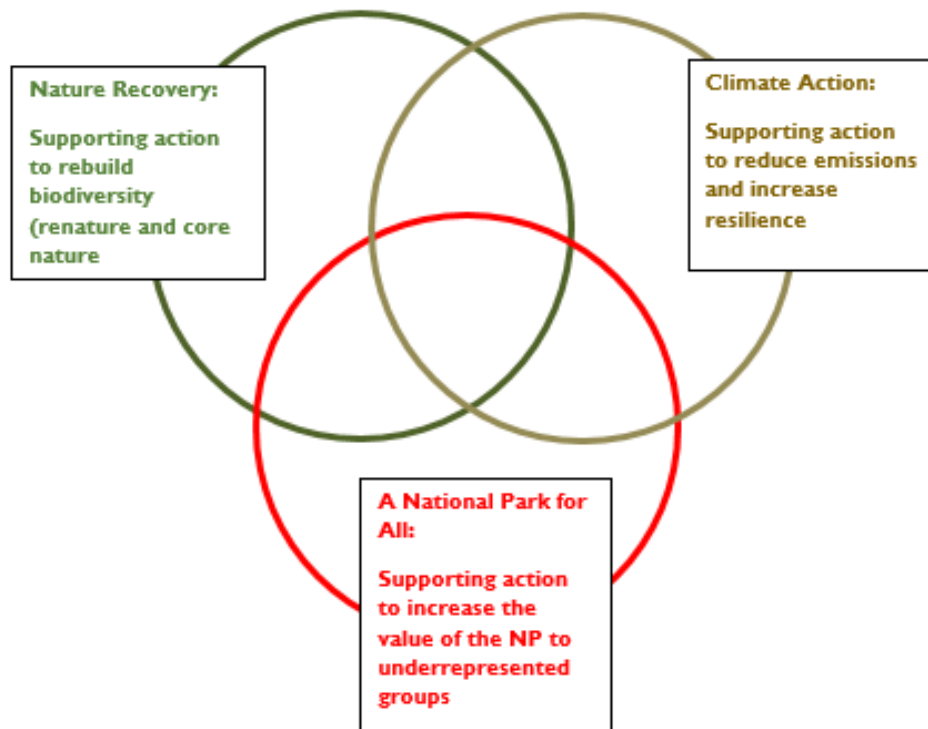
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Appendices: I. Draft Planning Position Statement Update
SDNPA Consultees: Legal Services; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Director of Planning
External Consultees: None
Background Documents: [South Downs Local Plan](#)
[Planning Position Statement Update](#)

Planning Position Statement Update by the South Downs National Park Authority

- I.1 This Planning Position Statement Update (PPSU) by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) seeks to ‘build back better, greener and more local’ as we emerge from the global COVID-19 Pandemic. The Update builds on the original PPS produced by the Authority in October 2020, which sought to help local businesses during the pandemic in line with our socio-economic duty. This Update is broader and strives to deliver on the single set of high-level targets for our Corporate Plan namely nature recovery, climate action and a national park for all; these are illustrated in figure 1. Planning has an essential role to play in achieving these targets through policy making, development management and major projects.

Figure 1: High level Corporate Plan targets



- I.2 The main audience for this Statement is people who run small (10 to 49 full time employees (FTE)) and micro (less than 10 FTE) land-based businesses, which contribute to the three key sectors identified in the Local Plan namely farming, forestry and tourism. One of the National Park’s special qualities is an environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise. Land used for agriculture and forestry covers most of the National Park, and is the most important provider of its ecosystem services. These land-based industries cannot be green if they are in the red.
- I.3 We sought the advice of the South Downs Agents’ Forum in October 2021. The final version of the PPSU was approved by Planning Committee on 14 April 2022. It is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications both by the SDNPA and local

authorities¹ acting on our behalf through hosted arrangements. It will be monitored and kept under review as we adjust to the new normal.

Climate Action

I.4 We are working with our partners on a [Climate Change Action Plan](#) for a net-zero Authority by 2025 and a net-zero with nature National Park by 2040. As part of this, we will:

- Implement Local Plan Policy SD48: Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources and the [Sustainable Construction](#) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in the determination of planning applications
- Publish a user-friendly Technical Advice Note (TAN) on Renewable Energy that was approved by Planning Committee in February 2022.
- Develop community energy schemes through the Community Energy Pathways Programme delivered by [Community Energy South](#).
- Partner community projects working to address climate change including the [Ouse Valley CARES](#) Project (Climate Action, Resilient Ecosystems and Sustainability)
- Work with farmers, estates and other landowners to change the way land is managed to reduce emissions and increase carbon sequestration. Farmers and land managers in the National Park will be able to apply for funding as part of a new initiative to support nature-friendly farming and sustainability known as the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme. They can also submit sites to restore natural systems and store carbon (sequestration) through the [Call for Nature Sites](#).
- Launch 'Our South Downs' in spring 2022. This is an SDNPA initiative to build a community of like-minded micro and small businesses, which share the same values around sustainability, into a local network group. There will be a consolidated easy to navigate website providing a planning resource for businesses. Our South Downs will promote stronger, shorter rural supply chains and support businesses in their pursuit of sustainability. The SDNPA endorse a 'think local, act local' approach and, through Our South Downs, will look to add value, facilitate and enable SDNP businesses, which are so often the custodians of the landscape.
- Work with [Green Tourism](#) to produce a sustainable accreditation for businesses, which according to the industry will be the first of its kind by any protected landscape or local authority in the UK. This project will be called Green South Downs and will empower businesses with the knowledge to meet their sustainable aspirations and positively contribute to the challenge of climate change. Green South Downs will be linked to OSD and will launch autumn 2022.
- Realise nature-based solutions through planning, which will support net zero plus delivery on nature recovery. They will also support other ecosystem service benefits such as flood prevention and ground water source protection.
- Implement our [Climate Change Adaptation Plan](#), which provides an assessment of current and predicted impacts of climate change upon key assets of the National Park, and on sectors such as farming, forestry and other land-use. The Adaptation Plan sets out proposals and policy responses to adapt adequately to these risks.



¹ Winchester District Council, East Hampshire District Council, Chichester District Council, Horsham District Council and Lewes District Council

Nature Recovery

- 1.5 In autumn 2021, we launched a [ReNature campaign](#) that aims to create over the next ten years an extra 13,000 hectares of habitat where plants and animals can thrive. This would bring to 33 per cent the proportion of the National Park land managed for nature. We also want to ensure that the remaining 67 per cent is nature-friendly by 2030. Biodiversity covers nature recovery and core nature. Planning in the National Park will deliver against the 33% target and ensure no net loss to the existing resource. As part of this, we will:
- Implement Local Plan Policy SD9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity and identify and incorporate opportunities for biodiversity net gain in the determination of planning applications.
 - Consider sites submitted through the [Call for Nature Sites](#) by landowners, land managers, communities, businesses, and conservation groups. These are possible sites where new wildlife habitat could be created, contributing to nature recovery in the South Downs National Park.
 - Make best use of a number of important new environmental mechanisms that will be introduced through the Environment Act such as nature recovery networks, mandatory biodiversity net gain and conservation covenants. We will keep people up to date on this and other nature recovery matters in our regular nature recovery bulletins.
 - Address fast changing biodiversity issues that are currently impacting on development in the National Park such as nutrient neutrality in the Solent catchment area (please see the [Partnership for South Hampshire](#) website for updates) and water neutrality in the Sussex North Water Supply Zone (please see [our website](#) for updates).
 - Implement Core Policy SD2: Ecosystem services of the Local Plan, which requires all planning applications to have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services. This policy requires development proposals to be supported by a statement that sets out how the development proposal impact, both positively and negatively, on ecosystem services. We encourage all applications and particularly those made by land based businesses to look at all opportunities in their proposals to conserve and enhance ecosystem services. There are two Technical Advice Notes to help with [householder](#) and [other applications](#).
 - Share information for delivery partners on nature recovery (please see [our website](#) for updates).

A National Park for All

- 1.6 This priority links to both our second purpose of promoting opportunities for understanding and enjoying the special qualities of the National Park and the socio economic duty of the SDNPA to support communities in the National Park. In all our planning projects and programmes we will strive to get the best outcomes for people, and develop opportunities for co-development and design with those communities currently under-represented in our governance and staff structures. We will actively seek opportunities for communities to contribute through our work on nature recovery, climate action and landscapes for all. As part of this, we will:
- Maximise the delivery of affordable homes in the National Park through the implementation of Policy SD28: Affordable homes, Rural Exception Sites and the [Affordable Housing SPD](#).
 - Spend the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) collected by the SDNPA to fund a wide range of infrastructure, including transport, schools, play areas, parks, cultural and sports facilities. The Infrastructure Business Plan (IBP) explains the prioritisation process of infrastructure projects and provides an overview of projects, which have secured CIL funding.

Planning Process

- I.7 In regard to small and micro businesses in our three key sectors of farming, forestry and tourism the SDNPA will:
- Work pro-actively with businesses, which are currently applying for grants or funding that must have planning permissions in place prior to submission of their full funding application. In particular, we will give clear advice on the proportionate amount of evidence need to support an application and will provide letters of support where appropriate.
 - We will introduce opportunities for land-based businesses to explore potential and current planning applications at our regular Farmers' Meetings.

Financial factors

- I.8 In regard to small and micro businesses in farming, forestry and tourism the SDNPA will provide free pre-application advice (one meeting followed up with written advice) for the following development that are all linked to the corporate priorities:
- Small scale renewable energy projects
 - Development proposals that seek to incorporate sustainable design features that substantially go beyond the sustainable construction standards set out in Policy SD48 and the Sustainable Construction SPD
 - Development proposals linked to the FiPL programme
 - Development proposals that substantially go beyond local and national policies in contributing to nature recovery
 - Development proposals that substantially go beyond local and national policies in contributing positively to health and well-being
 - Small scale led affordable housing schemes
- I.9 In order to apply for free pre-app advice please tick the box for 'exemption from fees' and provide a simple justification.
- I.10 We will also exceptionally waive monitoring fees for Section 106 legal agreements for small and micro land based businesses.

Policy interpretation

- I.11 There are a number of Local Plan policies that are particularly relevant to small and micro businesses in land-based industries. For example, many people have worked from home during the pandemic using outbuildings. Paragraph 7.96 of the supporting text for Policy SD31: Extensions to Existing Dwellings and Provision of Annexes and Outbuildings states that 'the use of outbuildings to support home working and home-based businesses will generally be supported where this does not involve a change of use of the main dwelling or have an adverse impact on the residential amenities of adjoining residents or the landscape of the National Park.' It is important to remember that all development plan policies will be taken into account when determining applications.
- I.12 The Government made a number of changes to the Use Class Order in 2020. The main change to affect businesses was the creation of a new E class that covers commercial, business and service and includes retail E(a), restaurants E(b) and offices E(g). The traditional B employment use class now only covers industry (B2) and storage and distribution (B8). Policy SD35 of the Local Plan relates to the former definition of employment that included offices, industry and storage and distribution. The 2020 PPS provided flexibility for commercial development. Building on that and the direction of

Government travel the Authority will as a matter of discretion show temporary flexibility in regard to the following aspects of the following Local Plan policies:

- SD35 Employment Land: No longer require marketing evidence over a period of at least 12 months currently for a change of use from an employment use (B use) to another commercial use (non-B use). The marketing requirements will stay in place for change of use from employment to residential.
- SD36 Town & Village Centres & SD37 Development in Town & Village Centres: Consider positively all applications for commercial uses in our town and village centres that will increase footfall, with less regard to specific Use Classes definitions and more regard to likely impacts.

- I.13 The affordability of housing is a major barrier to sustaining living communities in the National Park. Rural exception sites are a policy for delivering affordable housing in perpetuity to meet local needs, which are not served by the market. Policy SD29 of the Local Plan requires rural exception sites to be one hundred per cent affordable. The number of these sites coming forward has been disappointingly slow and so the Authority will temporarily and as a matter of discretion allow up to twenty per cent of the new homes on rural exception sites to be open market housing in order to subsidise the new affordable homes. This is in line with Government policy, which states that a proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example, where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding. The tenure of new affordable homes on rural exception sites should respond to the needs of the local community and the focus will usually be social rented. The First Homes requirement does not apply to Rural Exception Sites. Any new rural exception site should be located within walking distance of local facilities and not in isolated rural locations remote from any settlements.

Updates

- I.14 There have been a large number of actual and proposed changes to the planning system. Of most relevance to land based industries are:
- [Changes to the Use Class Order](#)
 - [Revised National Planning Policy Framework](#)
 - [Agriculture Act 2020](#)
 - [Environment Act 2021](#)
- I.15 For further help for businesses in the National Park please look at [this page](#) of our website.
- I.16 All agents who regularly submit planning applications in the National Park to ourselves and/or the host authorities are very welcome to join our Agents' Forum. Please email us on agentsforum@southdowns.gov.uk for further details.

