

Report to **Policy & Resources Committee**
Date **23 February 2023**
By **Performance and Projects Manager & Project Management Lead**
Title of Report **Q3 Performance report 2022/23 on South Downs Commercial Operations Limited**

Note

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to receive and consider the Q3 Performance report 2022/23 on South Downs Commercial Operations Limited.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The SDNPA considers it important as a publicly accountable body, to monitor its performance. The Policy and Resources Committee has terms of reference which include *“To monitor and review the performance including financial performance of South Downs Commercial Operations Limited in the context of its business delivery against the agreed operating agreement and annual business plan and make recommendations to the NPA as appropriate.”*
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to update the Policy & Resources Committee on the performance against KPIs of South Downs Commercial Operations Limited (SDCOL) during Quarter 3 (Q3) of 2022/23: 01 October to 31 December 2022.
- 1.3 From Quarter 1 onwards, we will also provide Members with a quarterly update on the High Level Targets – see section 2 below.

2. SDCOL Performance

- 2.1 The SDNPA completed the Phase 1 capital works programme and the Phase 1a stage is due to complete at the end of March 2023. Currently the Authority was still working within the original budget and contingencies approved by the NPA. It is anticipated that Foxhole Cottages will receive booked guests from late spring/early summer 2023.
- 2.2 The SDNPA completed renovations of Pump Barn, including Wi-Fi connection and the installation of a wood burner. The first Pump Barn event ran by SDCOL, a Christmas market, successfully took place on the 10th and 11th of December. This trial event was very successful and the Pump Barn will be used in the future for similar and other events.
- 2.3 Retail and Food & Beverage products are now 87% sourced from businesses based in or close to the South Downs National Park. This is very positive and significantly above the 25% KPI ensuring greater sustainability in the offering at Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP). The ability to source so many of the products from local suppliers is also positive in terms of supporting the local economy.
- 2.4 Unfortunately, issues continue with sourcing the required numbers of grazing stock. Plumpton College, the grazier for the site, removed 11 Sussex cows in October and has not yet provided a replacement. The current number of animals on site is a lot lower than

required; the site needs at least 80 cows in total but there are currently have only 27. Plumpton College are due to provide us with 40 more cows by our 6 January 2023 deadline. Discussions are in place to try and rectify this issue.

- 2.5 See Appendix 4 for detail on progress against the SSCP KPIs for Q3. Please note, a change in staffing at SSCP has impacted on the ability to report against some of the KPIs this quarter.

3. Other implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No further decisions are required as a direct result of this report.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	There are no direct resource implications to this report, as the recommendations are to receive and consider only.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	As SDCOL is a Teckal company managing SSCP for the SDNPA, it is important that Members consider the performance of the Company against the KPIs to ensure the Authority's assets are being effectively managed.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	SSCP supports delivery of the majority of outcomes in the PMP and is a key area of work in the Corporate Plan contributing to the higher level targets.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	The important relationship to note for this report is the relationship between the SDNPA and SDCOL. SDCOL being a Teckal Company contracted to run SSCP.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	The Authority's climate changes ambition at SSCP is to lead by example through how it's working practices and how it operates at and manages SSCP.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes – SSCP being a site attracting a large number of visitors significant works have been undertaken on site to ensure equality of opportunity as far as possible for visitors.
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?	Whilst there are many H&S considerations at SSCP, there are no implications directly arising from this performance report.
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None

Implication	Yes*/No
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	No, not directly although during the development of the Corporate Plan, sustainability issues are included as part of the process. SSCP contribute positively to delivery of PMP outcomes, all of which are aimed at delivering sustainability. The work at SSCP also supports the local economy. This performance report is a key part of the role of Members in ensuring the good governance of SDCOL.

4. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 4.1 There are no direct risks associated with this performance report. Risks to the SDNPA and SDCOL are monitored on their various risk registers. However, it should be noted that the good performance of SDCOL is important to ensure SSCP can fulfil its potential for nature and for visitors.

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South Downs National Park Authority

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Appendices	I. Q3 2022-23 SSCP KPIs
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services, Interim Business Service Manager; Countryside and Policy Managers
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	Corporate Plan 2020-25 year 3 action plan.

SSCP KPI Report 2022/23 Q2

Key Performance Indicator	Key data	Lead Officer	Annual Target	Year to date progress at current Q	Commentary at current Q	RAG	Next steps and/or potential risks
People Indicators							
Rating of Visitor Centre Experience (staff knowledgeable and welcoming, interesting interpretation and retail, etc.)	Data taken from SSCP Annual Visitor Survey and Visit England accreditation	Peter C	75%	Awaiting VAQAS inspection	Site was previously inspected by VAQAS on 19/09/2021 and achieved 69%		
Rating of cleanliness, including toilets			TBC	Awaiting VAQAS inspection			
Rating of catering offers on site			TBC	Awaiting VAQAS inspection			
Rating of wider park, landscape and things to do.			TBC	Awaiting VAQAS inspection			
Visitor numbers	Data to be provided from car park numbers, gate data and visitors passing through the visitor centre.	Peter C	N/A	As of end of Sep: Gate Counters=276,099, Car Park paid sessions est: 40,841, VC 26,469	Gate data just reports on 3 gates and total footfall through in both directions. Car Park data based on estimate from ringo sessions accounting for 31% of total. Also doesn't account for annual pass holders. Some holes in VC data	N/A	This is not a target, it is just for information.
Educational Indicators							
Number of events run (each would have individual satisfaction ratings on feedback forms)		Richard Ayres	4	18			
In person engagement: Number of people engaged; children, adults, etc.	In person engagement to be recorded using a "clicker" at events	Richard Ayres	1000	673	2 events are based on conservative estimates and some events we do not have data for so real number is probably much higher		
Digital engagement: Number of people engaged; children, adults, etc.	Digital engagement to be recorded using Social Media report	Richard Ayres		Instagram 1,527 followers, average weekly reach 2,064 facebook 1,692 followers average weekly reach 33,660, twitter 1,064 followers average weekly reach 13,289			
Local Economy Indicators							
Percentage of goods, services sold by Company originating from local suppliers.	Data taken from supplier list on Clover	Peter C	25%	87.11% of products			
Number of local businesses involved (trading, supplying)			10	47 supplying			
Survey of local businesses on ease of engagement, barriers and benefits (this would be infrequent, maybe every 3 years)	Business survey due 2023						
Overall contribution to local economy from visitors – derived from visitor survey questions on length of stay in area		TBC	TBC	TBC	Year 1 create baseline and set future targets		

Landscape Indicators							
Progress against key activities in annual action plan agreed in pursuit of landscape management plan				begin monitoring in year 1	Resting' areas not grazed as planned New access circular walk created Lagoon scrub to be cut at end of 2024		Working on new Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship application with Natural England means that there will be some shifts in the key activities/
Number of individual initiatives taken to improve habitats	Data taken from annual action plan which will be updated quarterly with what has been completed/ delayed etc	Laura / Sam	3	3	Grazing continued on site and started on the chalk grassland earlier in the autumn to get a head start. Sluice gate at the lagoons cleared out to allow control by the ranger of water levels to improve habitat Scrub control undertaken with the help of volunteers (including paying corporate groups)		Continue with more scrub control
Actions taken in mitigation of habitat stresses elsewhere on South Coast.	offsetting/receptor schemes implemented	Laura/Sam	1	none have come forward	This target is reliant on opportunities coming forward to us and then them being suitable for the park		no actions required - this indicator can be removed
That the features of the SSSI are in good condition and improving	NE SSSI data - expected 2023	Laura/Sam	SSSI in good condition and improving	SSSI in good condition and improving	A new agreement is currently being worked on with Natural England to start January 2024. This we have been assured by NE will ensure that the condition of the SSSI will be 'improving'		Continuing work with NE to develop the best possible CSS

SSCP KPI Report 2022/23 Q3

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People Indicators							
Rating of Visitor Centre Experience (staff knowledgeable and welcoming, interesting interpretation and retail, etc.)	Data taken from SSCP Annual Visitor Survey and Visit England accreditation	Peter C	75%	Awaiting VAQAS inspection	Site was previously inspected by VAQAS on 19/09/2021 and achieved 69%		
Rating of cleanliness, including toilets			TBC	Awaiting VAQAS inspection			
Rating of catering offers on site			TBC	Awaiting VAQAS inspection			
Rating of wider park, landscape and things to do.			TBC	Awaiting VAQAS inspection			
Visitor numbers	Data to be provided from car park numbers, gate data and visitors passing through the visitor centre.	Peter C	N/A	As of end of Decembers: Car park sessions (estimate) = 52,200 YTD, VC visitors = 35,793 YTD, Awaiting car park data	Gate data just reports on 3 gates and total footfall through in both directions. Car Park data based on estimate from ringo sessions accounting for 31% of total. Also doesn't account for annual pass holders. Some holes in VC data	N/A	This is not a target, it is just for information.
Number of events run (each would have individual satisfaction ratings on feedback forms)		Richard Ayres	4	22			
In person engagement: Number of people engaged; children, adults, etc.	In person engagement to be recorded using a "clicker" at events	Richard Ayres	1000	1378			
Digital engagement: Number of people engaged; children, adults, etc.	Digital engagement to be recorded using Social Media report	Richard Ayres		Instagram 1,659 followers, average weekly reach 4,911 facebook 1,812 followers average weekly reach 12,695, twitter 1,196 followers average weekly reach 17,493	Average weekly reach is based on most recent month		
Local Economy Indicators							
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Landscape Indicators							
Progress against key activities in annual action plan agreed in pursuit of landscape management plan	Data taken from annual action plan which will be updated quarterly with what has been completed/ delayed etc	Laura / Sam		begin monitoring in year 1	Resting' areas continued not grazed as planned Lagoon scrub to be cut at end of 2024		Working on new Higher Tier Countryside Steward Ship application with Natural England means that there will be some shifts in the key activities/
Number of individual initiatives taken to improve habitats			1	1	Grazing continued on site and started on the chalk grassland and extra cows brought in to help with the winter grazing	monitor grass heights and move cows around to ensure all our high priority habitat is grazed sufficiently before the spring.	
That the features of the SSSI are in good condition and improving	NE SSSI data - expected 2023	Laura/Sam	SSSI in good condition and improving	SSSI in good condition and improving	A new agreement is currently being worked on with Natural England to start January 2024. This we have been assured by NE will ensure that the condition of the SSSI will be 'improving'		Continuing work with NE to develop the best possible CSS

