

Report to **South Downs National Park Authority**
Date **19 October 2023**
By **Communications & Engagement Manager**
Title of Report **Proposal for South Downs Green Finance Summit**
Decision

Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to endorse plans for the South Downs Green Finance Summit

1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of our public affairs work, we are proposing to run a South Downs policy summit in Spring 2024.
- 1.2 In March 2023, SMT/Committee Chairs met to discuss a short proposal for such a policy summit and agreed to progress the proposal and bring to the NPA for endorsement. It was agreed that the topic for the South Downs Summit should be Green Finance and how it can be used to accelerate high-quality, landscape-led nature recovery. The working title for the summit was agreed as “**Green Finance: Will it Deliver Real Nature Recovery on the Ground?**”.
- 1.3 Green finance was chosen as the right policy topic as key decisions are now being taken that will determine the future of offsetting and green finance’s role in delivering on nature recovery.
- 1.4 The National Park Authority sits in a unique position to progress this debate:
- With a primary responsibility to deliver bigger better, more joined-up Nature
 - It has strong connections with, and the trust of, the farmers and landowners who will deliver the offsetting through genuine, landscape-led nature recovery.
 - As the planning authority, the Authority has substantial oversight over a key mechanism for delivering green finance.
 - Our work with farming and other rural businesses through delivery of our statutory Duty, means that we are uniquely placed to identify how green finance can not only deliver on nature recovery but be a means to support the rural economy positively into the future.

2. Aim and output of the South Downs Summit

- 2.1 The aim of the Summit is to bring together policy makers, nature recovery and green finance specialists, land owners, developers and organisations offsetting, to debate how green finance can deliver more, better, faster, landscape-led nature recovery and how the National Park Authority and other protected landscapes can play a key role as conveners and in working with landowners and developers to demonstrate practical implementation at scale.

- 2.2 As an innovative Protected Landscape, playing a leading role in this area, we will act as convener, providing the “glue” to bring the experts and delivery partners together in one place to debate and agree how the public and private sector can better work together to maximise the nature recovery impact of this new market.
- 2.3 Our aim is that the Summit will:
- position SDNP as an innovative protected landscape demonstrating how to use green finance as a key lever to achieve our collective national nature recovery and climate targets;
 - progress the debate on the role of green finance in providing the additional funding needed to achieve nature recovery; and
 - demonstrate practical implementation at scale, showcasing work with landowners and land managers to enable them to deliver high-quality nature recovery and climate mitigation environmental schemes that also support a thriving rural economy.
- 2.4 Following on from the State of Nature Report and the [Nature Market Principles](#), we will focus on how working with land managers is vital to delivering high-quality nature-based solutions into the economy and enable the greater green financing of landscape-led, at-scale nature recovery to happen.
- 2.5 This is a fast-moving area with many new developments and announcements. It is planned that a summit output will either be a partner “Accord” or an announcement on the next stage of National Parks’ green finance work.
- 3. Policy Context**
- 3.1 In its [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#), the Government set a goal to raise at least £500 million in private finance to support nature recovery every year by 2027, rising to £1 billion per year by 2033. The South Downs National Park and other protected landscapes are key to the delivery of this national policy goal. However, recent announcements by Government have shown that initiative from those delivering, facilitating and financing nature recovery through green finance is needed, if we are to achieve these goals and embed nature recovery as not only a vital part of our global climate commitments but as the cornerstone of a prosperous green economy going forward. The recently launched State of Nature Report shows that now, more than ever, that not enough is being done to halt the decline in our biodiversity.
- 3.2 The Summit will be a key means to deliver on one of our two agreed focuses of our Public Affairs Strategy (nature and climate) and Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 of our Partnership Management Plan (Landscape and Natural Beauty, Increasing Resilience, and Habitats and Species).
- 3.3 In addition to delivering on our public affairs strategy, the Summit will support delivery of our high-level Corporate Plan targets, in particular:
- Nature Recovery: HLT 1 and HLT 3;
 - Climate Action: HLT 4 and HLT 5.
- 3.4 As recent debates around nutrient neutrality and net zero through emissions have shown, policy decision are being made now that hugely impact the ability of private finance to be able to deliver these ambitious nature recovery goals. It is therefore the right time to ensure that the expert voice and experience of the National Park can be shared to support progression of both local and national delivery and feed into policy thinking for all parties in the run up to an impending national election.
- 4. Format for the day**
- 4.1 The proposed outline for the day is: 10am-4.00pm
- Welcome by event Chair

- Opening by SoS/Minister
- Keynote speaker – leading expert in the field
- Up to 4 short (20 minute) presentations from key speakers (with a break in between). Each speaker could be asked to highlight 2/3 principles that they see as crucial to progressing the effective green financing of nature recovery. This would include at least one landowner within the National Park.
- Panel discussion with questions from the audience.
- Lunch.
- Workshop session with feedback to main group (potentially on an accord).
- Break for tea/coffee (potentially final accord is drafted).
- Final round up.

5. Date and speakers

5.1 The Secretary of State for Defra (SoS) has been invited and has indicated her enthusiasm for the opportunity to open the South Downs Green Finance Summit. Following liaising with the SoS's private secretary we are proposing **Thursday 7 March 2024 as the summit date.**

5.2 We are currently approaching a potential chair and speakers.

• Venue and audience

- Venue will be South Downs Centre
- Number will be limited to no more than 100:
 - Speakers (7 places)
 - Chair, Vice Chair, Committee Chairs and 3 additional members to be nominated by the Chair (7 places)
 - Key staff – SMT and 6 other key staff (9 places)
 - Representative from each Local Authority (15)
 - A place each for National Parks England, National Parks Partnership, National Parks UK, the Campaign for National Parks, National Farmers Union, Country Land and Business Association, Environment Agency and Natural England (8 places)
 - Places remaining for delegates (54). (The focus for these places will be landowners, large developers, corporations, larger ecological consultants, non-governmental organisations, businesses)

6. Output

6.1 As mentioned earlier, this is a fast-moving area and the exact output is yet to be confirmed. The output for the day will be either a South Downs Green Finance Accord – a set of shared, key principles to ensure delivery of landscape-led, impactful nature recovery through green finance or an announcement of the next-phase of National Parks green finance programme.

7. Next

7.1 A team overseen by the Director of Planning will develop plans for the summit and any relevant key updates will be shared.

7.2 A process for selecting the three additional Member delegates will be agreed and shared by the Chair.

8. Other implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	<p>Yes. Budget has already been allocated to deliver the summit which includes lunch for delegates and speaker fees and expenses. The event will take place at SDC Hall so no premises hire costs are needed.</p> <p>Managers have agreed and allocated the time needed from key staff.</p>
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	<p>The Summit will take place in SDC Hall to keep costs to a minimum.</p> <p>The summit is part of direct delivery for our PMP, Corporate Plan and Public affairs Strategy,</p>
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	<p>Public affairs strategy objectives around nature and climate.</p> <p>PMP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Landscape & Natural Beauty • Outcome 2: Increasing resilience • Outcome 3: Habitats & Species <p>Corporate Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Recovery: HLT3 To prepare for and implement Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) • Climate Action: HLT5. 5% reduction per annum in the overall carbon footprint of the South Downs National Park from the baseline reported in 2019 • Generating Income: CP4. Incubate a number of income generating initiatives, building on Seven Sisters and the South Downs Trust, scaling these up to generate £200k per annum
Links to other projects or partner organisations	The purpose of the summit is to bring a large number of relevant partners together with a view to reaching an accord or support of the next-phase of National Parks green finance programme
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	<p>Supports delivery of Corporate Plan, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Recovery: HLT 1 and HLT 3; • Climate Action: HLT 4 and HLT 5.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	No
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park	Yes. The event will be held in SDC Hall to ensure full accessibility. Minibuses will be put on from Haslemere to

Implication	Yes*/No
Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Chichester to remove barriers to attending the conference. The invitation list will be designed to be diverse. Regard of the Authority's equality duty will be had in respect of any accord reached
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	GDPR will be followed in the management of personal data of invitees and speakers.

9. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Key speakers unable to attend on the day	Medium	Gaps in programme	Plan will be put in place to fill/amend programme if key speakers are unable to attend. Strong communication will be maintained with all speakers to avoid any last-minute surprises.

RUTH JAMES

Communications & Engagement Manager

South Downs National Park Authority

Contact Officer: Ruth James

Tel: 01730 819251

Email: ruth.james@southdowns.gov.uk

Appendices None.

SDNPA Consultees Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services, Business Service Manager

External Consultees None

Background Documents None

