

Report to **South Downs National Park Authority**  
Date **27 March 2025**  
By **Commercial & Strategic Manager – Seven Sisters**  
Title of Report **Seven Sisters Country Park Operating Plan 2025/26**  
**Decision**

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**Recommendation:**

**The Authority is recommended to:**

- 1. Approve the Seven Sisters Country Park Operating Plan 2025/26 as set out in Appendix I.**
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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Seven Sisters Country Park Operating Plan for 2025/26.
- 1.2 Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP) is owned and operated by South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). It comprises of 280 hectares of protected landscape which includes part of the Seaford to Beachy Head Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) together with built form and surrounding curtilage at Exceat, New Barn and Foxhole.
- 1.3 The site was purchased with three core principles in mind, driving ambition and operational delivery and these are reflected in the Operating Plan objectives for the coming year:
  - Exemplar Land Management for Nature Recovery
  - First Class Visitor Destination and Seasonal Planning
  - Financial Stability & Asset Management

The three core themes relate to the wider National Park objectives especially Nature Recovery and National Park for All.

- 1.4 For the first 3 years of operation, SSCP was managed by South Downs Commercial Operations Limited. On 9 October 2024 operations returned to SDNPA, as agreed by the NPA at its meeting on 9 July 2024, and SSCP is now an inhouse operation.

**2. Seven Sisters Country Park Operating Plan 2025/26**

- 2.1 The focus for the 2025/26 Operating Plan is to stabilise delivery of the first full season of the holiday accommodation and the implementation of the countryside stewardship scheme. Also to enhance the core offer with aspirations for nature, arts and culture, and transport management. The Operating Plan aims to balance the sometimes competing demands of the landscape, the visitor destination, and the commercial operation.
- 2.2 The Operating Plan at **Appendix I** builds on the positive work undertaken so far after investing in infrastructure, building the visitor offer and securing the Countryside Stewardship Agreement. There is ambition within the Operating Plan and a view to future

aspirations, along with a realistic and measured delivery plan based on available staffing resources on site and within the wider SDNPA.

2.3 The detailed Operating Plan is attached to this report as **Appendix I**, but under the key principles of operation, the key delivery themes are highlighted below:

2.4 **Exemplar Land Management for Nature Recovery**

- Continuing to deliver year 2 actions for the Countryside Stewardship Agreement.
- Continuing to contribute to corporate nature recovery objectives as the landowner.
- Working with external partners to support the proposal for the Super National Nature Reserve (SNNR).
- Refocus on-site messaging to influence visitor behavioural changes in recognition of and the need to support wildlife and habitats.
- Continue to provide landscape volunteering opportunities.
- Continue to support the provision of lifelong learning opportunities with internal and external partners.

2.5 **First Class Visitor Destination and Seasonal Planning**

- Develop a ‘Sense of Place’ to share the stories of the landscape and inform future interpretation and engagement opportunities, to suit seasonal and audience demands.
- To work with Heritage Coast partners to respond to increased visitor travel demands at peak times.
- Continue to evolve the visitor offer at the Visitor Centre and food & beverage outlets to meet seasonal trends and diverse audiences to generate income to off set costs.
- Continue to evolve the inhouse and private hire event and engagement opportunities to attract diverse audiences and generate an income to offset costs.
- Continue to manage the Cuckmere Cottages & Camping Management concession contract for the onsite accommodation offer.
- Expand the visitor experience volunteering opportunities.
- Deliver phase one of the outdoor natural play space.
- Continue to use social media and the website to engage with audiences.

2.6 **Financial Stability & Asset Management**

- Continue to maintain and invest in the built assets at Seven Sisters Country Park.
- Introduce new car parking tariff and prices to generate income to offset operational costs.
- Continue to effectively manage all leases, licensing and concession contracts that generate income to offset operational costs.
- Monitor and manage profiled budgets for all inhouse income generation activities allowing for seasonal trends to offset operational costs.
- Ensure compliant delivery of the Countryside Stewardship to ensure continued payment from the Rural Payments Agency.
- Effective management of all costs associated with owning and operating SSCP.
- Optimising donations and legacy opportunities in partnership with the South Downs Trust.

2.7 It is projected that the 2025/26 budget for SSCP will return a £10k surplus which will be reinvested in SSCP in future years.

	£000's	
Core Costs	582	Adverse
Car Parking	-248	Favourable
Events	-21	Favourable
Holiday Cottages	-8	Favourable
Landscapes	-191	Favourable
Visitor Centre	-44	Favourable
Food Outlets	-80	Favourable
<b>Total</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>Favourable</b>

- 2.8 Core Costs include all salary costs. Payments to East Sussex County Council (ESCC) relating to the acquisition of SSCP by the SDNPA are not included in the operating budget. The payment for 2025/26 to ESCC is £46,585. Infrastructure investment (e.g. fencing) will be funded by capital, which is not reflected in this operational budget.
- 2.9 As with other operational delivery activities by SDNPA, it is acknowledged that resources from the wider authority which support the operation of SSCP are not reflected in this operational budget.
- 2.10 Additionally, although the Authority has no intension of disposing of SSCP, it is important to note that SSCP will have appreciated in value since the Authority took ownership, particularly due to the investment across the site.

### 3. Performance Indications and Budget reporting

- 3.1 The 2025/26 Operating Plan proposes a suite of Key Performance Indicators that will be included in the wider SDNPA reporting mechanisms, and along with the budget monitoring procedures. These will be reported quarterly to the Policy & Resources Committee and annually to the NPA.

### 4. 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?	The Operating Plan delivery and the Seven Sisters budget for 2025/26 have been created within existing operational budgets. Detailed information is set out in the Operating Plan.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	KPIs and regular budget monitoring will ensure that the Authority's assets are being effectively managed having regard to our wider Purposes.
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	SSCP is an active part of the SNNR discussions and works with other partners in the locality and via the wider Authority work.

<b>Implication</b>	<b>Yes*/No</b>
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	The Authority's climate change ambition at SSCP is to lead by example through its 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?	With SSCP being a site attracting a large number of visitors significant works and actions have been undertaken on site to ensure equality of opportunity as far as possible for visitors. This includes provision of facilities to support access and some disabilities and supporting visits for a range of outreach groups.
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?	Yes. The systems used at SSCP include payment systems and may also include other personal data provided by users of SSCP. The data will be considered on a case by case basis with advice from the Authority's Data Protection Officer as necessary.

**5. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

- 5.1 There main risk associated with operating SCCP is financial, including a lack of investment into the assets to ensure they are maintained to a high standard, not meeting budget projections due to internal management, or external influences beyond operational control (e.g. flooding, pandemic).
- 5.2 Significant risks at SSCP are monitored on the Corporate Risk Register which is reviewed quarterly by the Policy and Resources Committee.

**CLAIRE ONSLOW**

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Appendices I. Seven Sisters Country Park Operating Plan 2025/26

External Consultees SSCP Advisory Board

Background Documents None

## **Seven Sisters Country Park Operating Plan 2025/26**

### **Introduction**

Seven Sisters Country Park is owned and operated by South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). It comprises of 280 hectares of protected landscape and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) together with built form and surrounding curtilage at Exceat, New Barn and Foxhole.

The site was purchased with three core principles in mind, driving ambition and operational delivery:

- Exemplar Land Management for Nature Recovery
- First Class Visitor Destination and Seasonal Planning
- Financial Stability & Asset Management

For the first 3 years of operation, the park was managed by South Downs Commercial Operations but in 2024, operations returned to SDNPA and is now an inhouse operation.

The focus for 2025/26 Business Plan is to stabilise delivery, enhance the core offer with aspirations for nature, arts & culture and transport management recognising this is a landscape, visitor destination and commercial operation. The three core themes relate to the wider National Park objectives especially Nature Recovery and National Park for All.

### **Exemplar Land Management for Nature Recovery**

As currently the only landscape within the National Park owned by the Authority, SSCP places responsibilities on the Authority both as a riparian landowner and manager of a parcel of land designated within the Seaford to Beachy Head Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is the chance we have to demonstrate exemplar practices for nature recovery and incorporating climate change adaptation. The custodianship of the SSCP landscape and its natural assets are driven by the key principles of rest, reset, adapt and build resilience.

The Seven Sisters Country Park Landscape Management Plan provides the long-term strategic vision for the landscape, with a five-year action plan for 2021 – 2026. This business plan focuses on delivery objectives for 2025/26.

In 2024, a five-year Countryside Stewardship Agreement was confirmed, with annual revenue funding plus capital works providing a framework and responsibilities for land management. This is not however an exclusive programme and the SDNPA are able to progress additional land management practices subject to the necessary permissions and corporate ambitions.

Conserving a protected landscape, whilst also attracting high numbers of visitors to view the iconic Seven Sisters cliffs does bring challenges and at times conflict to the site. There are opportunities to showcase improving practise in such areas as permissive paths, management and visitor behaviours affecting habitats and protected species in SSSI designated land.

The focus for 2025/26 will be to build upon the existing work to manage this diverse landscape and its habitats, implementing the second year of the Countryside Stewardship Agreement whilst feeding into the wider National Park objectives for Nature Recovery, Climate Change and ensuring Access for All. The long-term ambition is to improve the overall SSSI conditions from unfavourable

to declining to favourable. That measure of success will be down to all landowners working in partnership along the Heritage Coast and it is for Natural England to decide any status changes to the SSSI.

Our work to manage this landscape will be achieved by:

- 1. Continuing to deliver year 2 actions of Countryside Stewardship Agreement which will include a focus on:**
  - Long term, seasonal grazing arrangements to manage chalk grassland and floodplain grazing marsh
  - Scrub clearance
  - Regular species and habitat monitoring
  - Planting hedgerow and preparing new areas for priority habitats
  - Continued investment into landscape infrastructure e.g. fencing, troughs, gates
- 2. Continuing to deliver Nature Recovery objectives which will include:**
  - Conserve the landscape of SSCP and include results into the corporate performance reporting as part of as part of SDNPA High Level Nature Recovery target, including delivering the outcomes above as the landowner.
  - Supporting the delivery of the PMP to inform the transition to achieving targets in the Protected Landscape Targets & Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) specifically:
    - i. Target 2 - Bring 80% of the SSCP SSSIs into favourable condition by 2042
    - ii. Target 3 - For 60% of the SSCP SSSIs assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by January 2028.
- 3. Continue to work with external partners to support the proposal for the Seven Sisters National Nature Reserve (NNR), as the landowner of SSCP.**
  - Support the process toward NNR Declaration which is anticipated to be September 2025
  - Work as part of the Seven Sisters NNR core partnership
  - Contribute towards the development of the joint Management Framework
  - Contribute through offering SSCP facilities in support of collaborative/partnership working, such as hosting meetings and wider engagement events /interpretation opportunities
- 4. Refocus onsite and pre-visit messaging to distinguish between Seven Sisters cliffs and Cuckmere Haven to support key habitat and species conservation with the landscape**
  - Targeted signage and messaging during chalk grassland season to change perceptions from a municipal park to connecting with the landscape of the South Downs and SSCP.
  - Targeted signage and messaging on the importance of dogs on leads during key seasons such as animal grazing and ground nesting bird season, building on the Take the Lead campaign and linking to conservation.
  - Soft social media and on-site messages throughout the season to promote and educate Cuckmere Haven as a wetland habitat / informal nature reserve rather than a municipal 'country park' to influence visitor behaviours.
  - Promote cliff safety and participate in the wider Heritage Coast suicide prevention messaging

**5. Provide landscape volunteering opportunities for a range of audiences including:**

- Corporate Volunteering in partnership with South Downs Trust
- Youth Action Days and work experience placements
- Supporting educational and community groups undertaking voluntary beach clean activities not organised by SSCP
- Provide opportunities to engage with traditional landscape management skills such as scything as part of regular landscape management practices.

**6. Work with internal and external partners to provide a range of lifelong learning opportunities to engage with nature including:**

- Developing a toolkit of downloadable resources from the SSCP website for primary and secondary self-led educational visits
- Engage with external education providers to utilise SSCP as a location for nature-based learning sessions for both seasonal events and sign posting educational enquiries
- Encourage self-led citizen science opportunities eg RSPB Garden Birdwatch, Annual Butterfly Count, promoting the use of i-naturalist to capture species data, whilst engaging with the landscape
- Promote participation with the three photo posts on site for citizen science landscape monitoring.

**First Class Visitor Destination & Seasonal Planning**

A key focus of 2025/26 will be managing Seven Sisters Country Park as a visitor attraction. Rightly, the first few years of ownership have focussed on investing in visitor infrastructure and securing a Countryside Agreement for long term landscape management.

With 3 years' experience of operating the site and responding to a wide range of seasonal demands and visitor needs, the time is right to evaluate our learnings. From this we will reshape the ambition to focus on visitor demands, refine our offer and maximise opportunities to develop market segmentation to attract a wider audience throughout each season. Refining the visitor offer throughout the seasons, responding to the natural challenges of an outdoor, landscape attraction drives the need for a flexible offer at Seven Sisters Country Park. This will enable a wide range of visitors to safely access and engage with the site, its history and nature throughout the year.

Delivery of objectives under this heading will be separated between long term ambition and operational delivery for 2025/26.

**Long term Ambition**

- I. Develop a 'Sense of Place' for the country park to inform:
  - Visitor interpretation, marketing messages and products to suit a range of audiences and seasonal demand, integrating shared branding with NRR when available.
  - Promote the history and personal stories of key assets within the site to create connections with audiences and wider understanding of the landscape
  - Understand seasonal market segmentation needs and delivery linked to above
  - Prepare capital and fundraising bids to support phased costed delivery of the above

- Inform content updates on the SSCP website to reach specific target audiences and specialist interest visits
2. To work with partners in a wider context of the Heritage Coast to respond to increased visitor travel demand;
    - To continue to advocate with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) the need for a much safer visitor crossing across the A259 at Exceat. Promote the preparatory work for a crossing and seek possible funding options for the delivery of pedestrian crossing
    - Update the SSCP travel plan, with a watching brief on the demand for coach parking on site after provision changes at Birling Gap and a noted increase in overseas group travel traffic at peak times.
    - Work with Heritage Coast partners and travel providers to promote more sustainable travel to the area, with an aspiration to encourage modal shift
  3. Work with Forestry England with a commitment to deliver to develop a waymarked pedestrian route on FE land between Friston Forest and SSCP to create a safer, off-road route that supports site connectivity between partner landowners.
  4. Explore with external partners including District and Parish Councils, the opportunity and implications to adopt the decommissioned telephone box at Seven Sisters Country Park, with the potential to use for interpretation or other visitor engagement activity.

### **Operational Delivery 2025/26:**

1. Deliver a 364-day Visitor Centre offer (closed Christmas Day) to support visitors to SSCP, Friston Forest and the wider SDNP, with a seasonal retail offer to generate an income. This is to offset the free information service using average spend per transaction as a monitor of success. Summer opening hours will remain as 10am-5pm with the option of ensuring a core winter service provision between 10am – 3pm providing flexibility to adapt to seasonal and audience demand whilst optimising staff hours.
2. Deliver the Grab & Go takeaway food and beverage service, but with greater flexibility to adjust the off season opening hours outside of a core time of 10am – 2pm to respond to seasonal demand and optimising staff hours, using average spend per transaction as a monitor of success. Summer opening hours will remain as 10am – 5pm.
3. In both Visitor Centre and Food & Beverage outlets, monitor, review and evolve the range of products available to support events, seasonality and changing audiences, and where possible source from local suppliers to promote economic prosperity within and around the SDNP.
4. Complete a tender process for a two-year ice cream concession to be located in the south car park from Spring 2025, replacing the in-house service provision.
5. To commission the annual Visit England Visitor Attractions Assessment as a measure of success and seek to achieve a higher score than the 2024/25 of 75%, but mindful that onsite



tenants, where we have no operational control are also included in the assessment and could impact final scores.

6. To build upon learned experience and deliver a diverse, year-round programme of events and engagement opportunities whilst generating an income for the use of available spaces and catering to include:
  - Private hire events – closed events not for the public
  - Private hire events – public events that add to the visitor offer / events programme (eg art exhibitions)
  - Partnership events - with key stakeholders such as SDNPA and Sussex Wildlife Trust to deliver nature-based engagement / educational / wellbeing opportunities
  - Private Hire workshops – individuals / organisations hiring SSCP as a location for workshops eg wildlife painting, yoga, floristry and foraging.
  - Small programme of in-house events to build the profile of SSCP, as well as the visitor engagement of the site. Including Dark Skies, Renature, free school holiday activities/ trails, Christmas Market and Seven Sisters Talk and Tours.
  - Utilise opportunities to join regional / national events such as Artwave Open Houses, RSPB Garden Bird Count, Heritage Open Days to reach new audiences during off peak season.
  
7. To continue to manage the performance of Cuckmere Cottages & Camping management concession in the delivery of the self-catering cottages and camping barn and field as part of the visitor offer.
  
8. Continue recruitment and promotion of visitor experience volunteering opportunities to include:
  - Visitor welcome and orientation
  - Events & education support
  - Litter picking and site presentation
  
9. Deliver phase one of a natural play space funded by CIL, to encourage engagement with nature and provide an additional resource for educational and forest school visits and seek additional fundraising to extend the offer after engaging with audiences and user feedback.
  
10. Promote and increase usage of two mobility scooters for visitors with mobility restrictions to be able to engage with nature and the park, with an ambition to increase the fleet via fundraising.
  
11. Continually review and update the SSCP website as the primary pre visit information hub for a range of audiences; and for 2025/26 expand the information translated for overseas visitors and develop a range of downloadable circular walks from Exceat.
  
12. Regularly update social media channels with a seasonal mix of commercial promotion and landscape management stories to attract new audiences, share conservation work and build a sense of belonging with local and repeat visitors.

## Financial Stability

As the owners of SSCP, SDNPA have a responsibility to maintain and conserve the landscape and all the assets within the country park including structural integrity, health, safety and function of this public site, , to support the objective of being a first-class visitor attraction. With increased visitor demand and an aged, historical asset this can sometimes be a challenge.

During the three years operated by South Downs Commercial Operations Ltd (SDCO), positive progress was made to reduce the SSCP operational deficit year on year. As we enter a new year, after bringing operations in house as part of SDNPA efficiencies are identified with VAT, recharges and some contract costs so the new budget now highlights true costs associated with owning SSCP. At the time of writing projected operational surplus for 2025/26 is £10k.

## Long Term Ambition

Whilst achieving 'break even' and financial stability is a key objective of operating SSCP, owning an asset comes with responsibilities and need for investment. In the short term, the first objective is to invest and maintain safe visitor spaces and facilities. Second objective is to break even and begin to set aside a contingency fund. There is then a need to ensure that income generated from commercial activity is earmarked for future investment, alongside capital expenditure through seeking new commercial opportunities.

## Asset Management

As owners of the site, the asset management priorities for 2025/26 will include:

- Commissioning a comprehensive asset audit to identify the condition of all assets to inform maintenance and investment planning
- Completing essential structural works at New Barn cottage, to enable a business case to attract a tenant from agricultural / arts & culture / social housing arenas for off grid living.
- Install solar panels at Exceat as part of the SDNPA ambitions to reach carbon neutrality and reduce utility expenditure.
- Improvements to the layout of south car park, to support turnover and parking efficiencies at peak times during spring 2025. Develop a phased implementation plan for more significant improvements to the north car park including drainage, pedestrian walkways, accessible parking and maximizing limited capacity.
- Implement the outstanding project to locate electric vehicle chargers in north car park, subject to electrical capacity to do so before the expiry of the BMW funding at the end of 2025.
- Complete outstanding works at the self-catering cottages to continue to manage the asset and improve the quality of the offer.

## Financial Stability

SSCP operates a diverse range of income streams to offset the operational costs of managing the landscape, providing high quality visitor facilities whilst reducing reliance on single income activities. Income is generated from the following sources, with car parking providing approximately 35% of total income in 2025/26.

Financial performance is regularly monitored and reported to the SDNPA Policy & Resources Committee and National Park Authority as part of the standard corporate financial reporting procedures.

### **Draft Budget overview for 2025/26**

The table below is a summary table of each performance area and the projected outturn for the 2025/26 budget. A more detailed budget can be viewed in appendix 2. This table reflects the Operational delivery of SSCP. There remain core costs of the ownership of SSCP that are reflected in the text below.

	£000's	
Core Costs	582	Adverse
Car Parking	-248	Favourable
Events	-21	Favourable
Holiday Cottages	-8	Favourable
Landscapes	-191	Favourable
Visitor Centre	-44	Favourable
Food Outlets	-80	Favourable
<b>Total</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>Favourable</b>

- It should be noted that all salary costs are reflected in the Core Cost element of this budget. The costs will be allocated to the individual profit centres in due course.
  - The payments to ESCC relating to the acquisition of SSCP by the SDNPA are not included in the operating budget. The payment for 2025/26 to ESCC is £46,585.
  - Costs relating to SSCP's communications of £18k are held in the Communications budget are not reflected in here as they are under the direction of the Head of Communications.
  - Costs of £6k relating to council tax of New Barn Cottage (with an "uninhabited" premium) and insurance for the scooters is included in Property Services Budget and not reflected in the budget above.
  - It is also acknowledged that resources from the wider authority which support the operation of SSCP are not reflected in this operational budget.
- **Car Parks**
    - In 2025/26 a new car tariff and pricing structure will be introduced to enable up to 2hr, up to 4hr and over 4hr stays to encourage turnover and more effective capacity management at peak times.
    - Tarriff increases will also be applied for coaches, in response to an increased demand for coach parking and limited on site provision alongside a reduction of capacity along the heritage coast. Coaches cannot be accommodated on site at weekends or during July – August due to the growing size of coaches and turning circle restrictions in an already busy car parks.
    - The 2025/26 parking charges are highlighted below. Whilst the full impact of changing visitor behaviour is hard to quantify, an income uplift has been applied to the forecasted budget.

<b>Cars</b>	<b>2024/25 Tariff</b>	<b>2025/26 Tariff</b>
Up to 2 hrs	£3.50	£3.50
Up to 4 hours	n/a	£5.00
Over 4 hours	£4.50	£7.00

<b>Coaches / Mini Buses</b>	<b>2024/2025 Tariff</b>	<b>2025/26 Prices</b>
Half day	£6.50	£10.00
Full day	£12.50	£20.00

- Alongside direct income from parking charges, we will continue to receive an income share from Forestry England for the local and national car park passes permitted to park at SSCP, which is an ideal product for local, regular users eg dog walkers.
- **On site leases and licensing agreements:**
  - In 2025/26 we will continue to generate income from onsite tenants and licensing agreements which are included in the core costs budget and will include
    - Saltmarsh Farmhouse Cafe – percentage turnover for 2024/25 accounts
    - Cuckmere Cycle Company – percentage turnover for 2024/25 accounts
    - ESCC / Buzz Active – currently zero rental as part of the purchase agreement
    - Natural England office rent agreement
    - Farm Business Tenancy for North Brooks
- **On site concessions**
  - In 2025/26 there will be two onsite concessions generating an income:
    - Fixed fee and % of turnover of combined self-catering cottage and camping income
    - Annual fee for ice cream concession
- **Visitor Centre**
  - Profiled budget for income generated via the sale of souvenirs, gifts, local crafts and artists products, books, maps and children’s toys, responding to the anticipated seasonal business fluctuations of an outdoor landscape.
- **Food & Beverage**
  - Profiled budget for income generated via the sale of take away drinks, sandwiches, snacks, ice creams, responding to the seasonal business fluctuations of an outdoor landscape, and no provision of wet weather seating spaces due to other onsite business agreements.
  - Maximise opportunities to provide refreshments and lunches to ad hoc private hire events and groups visits, including the Pump Barn licensed bar service.
- **Events**
  - Profiled budget for income generated from hireable spaces including private hire and partnership hire events.
  - Profiled budget for income generated from ticket sales and space hire from inhouse events

- Data captured to record 'opportunity costs' when spaces are used by SDNPA for delivery objectives eg wellbeing and education outreach, NRR meetings, engagement events (eg local plan and PMP)
  - Continue to work with Sussex Film Office, to promote SSCP as a filming location subject to market demand.
  - Ad hoc receipts of licence fee for third party event organisers using SSCP for events e.g. Charity walks and marathons where there is an impact on staff time or the landscape.
- **Landscape Management**
    - Annual payment from the Rural Payments Agency for Countryside Stewardship Scheme duties.
    - Income generated from corporate volunteering bookings
    - Ad hoc opportunities to apply for funding for specific projects as they arise.
- **Donations**
    - Maximise opportunities to promote ad hoc donations on site and after the use of the mobility scooters
    - Work with the South Downs Trust to create a new legacy option for SSCP (alongside SDNPA) to promote opportunities to leave a legacy or donate towards specific activities.
- **Operating Costs**

There are many general costs associated with owning assets, managing a landscape and operating a safe, first-class visitor attraction of which some do not have a direct income activity to offset costs. Costs across all budget areas are regularly monitored to keep to a minimum but some are hard to directly influence. They include:

- SSCP operates with 7FTE core staff these being Commercial & Strategic Manager, Country Park Manager, Visitor Services Manager, Visitor Services Assistant, Park Ranger (job share) and Operations Assistant. New for 2025/26 is a one-year, fixed term, full time Senior Park Ranger post providing extra resource to ensure the delivery of the Countryside Stewardship and an ambition to extend this post to be funded by the Countryside Stewardship Agreement until the end of the agreement (2029).
- An additional budget is allocated for front of house staff delivering the Visitor Centre, Food & Beverage services and supporting events. Historically, these have been casual contracts. In 2025/26 we will move to a combination of fixed term, seasonal and casual posts as we trial new ways of working to respond to seasonal demand. With the ambition to move to a mix of permanent, seasonal and casual contracts keeping within the allocated budget. An increase in the national living wage does place pressure on existing budgets.
- Premises costs including utilities, business rates, insurances, security and alarm contracts, waste collections and septic / sewage plant emptying contracts. In early 2025, the cleaning contract will be renewed and is likely to be at an increased cost to manage the seasonal demands of the site. As highlighted earlier in this plan there is an

ambition to instal solar panels which will contribute to reduce energy costs.

- Annual payment to East Sussex County Council, increased in line with RPI.
- Non-revenue items are summarised at appendix 2.
- Cost of sales for retail and food and beverage outlets is closely monitored, all supplies are increasing prices in response to changing economic conditions which will result in carefully considered price increases on site to achieved income targets, whilst not out pricing audience demands.

**Appendix I: Summary of KPIs**

Performance is regularly monitored and reported to the SDNPA Policy & Resources Committee and National Park Authority as part of the standard corporate KPI procedures.

Objective	KPI	Reporting mechanism	Reported	Annual Measure	Final 2024/25 Measure to follow
Exemplar Land Management & Nature Recovery	No. Corporate Volunteer Activities	NP4ALL log	Quarterly	12	
	No. of volunteer activities	NP4ALL log	Quarterly	50	
	Hectares of habitat created, improved or secured for nature recovery	Nature Recovery Log	Quarterly	SSCP contribution to overall SDNPA 1,300ha target	
First Class Visitor Destination Visitor Engagement & Seasonal Planning	Average Spend per Transaction in Visitor Centre (ASTV)	SSCP systems	Quarterly	Over £9.50	
	Average Spend per Transaction in Food & Beverage (ASTV)	SSCP systems	Quarterly	Over £5.25	
	Annual Visit England Visitor Attraction Assessment	SSCP systems	Annual	Over 75%	
	No. private hire events	SSCP systems	Quarterly	75	
	No. In house events	SSCP systems	Quarterly	20	
	No. of volunteering activities	NP4ALL log	Quarterly	100	
	No. mobility scooter hires	SSCP data	Quarterly	150	
	Cottages Occupancy Rate	SSCP data	Quarterly	55%	
	Car park compliance checks	SSCP data	Quarterly	Over 90%	
	SSCP Miles without Stiles page views	SSCP website data	Quarterly	5000 per year	
SSCP Educational page views	SSCP website data	Quarterly	5000 per year		

**Appendix 2:**

**2.1 Detailed Budget for 2025/26 - Revenue budget – This is incorporated in the SDNPA budget for approval at NPA, in Corporate Strategy directorate. Negative figures represent income.**

Row Labels	Sum of Revised budget	
<b>I - Seven Sisters Core Costs</b>		
Bank Charges	£	1,200
Bldgs & Plant - General Repairs	£	17,052
Bldgs & Plant - Programmed Maintenance	£	7,050
Bldgs & Plant-Parking Machine Maintenance	£	1,200
Business Rates	£	9,378
Computers - Software (Incl Licences)	£	240
Contractor Payments Re Bldg Cleaning	£	42,396
Electricity	£	68,000
General Office Expenses	£	360
General Sals - Basic Pay	£	418,653
Lettings - Premises	-£	30,000
Minimum Revenue Provision	£	22,000
Miscellaneous Fees	£	180
Miscellaneous Income	-£	17,600
Office Stationery	£	240
Other Payments To Other LAs	£	11,585
Property Insurance	£	3,695
Rubbish Clearance	£	6,000
Waste Management	£	3,862
Water Supply \ Sewerage	£	17,000
	<b>TOTAL £</b>	<b>582,491</b>
<b>2 - Seven Sisters Car Parking</b>		
Bldgs & Plant-Parking Machine Maintenance	£	12,543
Car Parking Income	-£	284,555
Cash Collection Service	£	9,183
Materials	£	806
Security	£	14,026
	<b>TOTAL -£</b>	<b>247,997</b>
<b>3 - Seven Sisters Events</b>		
Bank Charges	£	546
Filming Licences Fees	-£	15,000



Goods For Resale	£	3,125
Materials	£	600
Miscellaneous Income	-£	8,800
Payments to other bodies	£	1,600
Venue / Room Hire	-£	3,500
<b>TOTAL -£</b>		<b>21,429</b>
<hr/>		
<b>4 - Seven Sisters Holiday Cottages</b>		
Business Rates	£	6,957
Electricity	£	15,200
Fixtures & Fittings	£	4,800
Lettings - Premises	-£	37,500
Water Supply \ Sewerage	£	2,300
<b>TOTAL -£</b>		<b>8,243</b>
<hr/>		
<b>5 - Seven Sisters Landscapes</b>		
Computers - Software (Incl Licences)	£	1,534
Materials	£	1,100
Miscellaneous Income	-£	7,000
Other Contributions	-£	1,000
Rural Payments Agency Grants	-£	185,655
Vehicles - Repairs & Maintenance	£	500
<b>TOTAL -£</b>		<b>190,521</b>
<hr/>		
<b>7 - Seven Sisters Food Outlets</b>		
Bank Charges	£	4,294
Goods For Resale	£	56,800
Materials	£	1,200
Sales - Goods And Merchandise	-£	142,000
<b>TOTAL -£</b>		<b>79,706</b>
<hr/>		
<b>6 - Seven Sisters Visitor Centre</b>		
Bank Charges	£	2,388
Goods For Resale	£	58,025
Materials	£	660
Sales - Goods And Merchandise	-£	105,500
<b>TOTAL -£</b>		<b>44,427</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL -£</b>		<b>9,831</b>

## **2.2 Capital investment planned for 2025-26**

An allocation of £94k have been identified in the capital plan for 2025-26 relating to the provision of fencing, troughs and gates at SSCP. This expenditure is being met from unrestricted reserves in year.

In addition to this, £207k has been allocated for the refurbishment of the New Barn Cottage and a further £50k to the Car Park improvements on site. These have been carried forward from the 2023-24 financial year.

Further capital investment may be approved by the NPA should funding become available. The SDNPA is currently unsighted on the capital allocation that may be made by DEFRA in 2025-26.

## **2.3 Asset Valuation**

A valuation of the SSCP for the end of 2024-25 is currently underway.

Prior year valuation was assessed at £7.5m by Savills. In the 2024-25 financial year capital investment in terms of the sewage treatment plant, repairs to the sluice gates and wetland enhancement improvement works have been carried out which will impact on the valuation currently underway. Further investment planned in 2025-26 (see above) will impact on subsequent valuations.

The impact of the SDNPA investing in its assets will improve several accounting ratios which might be used to determine the financial sustainability of the organisation.