

Agenda Item 19
Report PR24/25-41

Report to **Policy & Resources Committee**
Date **26 June 2025**
By **Commercial & Strategic Manager – Seven Sisters**
Title of Report **Q4 Seven Sisters Country Park Performance Report 2024/25**
Note

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Receive and consider the Q4 Seven Sisters Country Park performance report 2024/25**
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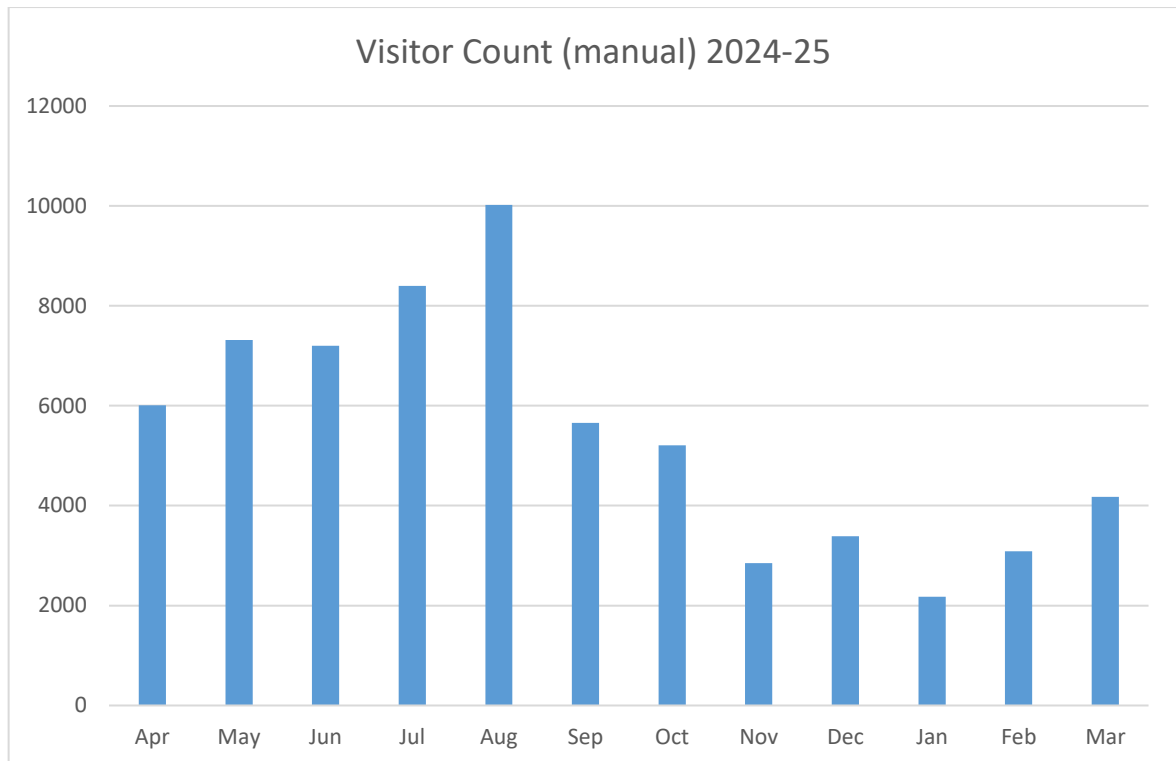
1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the P&R Committee on the performance of the Seven Sisters Country Park during Quarter 4 (Q3) of 2024/25, 1 January – 31 March 2025. This report contains an update on performance against the KPIs (**Appendix 1**), which were approved by the Authority on 11 July 2023.

2. Update on performance against KPIs

- 2.1 During Q4, SSCP has performed well against the majority of the KPIs, and actions in the SSCP Business Plan. These include the following highlights:

 - Monthly car park compliance checks reporting an on target average of 90% compliance in Q4. It should be noted that Q4 is typically a quieter period until mid-February.
 - Food & Beverage reported an average spend per transaction of £5.55 which is consistent with the previous quarters and the offer available, and 40% above the original budget.
 - The Visitor Centre reported an average spend per transaction of £10.60 and 29% above the original budget. Spend per transactions is considered to be a more valid measure than spend per head, as not every visitor makes a purchase.
 - The table shows the manual count of visitors in the Visitor Centre for 2024-25 demonstrating, the lower visitor numbers in Q4.



- Q4 is typically a quieter trading period for visitor flow, but a general increase in visitor numbers has been experienced throughout 2024/25 with a positive impact on trading.
- By end of Q4, the first season of the self catering cottages and camping concession reported positive occupancy. The contract covers the period June to March with Kestrel reporting 41%, Skylark 29% and Redshank 24% occupancy. Considering the contract launched in peak season, this is considered to be a positive trajectory. Groups booking the camping barn in between the June - October recorded 39% occupancy. Bookings for the 2025-26 season are already favourable compared to previous season.
- Feedback for both the camping facilities and self-catering cottages has been extremely positive, and the quirks and logistics of the site are now understood.
- During Q4, we facilitated 6 Sussex Film Office requests including two well known brand photoshoots.
- 2 inhouse events were hosted in Q4, a free half term 'nature bingo' activity and the communications team led, very popular SDNPA Dark Skies event.
- In addition, a small number of private hires for a range of activities including PMP engagement, school visit dry space, art workshop and yoga, alongside inhouse hosting including the Heritage Coast Operations Group, first aid training, nature recovery and SNNR meetings and supporting the wellbeing team with outreach activities including Sanctuary Café and educational visits. Private hire during winter has its challenges as the Pump Barn is not insulated making it a cold space and the Turkey Barn does not have a Wi-Fi connection.
- During Q4, the mobility scooters were hired for 33 sessions, with a continued notable increase in local, repeat visitors thrilled to be able to access and engage with the country park. Drier weather than the previous year supported the regular use of the scooters in this period.
- No Corporate Volunteering Days were hosted in Q4. Typically, the demand for Corporate Volunteering during winter months is lower, so team capacity focussed on other volunteering groups.

- 12 regular landscape volunteering opportunities took place in Q4 including Youth Action Days and South Down Volunteer sessions, focussing on the clearance of 0.5ha of scrub at Haven Brow – a winter project as part of our Countryside Stewardship Agreement.
- Two regular visitor experience volunteers continue to undertake weekly litter picks along the main visitor routes.
- Seven Sisters Rangers joined National Trust colleagues for Changing Chalk funded scheduled monument monitoring training, to ensure the assets at SSCP are managed appropriately.
- Three photo posts were installed along the South Downs Way to capture fixed point images. As a citizen science engagement activity, these images will create a record of the seasonal, changing landscape for our Countryside Stewardship Agreement.
- Investment in infrastructure continued with the completion of the replacement of c4000m fencing and trough connectivity to ensure safe grazing funded by Countryside Stewardship and the replacement of gates along the South Downs Way funded by Access / SDW funds.
- Native hedgerow was planted alongside the new sewage treatment plant fencing to establish new habitats for pollinators after the construction works.
- Winter grazing continued with the 30 resident ponies, 300 sheep and 80 cows in the park January & February before leaving the site for calving and lambing in March. The sheep were walked to their farm in Litlington early one morning, a traditional method rather than using several vehicle movements – which was quite an event and popular on social media.

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?	It is important that Members consider the performance of the SSCP 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	To note that SSCP is now an inhouse operation.
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 how it's working practices and how it operates at and manages SSCP.

Implication	Yes*/No
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 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

4. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

- 4.1 There are no direct risks associated with this performance report. Risks to the SDNPA are monitored on their various risk registers, including on the Corporate Risk Register which is overseen by the P&R Committee.

CLAIRE ONSLOW

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 Appendices: None
 External Consultees: None
 Background Documents: None