

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	30 September 2013
Title:	South Downs National Park Management Plan – Consultation Response
Reference:	5113
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to endorse the response of the County Council to the consultation on the South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan and to seek agreement to delegate endorsement of the final Management Plan to the Director of Economy Transport and Environment in consultation with the Executive Member for Economy Transport and Environment.
- 1.2 The South Downs National Park was established in 2010. The National Park Authority, as the planning authority and governing body for the National Park, has a statutory duty to publish three key documents:
- a Management Plan by 2014;
 - a Local Plan by 2017; and
 - a Minerals and Waste Plan (completed, prepared jointly with the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan).

It is currently seeking comments from partners on the Management Plan through a wide public consultation. As part of this process a meeting has been held recently between the South Downs National Park Authority and elected Members of Hampshire County Council. That meeting explored various areas of common interest between the County Council and the National Park Authority which can provide a basis for identifying future opportunities for collaborative working through the delivery of the County Council's services. At the same time, the New Forest National Park Authority is beginning to review its own Management Plan. The draft plan will be published for consultation in Autumn 2014. Members may wish to follow a similar process to that of the South Downs Partnership Management Plan of endorsing the response of the County Council to the consultation and final Management Plan.

- 1.3 The South Downs National Park Management Plan is an important document for the National Park Authority and its partners. It is referred to as a 'Partnership Management Plan' and although it is a statutory document of the National Park Authority, it is a plan for all the partners with an interest in the area of the National Park. There is no requirement for the County Council to formally adopt it. The Management Plan will influence and direct all the policies that the National Park Authority and the Local Authorities have for the area of Hampshire covered by the National Park. For the County Council this will include its statutory responsibilities for Minerals and Waste planning (the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan is a joint document with the National Park Authority), planning for its own estate, and its highways and rights of way duties. It will also have a strong influence on the policy framework of the National Park Authority Local Plan and on District Local Plans outside the boundary of the National Park. Given the County Council's interest in the National Park and the influence of the Management Plan on the activities of the County Council, in addition to endorsing the comments on the draft Management Plan, Members may wish to have the final Management Plan reviewed and formally endorsed.
- 1.4 The Management Plan is required to provide a framework for the delivery of the National Park's two purposes and statutory duty, as follows:
- Purpose 1:** To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks;
- Purpose 2:** To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks
- Duty:** In pursuing National Park purposes, the National Park Authorities must seek to foster the economic and social well being of the local communities within the National Park.
- 1.5 The Management Plan has been informed by several topic working groups and the South Downs Partnership over the last two years, all of which have had officer representation from the County Council. Many of the officer views have been met as a result of their contributions at those working groups, and many of their comments on an earlier draft of policies have been taken on board. The strategic management planning of the National Park and integration of the many different interests is welcomed. It is not an inconsiderable task and the comments provided are intended to be constructive and in best the interests of the park and communities that live in it.
- 1.6 The County Council welcomes the Management Plan and supports the principles that it seeks to establish. It is recognised that the challenge for the Management Plan has been to integrate the many different interests across the National Park into a single document, and this has generally been achieved successfully. The key issues arising from the consultation, and which form the basis of the County Council's response, are:

- a) Greater positive emphasis could be placed on the second purpose and the duty to address a perceived lack of balance between Purpose 1 (conservation and enhancement) and Purpose 2 (public understanding and enjoyment). Additional weight appears to be given to Purpose 1, although they should be of equal importance. Priority should only be given to Purpose 1 in the case of irreconcilable conflict, as set out in the 'Sandford Principle'¹.
- b) The aspirational nature of the Plan is welcomed, but it should recognise the constraints on partners to deliver those aspirations. For example, the Plan sets out policies and proposals to enhance public transport provision that, given the current financial and policy climate, are unlikely to be achieved within the five year time period of the Plan.
- c) The Plan needs to be measurable in terms of its achievements. This is made difficult by a lack of clear targets for delivery. For completeness, an action plan that demonstrates the thread between vision, issues, outcomes, policies and delivery would be particularly helpful.
- d) The use of specialist language in some parts of the Plan will make it less readily understood by lay readers.
- e) There is a need for flood risk management, a new duty for the County Council, to be included in the policies for water. Given the importance of this issue to communities in the National Park, reference should be made to the different types of flooding that the National Park is subject to.
- f) Key organisations have been identified to deliver the Management Plan's objectives. It will be necessary to outline the roles and responsibilities of those organisations, including those of the County Councils.
- g) There is no reference to Green Infrastructure in the Plan. This is a critical factor in the delivery of 'ecosystem services'² and in meeting the needs of both visitors and residents, and the Plan should be providing a policy background for the formation of Local Plan policy for Green Infrastructure.

¹ To help National Park Authorities make decisions between conservation and recreation, the National Parks Policy Review Committee made a recommendation in 1974, which is now known as the 'Sandford Principle', named after Lord Sandford who was Chair of the committee. "Where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment, then conservation interest should take priority"

² Ecosystem services are the benefits we get from nature and culture - the services provided by the natural environment that benefit people. Described in four categories; Regulating (e.g. flood protection), Supporting (e.g. soil formation), Cultural (e.g. health and well being) and Provisioning (e.g. water and food).

1.7 The following comments are structured around the main headings of the Plan:

Setting the Scene

- a) The role of and pressures on the market towns (such as Petersfield, Alton and Bishops Waltham) as service centres for residents and their rural hinterlands and as gateways to the National Park should be given greater emphasis.
- b) Access is given a narrow definition in the Plan. The consideration of access would be enhanced by considering destination management, transport access to, and not just within, the National Park, and to Open Access land, country parks and the coast.
- c) The references to sustainability are welcomed, but if sustainability is to be considered seriously in the Plan references to population profiles, employment statistics, travel to work patterns, health, housing need, business accommodation need and economic output would help to underpin the intended outcomes as these are all components of sustainability.

A thriving Living Landscape

- d) Reference to conserving and enhancing priority habitats and species in the general policies could helpfully include reference to conserving and enhancing heritage.

People Connected with Places

- e) The South Downs Way is an important recreational facility, but reference could be made to other long distance paths, cycle networks and trails.
- f) There are concerns about the affordability of the policy to improve existing public transport provision. Any increase in public transport services will be demand-led, and so the policies around sustainable travel could encourage promotion and use of existing services rather than seeking to provide more under-used services. There is also an opportunity for communities to set up imaginative, alternative models.

Towards a sustainable future

- g) In addition to reference to barriers to housing and key services reference could also be made to barriers to employment. This could consider the development of suitable business premises. Further consideration of the economic relationship between the National Park and its hinterland would be helpful, given the strong interrelationship between them.
- h) The population in general is getting older and on the basis of demographics within the National Park greater consideration should be given to an overarching approach for appropriate housing for the older

population which can be taken forward more specifically in the Park Authority's Local Plan.

2. Finance

- 2.1. There are no financial implications for the County Council. All activities relating to delivery of the Management Plan will be as part of normal County Council planned and agreed business.

3. Performance

- 3.1. Measurement of performance in the delivery of the Management Plan will be the responsibility of the South Downs National Park Authority. The County Council may be asked to provide information on its activities in order for the National Park Authority to monitor performance of the Management Plan.

4. Future direction

- 4.1. The County Council will remain engaged with the South Downs National Park Authority on the future development of its Management Plan, and influence the future direction of activity through the National Park officer groups, the South Downs Partnership and County Council representation on the National Park Authority.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. That the response of the County Council to the consultation on the South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan be endorsed.
- 5.2. That authority is delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment, to endorse the final South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<p><u>Title</u> A statutory duty of regard for National Parks is provided for in Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (National Parks), Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988 (The Broads) and Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (AONBs). Specifically, they state that, "in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land" in these areas, relevant authorities "shall have regard" to their purposes</p>		<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
Draft South Downs National Park Management Plan	http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/356182/Consultation_Draft_PMP_20130701PC.pdf and printed copies available in the Members room.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1 The proposals in this report have been developed with due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Council's equality objectives. The website contains a summary [assessment of the impacts](#) on 'Enhancing Hampshire's Quality of Life'.
- 1.2 It is considered that the issues covered by this report will not have impacts requiring further specific actions by the Council above those already established in its existing policies and working procedures.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. Policies in the Management Plan aim to secure the engagement of all sectors of society, particularly children and young people, with the social, economic and environmental benefits of living in or visiting the National Park. Policies to improve employment opportunities and a specific initiative to address 'heritage crime' will contribute towards a reduction in crime and disorder.

3. Climate Change:

- 3.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Policies aimed at reducing the carbon footprint of the National Park are related to the County Council's objectives for sustainable transport and access solutions through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

- 3.2. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

The Management Plan contains policies for adaptation to climate change, although at present these policies are concerned exclusively with the environmental impacts at the expense of the social and economic impacts.