

Subject:	Downland Estate Update		
Date of Meeting:	17 October 2012		
Report of:	Strategic Director Place		
Contact Officers:	Name:	Geoff Raw/Gillian Marston	Tel: 29-0726/4701
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Key Decision:	Yes		
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) have been developing their policy framework and investment strategy and following discussions with Council officers are keen to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to forge closer working between the two authorities. In this context the Council are seeking: to conserve and enhance the landscape, ecosystems, culture and history of the South Downs; promote its enjoyment and where appropriate to strengthen open access to its City Downland Estate; to diversify economic activity including exploring 'eco-tourism' opportunities; and, develop joint funding initiatives on a range of projects.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Environment & Sustainability Committee agrees to:

- 2.1 Endorse the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) set out in Annex 1;
- 2.2 Encourage the Strategic Director Place to explore funding opportunities to support economic diversification within the Downland area including measures to boost eco tourism and promote access by the city's local communities to the countryside;
- 2.3 Establish a City Downland Estate Advisory Board the terms of reference to be ratified by the Strategic Director of Place and Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 At 10,500 acres, Brighton & Hove's City Downland Estate is the largest area of the South Downs falling under single public ownership and control. Successful collaboration opens the door to some key prizes:

International Recognition:

- ✓ The Council and its partners are already working on submission of a UN Biosphere Bid. If successful this will place the chalk block that is the area of land from the Adur to the Ouse including the Brighton and Hove and the Council's Downland Estate on a platform with other internationally recognised habitats and landscapes of special environmental significance and conservation importance;
- ✓ International recognition may help to underpin work in securing investment resource in the area including the City Downland Estate.

National Investment:

- ✓ The SDNPA are developing their vision and distinctive offer as the newest national park. The City Council has an important role to play in supporting the park authority in this work. The close proximity of the city to the park area is a unique feature amongst the national parks. Forging a stronger connection with the geography of the city and a relationship between our urban population and Downland can positively influence peoples health and well being and the trajectory of investment for many years to come;
- ✓ In promoting the economic diversification of the City Downland Estate the Council working with the SDNPA will better align local management and investment strategies with national government objectives.

Local Pride:

- ✓ The Council as one of its corporate priorities has already opened up a greater proportion of its City Downland Estate to open access to our local community and those who visit the city;
- ✓ The city's Food Partnership have identified the City Downland Estate as a focal point for local food branding and sourcing. This in turn may contribute to healthier eating and dietary awareness particularly amongst young people and more deprived communities where it can be promoted;
- ✓ Closer working and investment alignment between the Council and the SDNPA has a greater chance of improving the impact of local environmental, water quality and biodiversity measures;
- ✓ The City Downland Estate can serve as part of a jewel in a emerging eco-tourism offer;
- ✓ Further opportunities may emerge for the city in hosting cultural and sporting activities and supporting healthier lifestyles;
- ✓ The initiative holds out the opportunity to raise the education offer to all schools in and on door step of the national park.

- 3.2 Establishing a City Downland Estate Advisory Board provides some of the necessary policy development to support the Committee in taking forward this part of the Council's work. This includes engagement with our tenant farmers and agricultural agents, local communities within and on the on fringe of the national park and in brokering the investment opportunities arising from economic diversification including eco tourism. The Advisory Board can support:

- A new partnering relationship between the Council and the SDNPA including co-production of public service and investment strategies within the City Downland Estate;
- The Biosphere Board and the City Sustainability Partnership to ensure effective co-ordination of a strong UN Biosphere bid;
- Co-commissioning of refurbishment plans for some of the Stanmer Park buildings amongst other landmark projects.

3.3 The remit for the Advisory Board will be subject to further discussion with partner agencies and may include:

a) Membership

- Cross party nominees
- SDNPA representative
- Nomination from CVSF
- Nomination from City Sustainability Partnership
- Senior council representatives
- Farming representatives
- Council's management agents
- Nomination from the Biosphere partnership
- Statutory representatives (Environment Agency, Natural England)
- Ad hoc expert advisors (could be universities & others called on when useful – e.g. Health & Wellbeing Board)

b) Terms of Reference

- Advance the vision and objectives of the City Downland Estate policy to improve the conservation of the landscape, ecosystem services and cultural heritage for the benefit of the City, visitors and neighbouring communities;
- To advise and provide a consultation sounding board for the City Council;

c) Logistics

- Up to 4 meetings per annum
- 4 year cycle of nominations

3.4 Outcomes

A successful Advisory Board can be expected to support the Council in delivering:

A strengthened, diversified and sustainable countryside economy

- Explore new and innovative business models & markets which complement and improve the important assets of the City Downland Estate (e.g. appropriate Eco tourism);
- Learn from others and draw on expertise & guidance;
- Establish a business innovation panel to advise farmers and local communities of new economic opportunities which support Biosphere objectives;
- Investigate the options for Rural Growth Zones.

A measurable improvement in Biodiversity

- Expand local food growing opportunities where appropriate and with sensitivity to conservation priorities;
- Pilot projects with local farmers to strategically enrich biodiversity through the establishment of landscape-scale green networks complemented by site based conservation management ;
- Universities, schools and local communities are fully engaged in developing biodiversity within the City Downland Estate.

Greater access and use of Downland to enhance health & wellbeing especially within disadvantaged communities.

- Increased accessible access areas & trails;
- Greater continuous access trails with exits from the City;
- Stanmer Park established as a major 'Gateway to the Downs' together with full consideration of other opportunities to the East and West of the city such as Benfield Valley, Sheepcote Valley and north Portslade;
- The City's Health & Wellbeing Board engaged with promoting practical public health initiatives related to the Downs;
- Public engagement initiatives;
- Improved permeability from urban areas.

Stronger engagement between Statutory Authorities & with local communities & businesses

- Sharing best practice between agencies involved in Downland management;
- A joint commitment to protecting and enhancing ecosystem services improving biodiversity, and developing sustainable economy and land management of the Downland Estate;
- A collaborative approach to finding solutions to planning issues;
- A renewed engagement with community interest groups and social enterprises to unlock opportunities.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The draft MoU is to be circulated to the City Sustainability Partnership who are being canvassed to identify funding proposals and invest initiatives as part of the One Planet Living action plan engagement process.
- 4.2 The Economic Partnership will be consulting on the refresh of the City Economic Strategy which may also highlight funding and investment initiatives.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 It is not anticipated that there will be any additional costs arising directly from the endorsement of the Memorandum of Understanding.
- 5.2 Any projects arising from the identification of future funding opportunities would need to be properly costed and reported to Committee in the usual way. Any

matched funding that might be required would need to be identified from within existing budgets.

- 5.3 It is not proposed that the City Downland Estate Advisory Board will have decision making powers and as such it will not be able to commit the Council to expenditure. The administrative costs of the Advisory Board will need to be identified and responsibility for funding them agreed between the Council and SDNPA. This will be reported back to Committee and funding will need to be identified for any Council contribution

Finance Officer Consulted: Jeff Coates

Date: 3.10.12

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The proposed MoU is an agreement to work together based on shared principles. It is not legally binding or enforceable but identifies the parties strong commitment to collaboration.
- 5.3 The role of the proposed Advisory Board will be to advise and support the Council's existing decision making Committees. It is not proposed that the Board will have delegated powers to make decisions on behalf of the Council..

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 3rd October 2012

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The South Downs National Park creates an opportunity to widen access to the countryside to all of our communities. There will be particular emphasis on increasing access to groups who do generally visit the Downs through the activity of the rangers for example. In addition, when considering gateways and new open access areas consideration will be given to ensuring access for those with mobility difficulties.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The strengthening of the relationship between the Council and SDNPA and a proactive relationship to joint working will contribute to optimise the ecological value of the Council's City Downland Estate as well as its economic and social sustainability. Developing joint funding proposals will help to underpin the UN Biosphere bid. The One Planet Living framework is being presented as the approach to sustainable development particularly in the "Transition" zone of the Biosphere: predominantly the urban area of Brighton & Hove.

Business impact

- 5.6 Appropriate economic diversification can improve business enterprise, employment and training opportunities. It can also strengthen the business foundations for many of the Council's tenant farmers who are dependant to some degree on the continuation of Common Agricultural Policy subsidies, fluctuating commodity prices as well as rising energy, water and fertiliser costs.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.6 None specific.

Risk Management Implications:

5.7 None specific.

Public Health Implications:

5.8 Effective management and development of the Council's City Downland Estate is important to the supply of clean water to the city from the chalk aquifer and, in providing public access to green spaces, to the overall health and well being of the city's population.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.9 The council has an important role in advancing its relationship with key strategic partners such as the SDNPA and in promoting the economic potential of the city.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1 It is critical for the Council to work in strong partnership with the SDNPA in order to influence the management of the Park optimise the economic, social and environmental value of the Council's City Downland Estate.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 To seek endorsement in developing a closer working relationship between the City Council together with its partners with the SDNPA for the benefit of the City.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Appendix 1: SDNPA-BHCC MoU

Documents in Members' Rooms

None.

Background Documents:

None.

Appendix 1: Brighton and Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority Memorandum of Understanding

Introduction

A strong working partnership between Brighton & Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority will result in a wide range of benefits. Building a strong connection between the South Downs and the City will promote the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the South Downs around and within the city.

Purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to provide a statement of joint intent and shared principles in order to underpin future work and plans of action which Brighton & Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority will undertake together.

This Memorandum covers:

- Working principles
- Shared aims and outcomes
- Potential areas for future joint working

Working principles

- **Active engagement:** between Brighton & Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority wherever possible in order to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits of the South Downs National Park to the city's residents and visitors, and the active involvement of the people of the City in caring for the National Park;
- Work beyond boundaries and innovatively: forming wider partnerships to deliver shared aims and outcomes
- **Co-operation on projects:** working together on key programmes where this will better deliver shared outcomes
- **Joint communications:** shared and cross referenced marketing and information services in order to maximise the impact of both
- **Early consultation and involvement:** on key policy development and projects which impact on the South Downs within the city and on the Council's Downland Estate
- **Recognising and sharing expertise:** practically exchanging skills and information as appropriate to deliver the shared outcomes effectively.
- **Regular liaison:** The Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council and the Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority will meet twice a year to discuss the partnership and plans for the future.

Shared aims and outcomes

These shared aims and outcomes aim to reconnect the city of Brighton and Hove with the South Downs as well as meeting the collective duty¹ Brighton & Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority towards the National Park.

*To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
(NP Purpose 1)*

1. To recognise the importance of the City's Downland Estate to the South Downs National Park and to work to sustain its natural resources for the long term future of people working, enjoying and benefitting from it. .
2. To conserve and enhance the landscapes, ecosystems, biodiversity, culture, history and archaeology of the South Downs around and within the city and on the perimeter of the Downs to create an interconnected natural space (Biosphere Objective)

To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public. (NP Purpose 2)

3. To re-connect the City with the South Downs, to ensure visitors and residents are better able to enjoy, understand and get involved in looking after the Downs in a sustainable way.
4. To provide high quality communications and environmental education, research and training and demonstrate innovative approaches to nature conservation and sustainable development. (Biosphere Objective)

To foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities, in pursuit of the twin purposes (SDNPA Duty)

5. To identify and develop forms of economic and social development which is culturally and ecologically sustainable (Biosphere Objective)
6. To strengthen engagement with local communities and public, private and voluntary organisations to achieve wider involvement and commitment to conservation and sustainable management.

¹ Environment Act 1995, Section 62; National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, Section 11a

Areas for Joint Working

These areas of joint working will be developed with the appropriate mechanisms to develop substantive plans of action and will form the basis of discussion and review at the regular liaison meetings.

On an annual basis the Areas of Joint Working will be reviewed and updated for agreement by Brighton & Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority

Shared Aim/Outcome	Project	
1	Move towards a more sustainable Downland Estate	<p>To work together, with farmers, to develop and enhance appropriate and sympathetic uses of the land on the Downland Estate in order to create both a sustainable and economically viable future for the Estate.</p> <p>To this end, to form a formal mechanism which engages key stakeholders and farmers to advise on management</p>
3	Creating high quality gateways to the Park and improve the percolation from the city to the Downs to increase knowledge and enjoyment of the Downs , its wildlife and cultural heritage	<p>Establish gateways into the Downs from a range of accessible points across the city which are high quality environments or with plans to reach that status.</p> <p>To identify key gateways, plans and funding.</p>
5	Developing eco tourism as an alternative and sustainable business	Developing and implementing a plan detailing opportunities to promote sustainable ways for visitors to enjoy the Downs, the sea and the City in a way which protects the environment
2, 4, 5	Creating a holistic approach to environmental conservation through achieving Biosphere Reserve status	To work with Partners to achieve international recognition from the United Nations for the special nature of the local environment from the Adur to the Ouse, by September 2014. Subsequently working with the partnership to translate adopted policies and strategies into actions for the delivery on the ground
1, 2, 3, 4, 5,6	Enhancing Stanmer Park to create a unique gateway to the Downs	<p>Create a new and holistic vision for Stanmer Park for the 21st century whilst respecting the historic parkland and National Park setting, and is a self sustaining estate focused on sustainable living.</p> <p>To jointly develop business proposals and bids to conserve and enhance the Home Farm buildings to provide sustainable public, private and voluntary uses and facilities in keeping with Stanmer Park and the South Downs</p>

Signed:

Date:

Leader of Brighton and Hove City Council

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the South Downs National Park

End.