

AM 575-20

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2020

PARTNERSHIP FOR SOUTH HAMPSHIRE – STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

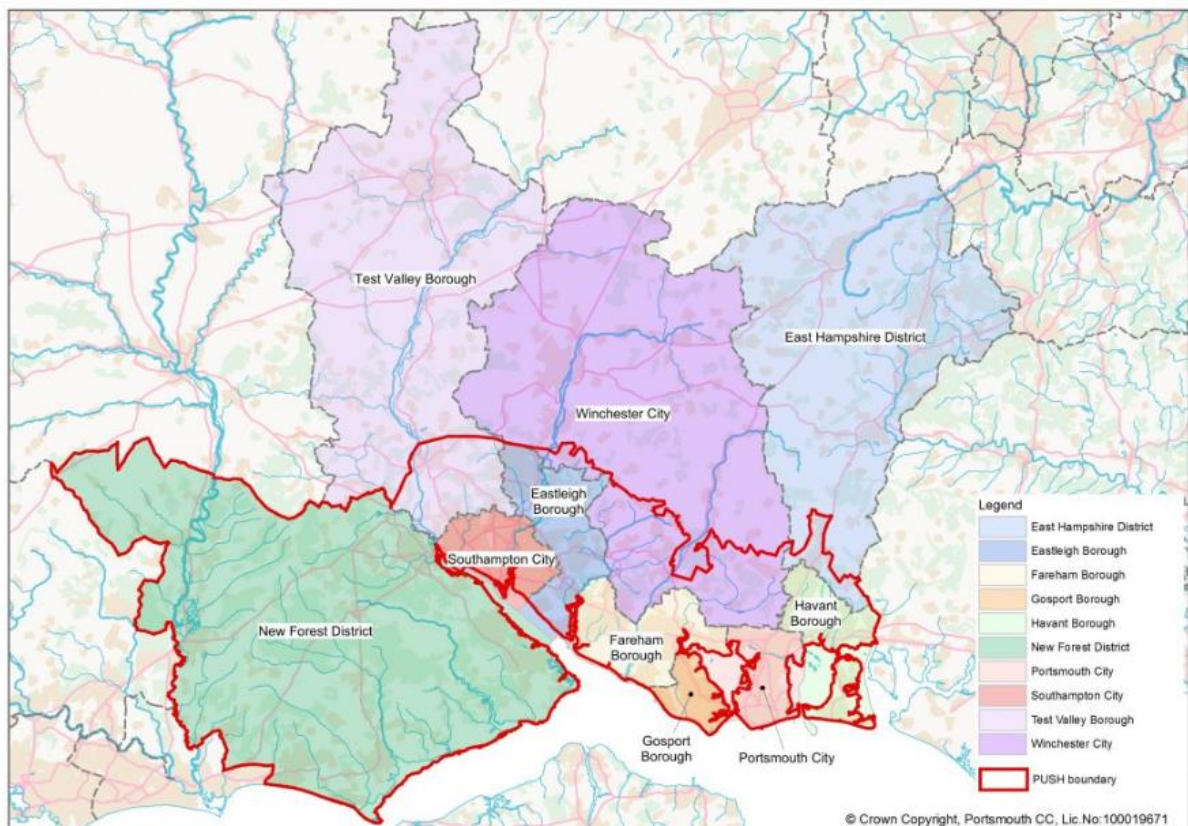
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Summary

Since August 2019 the National Park Authority has been a member of the Partnership for South Hampshire. At their 30 September 2020 Joint Committee meeting, the Partnership agreed an updated Statement of Common Ground and now each individual local planning authority is required to sign the document so it can be published. The revised Statement of Common Ground (Appendix 1) reflects the input of Authority officers and this report recommends that members endorse the Statement. The Statement helps local planning authorities demonstrate constructive and positive cooperation on strategic planning matters and sets the framework for a future PfSH Joint Spatial Position Statement.

1. Overview of the Partnership for South Hampshire

- 1.1 The Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) comprises twelve local authorities, working collaboratively on cross-boundary strategic matters. PfSH also works closely with other partners, including the Solent LEP and the Local Nature Partnership. The work of PfSH aims to improve the prosperity of the sub-region and enhance the quality of life for its 1.38 million residents (see map below, PfSH boundary in red).



- 1.2 In Summer 2019 the National Park Authority accepted an invitation to be represented on the PfSH and further details can be found in report 582/19 considered at the August 2019 Authority meeting. Benefits of our membership of the PfSH include:
- Co-operation on strategic, cross-boundary planning matters. The collaboration contributes to meeting the legal ‘duty to cooperate’; and examples include the Bird Aware Solent mitigation scheme (covering 250 kilometres of coastline from Milford-on-Sea to Chichester Harbour); and more recently work on nitrate neutrality.
 - PfSH supports the joint funding of research and identification of potential strategic solutions. These outcomes may not be available to individual authorities due to the scale of resources required or the available skills.

2. Overview of the PfSH Statement of Common Ground (Appendix 1)

- 2.1 Under current national policy, planning authorities are required to address cross-boundary strategic issues through their Local Plan work. Complying with the ‘duty to cooperate’ is a legal requirement that is tested at Examination. Our adopted Local Plan (August 2019) was accompanied by a ‘Duty to Cooperate Statement’ which was assessed by the two Government-appointed Inspectors, as well as signed statements of common ground with the constituent local authorities in the National Park.
- 2.2 The PfSH Statement of Common Ground (Appendix 1) has been prepared with input from planning authorities in South Hampshire – including National Park Authority officers. Set out below is a summary of the key elements of the Statement of Common Ground, alongside an outline of the implications for the New Forest National Park.
- Using the **latest housing need and supply** figures provided by local planning authorities (including the National Park Authority), the estimated shortfall in housing provision across the sub-region amounts to circa 10,750 dwellings by 2036. The Government has also recently consulted on a revised standard method for calculating housing needs, which would increase the housing need requirements for the sub-region (thereby further increasing this shortfall in housing provision). To meet the identified housing needs, PfSH has commissioned a review of potential ‘Strategic Development Opportunity Areas’ across the sub-region.
 - To inform future employment land allocations, PfSH has commissioned an evidence base study on **economic, employment and commercial needs**. Authority officers are engaged in this work, with the current context for the National Park area being one of low levels of unemployment and employment floorspace needs being met through ‘windfall’ development, rather than employment land allocations. When this study has been completed, the SoCG will be updated to include information on the need for and supply of employment land.
 - Paragraph 3.17 of the Statement of Common Ground confirms that PfSH proposes to lead on developing a ‘**Greenprint for South Hampshire**’ that will provide a shared framework to enable authorities to work together to design and implement programmes that achieve economic, environmental and social improvements. This will help deliver a ‘green recovery’ from the current Coronavirus pandemic. Further details on the role of the National Park Authority and the Green Halo Partnership in bringing forward the proposed ‘Greenprint for South Hampshire’ are available in the report considered by the PfSH Joint Committee last month (Appendix 2).

- PfSH has a strong track record on **strategic environmental mitigation**. For example, the Statement of Common Ground highlights the Bird Aware Solent mitigation scheme, which covers the National Park's 26 miles of coast. Paragraph 3.15 also acknowledges the recreational disturbance issues associated with new development on the New Forest's internationally protected habitats. The Statement of Common Ground supports the preparation of a co-ordinated approach to addressing recreational pressures on the New Forest through appropriate planning and mitigation measures (linked to the recent Footprint Ecology research).
- Paragraph 3.46 highlights the **legal 'duty of regard' to the two statutory National Park purposes**, set out in Section 62(2) of the Environment Act 1995. This duty ensures any decisions that could affect National Parks must have regard to the statutory purposes. The inclusion of this reference reflects the sub-region's location between the South Downs and New Forest National Parks. This legal 'duty of regard' will be important in PfSH's current work to identify potential strategic development opportunity areas to meet housing needs.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Subject to each individual local planning authority signing the revised Statement of Common Ground, it will be published. The Statement of Common Ground will be available to help local planning authorities in demonstrating constructive and positive cooperation on strategic matters through Local Plan-preparation and at Examination.
- 3.2 In 2016 the PfSH produced a non-statutory Spatial Position Statement. This Position Statement does not form part of the statutory 'development plan', but instead informs future work on the level and distribution of development. Ultimately it remains the role of Local Plans prepared by the constituent planning authorities to allocate land for development and safeguard environment assets. The updated PfSH Statement of Common Ground sets out the process and workstreams that will lead to the review of the Spatial Position Statement for the South Hampshire sub-region.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The Authority's representation on the PfSH enables it to engage positively in sub-regional planning issues. The production of an updated Statement of Common Ground is supported and the version at Appendix 1 reflects the input of Authority officers. The Statement of Common Ground assists the Authority in demonstrating our on-going engagement on cross-boundary planning issues. Moving forwards, it is important that work on an updated Spatial Position Statement – covering the sub-regional distribution of housing and employment needs – factors in potential impacts on the National Park.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Members endorse the signing of the Statement of Common Ground (Appendix 1) for publication and to inform the future production of a PfSH Joint Strategy.

Papers: AM 575-20: Cover Report
Appendix 1: Partnership for South Hampshire Statement of Common Ground
Appendix 2: Partnership for South Hampshire Joint Committee Report: 'A Greenprint for South Hampshire – The Opportunities Ahead'

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Equality Impact Assessment:

There are no equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report.