

## ENVIRONMENT **LAND ACQUISITION FRAMEWORK**

### **1) Land Acquisition Principles**

All proactive and reactive land acquisitions will be assessed against the following criteria, through a two-page paper presented to SLT. Only those acquisitions meeting the criteria below will be considered for a more comprehensive examination and subsequently presented to Members for a decision.

- 1) **Necessity of SDNPA Involvement** - Is the project or outcome achievable without direct intervention from the SDNPA? Consider whether other entities could achieve similar results, or if SDNPA's unique role is essential for success.
- 2) **Alignment with Strategic Goals** - Does this opportunity contribute to achieving the objectives outlined in the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) and Corporate Plan (CP). Assess the potential impact on key areas such as conservation, public engagement (for example, any benefits for underserved communities), and sustainable development (for example climate change reduction).
- 3) **Availability of Sufficient Funding** - Are there adequate financial resources to support the acquisition and any associated costs? Evaluate the overall budget, potential grants, and other funding sources to ensure feasibility of the project.
- 4) **Mitigation of Significant Liabilities** - Does the land have any inherent risks or liabilities, such as environmental contamination, particular risks (such as flood risks), maintenance requirements, or legal encumbrances, that could impact its value or usability or create liabilities and costs? Consider whether these risks can be effectively mitigated.
- 5) **Operational Feasibility** - Can the SDNPA effectively manage the land, given its current resources and operational capacity? Assess whether the authority has the necessary expertise, personnel, and infrastructure to maintain and develop the property effectively, over a long period of time.

## 2) Land Acquisition Assessment

### 1) Introduction

- Overview of the scheme and how this land acquisition fits into the South Downs National Park Authority's Corporate Plan priorities and delivers on the statutory purposes and duty of the South Downs National Park.

### 2) Objectives

- Why is the SDNPA interested in purchasing this land? Cover considerations against the acquisition principles and what the intended outcomes/outputs would be?

### 3) Land Selection Criteria

- What makes this land valuable to the NPA? Consider:
  - Biodiversity: presence of unique or endangered species. Lawton principles fulfilled.
  - Ecosystem Services: benefits the land provides, like water purification or carbon sequestration.
  - Connectivity: does it connect with other protected areas, local communities or enhance public access?
  - SWOT analysis of the land in question

### 4) Environmental Impact

- Assess the current environmental status:
  - Plants and Animals: any notable species? Are there invasive species?
  - Water Resources: does the land affect local water systems?
  - Soil Health: is the soil healthy? Any erosion risks?
- Consider climate-related risks and potential impacts on the environment and cultural heritage.

### 5) Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- How does this acquisition affect local communities?
- Where possible, engage with local residents to understand their perspectives.
- Obtain feedback from relevant stakeholders (e.g., other environmental groups and Local Authorities).

### 6) Legal and Regulatory Compliance

- Consideration of the proposed acquisition in relation to the Authority's statutory provisions (e.g. Environment Act 1995, Local Government Act 1972, National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949, Countryside Act 1968) and other duties (e.g. Equality Duty).
- Check for any land use designations.
- Identify potential legal challenges and ways to address them.
- Consider conservation covenants or other legal tools to protect the land.

## 7) **Financial Considerations and Resources**

- What is the cost of purchasing and maintaining the land?
- Explore funding sources and financial sustainability.
- Ecosystem Services potential, are there any new income opportunities through our Nature Based Solutions offer.
- Identify ongoing costs for management and any other revenue opportunities.
- How and by whom would the land be managed – Authority or partner?
- What would be the impact on the wider organisation, its functions and resources? Would additional staff or specialists be required?
- Proposals for oversight and performance monitoring.

## 8) **Risks, Liabilities, and Contingency Planning**

- List potential risks (e.g., regulatory issues, community opposition, financial hurdles), liabilities and their anticipated impact.
- Develop strategies to mitigate and manage these risks.
- Plan for possible contingencies.

## 9) **Conclusion**

- Summarise the key findings.
- Recommend whether or not to proceed with the acquisition, along with any suggested conditions or additional steps or approach for example whether we acquire direct or through an associated vehicle or whether we enable another party or parties to acquire.

## 10) **Supporting Documents**

For example

- Asset inventory
- Detailed environmental assessments
- Legal documents and compliance records
- Financial plans and projections
- Stakeholder feedback and engagement records
- Maps – GIS analysis, historical, aspirational

