

Subject:	Stanmer Park designation as a Country Park		
Date of Meeting:	29th September 2020		
Report of:	Executive Director Economy, Environment and Culture		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Rob Dumbrill	Tel:
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Ward(s) affected:	Hollingdean & Stanmer		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The report requests permission to apply for accreditation to Natural England to designate Stanmer Park as a Country Park
- 1.2 To meet accreditation standards park managers are required to submit a range of documents to ensure they meet the standard. We have not previously applied for this accreditation but have the documents and policies already in place either as part of the background for the National Lottery Heritage Fund Stanmer Restoration Project or core council documents.
- 1.3 The designation would clearly signal to potential users the status and scale of Stanmer Park as a regionally significant recreational destination in line with other country parks in the region.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee agrees that the council applies to Natural England for Stanmer Park to become accredited as a Country Park.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Stanmer Park is Brighton and Hove's largest park and is in receipt of substantial grant funds from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Community Fund (£3.8m). This has enabled the council to work with partners at Plumpton College, who have also invested significant amounts of money and the South Downs National Park Authority. The combined funding of £6.9 million is restoring and improving aspects of the parks infrastructure and visitor offer. It is also extending the understanding of the parks heritage, providing high quality education and community involvement along with provision of staff to deliver these targets, providing long term vision and management for the whole estate. The area of the park being improved using this grant is approximately 20 of the 485 hectare estate
- 3.2 The Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for country parks in England. It defines good practice and identifies agreed standards. The basic

criteria are included in Appendix 1, Draft application, with our view as to whether we meet them. It is a baseline quality standard that helps guide country parks to be the best they can be for current and future users. Accreditation is reviewed every three years.

- 3.3 Accreditation gives confidence to the public and potential funders that Stanmer as a country park is managed for the benefit of city residents, visitors and the flora and fauna that use it or live there and manage public funds appropriately
- 3.4 The Country Park scheme enables sites to appear on the .gov website. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accredited-country-parks-in-england/accredited-country-parks-in-england> as a trusted site this would give further weight to the park as a worthwhile venue to visit. This will also appear on South East Tourism site and as a marker on Ordnance Survey maps which have shown a huge surge in searches for greenspace and country parks during the Covid situation.
- 3.5 The improvements already being carried out to the park along with the designation will encourage more visitors from a wider area with a higher dwell time. This may encourage more overnight stays within the city which are one of the key targets of the Brighton & Hove Visitor Economy Strategy 2018-2023 to increase the value of tourism to the city.
- 3.6 The future for ongoing improvement and the maintenance of the investment made to date is largely dependent on securing revenue funding linked to the previous in principle decision to charge for parking and to ring fence that income for Stanmer Park. Raising the profile of Stanmer with this designation should make the site more appealing to visitors from further afield. Whilst the aim is to increase visits though public transport there will always be a proportion of visits made by car and these will contribute directly to the income generated. More visitors will also benefit the existing businesses in the park by creating higher footfall and spend. Successful businesses at Stanmer will contribute to council income generation, enhance the visitor experience and Council profile.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The alternative is to not apply for accreditation. Whilst this would not have any direct detrimental effects it is believed that designation will significantly enhance the status of Stanmer as a destination for a much wider catchment than at present increasing its profile which will assist both with revenue income generation and when further grant bids are submitted in the future.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

The community linked to Stanmer is very broad so a sample of various stakeholder types have been consulted about the proposal including our main partners and funders in the restoration project, Stanmer business and residents. Responses are included in **Appendix 2 Consultation Responses**

The idea of applying accreditation has been well received by stakeholders who have responded to date.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 If the accreditation is accepted Stanmer Park profile will be raised as a regional attraction for heritage visits and leisure days out
- 6.2 More people will be encouraged to visit and we can then show them how significant the heritage of the estate is
- 6.3 The estate will be more financially stable and businesses will have greater confidence to continue to invest in the estate to benefit from the higher visitor numbers
- 6.4 Continued partnership working and the country park status should reassure potential external funders that we as an organisation are committed to Stanmer for long term improvement and regeneration with a stable management platform.
- 6.5 There is broad support for the registration from funders, partners, business and resident led groups in Stanmer.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 Any costs associated with obtaining accreditation for Stanmer Park as a country park will be contained within existing City Parks budgets. As set out in the body of the report, obtaining this accreditation will potentially raise the profile of the park and contribute to the park's financial viability. Any additional significant financial implications arising from obtaining (and maintaining) accreditation will be reported in future committee reports.

Finance Officer Consulted: Jess Laing

Date: 27/08/2020

Legal Implications:

Designation as a country park does not follow a statutory procedure and is by application to Natural England as set out in the report. The relevant Guidance states that accreditation is for three years but can be renewed. Accredited status can be withdrawn by Natural England should the country park no longer meet the required criteria.

Lawyer Consulted: Hilary Woodward

Date: 25/8/20

Equalities Implications:

- 7.2 The application will further reinforce the upgrading facilities and services to meet the needs of our visitors that has been part of the restoration project. The draft application for registration shows we are meeting and increasing provision and depth of reach to the community at large

Sustainability Implications:

The restoration project required planning approval from the South Downs National Park. The planning application included a sustainable travel plan which

is being reviewed with new targets to be added as part of the discharge of conditions. These will include targets to increase the use of sustainable modes of transport by both visitors and workforce based there.

Brexit Implications:

7.3 Not applicable

Public Health Implications:

7.4 The National Lotteries space to thrive report outlines the benefits of high quality parks and open spaces, such as Stanmer Park, promoting the wider use and supporting further improvement to the park will assist the delivery of these benefits. The recent surge in the use of our parks and open spaces during the height of the lockdown further reinforces these benefits identified prior to the crisis.

Enhances physical health, mental wellbeing and life satisfaction, reduce obesity, diabetes and heart disease, support mental wellbeing and stress relief.

Create important opportunities for social integration and engagement with local residents, including children, valuing the chance to be involved in improving their green spaces (for example, through volunteering).

Parks and green spaces enable people to connect with nature, which includes experiencing the natural world through the physical senses, learning about it, and engaging mindfully with nature by paying attention. This is associated with a sense of gratitude and self worth and can help people recover from stress and mental illness. It also helps to build a sense of place and community and foster feelings of belonging.

Parks and green spaces can have economic benefits including creating employment, hosting economic activities based around healthy activity such as guided walks and exercise sessions encouraging inward investment.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Appendix 1 Stanmer Park Natural England guidance for accreditation draft application
2. Appendix 2 Consultation evidence and supporting statements from stakeholders

Background Documents:

None

Appendix 1 Stanmer Park Natural England guidance for accreditation draft application					
	Ref	Essential Criteria	Criteria Met? (Yes/No)	Location of Evidence	Format of Evidence
Count of Criteria met (All Criteria must be met)			15		
1. Area	1A 1	At least 10 Hectares (25 Acres) in Size	Yes	Site Masterplan	GIS extracted plan
	1A 2	Must have identifiable boundary	Yes	Site Masterplan	GIS extracted plan
2. Accessibility	2A 1	Readily accessible to the population which it is intended to serve	Yes	Site Masterplan	GIS extracted plan
	2A 2	Entry free of charge	Yes	Site Masterplan	GIS extracted plan
	2A 3	Site access plan in place that has been developed following an access audit and addresses the requirements of the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) to ensure indoor and outdoor facilities provided are inclusive and accessible. Evidence of commitment to Equality Standards (or equivalent level of delivery) related to the site	Yes	Enter page and para number	Enter type and title of material
3. Character	3A 1	Must predominantly consist of natural or semi-natural landscape, e.g. woodland, grassland, wetland, heathland, parkland	Yes	Site Masterplan	GIS extracted plan
	3A 2	Less than 5% total area of buildings	Yes	Site Masterplan	GIS extracted plan
4. Facilities	4A 1	Easily followed paths, bridleways and cycle paths, e.g. waymarked or with a leaflet	Yes	site interpretation plan	Design manual for site interpretation

	4A 2	Toilets on site or within 2 minutes walking distance	Yes	Site Masterplan	GIS extracted plan
5. Links to local communities and neighbourhoods	5A 1	Opportunities for the local community to have an influence over the management and development of the site	Yes	Stanmer Friends Group, public consultation regarding restoration project development	Draft constitution pdf document and survey summary
6. Links to the wider countryside	6A 1	None currently essential (see Desirable section)	No	N/A	N/A
7. Management	7A 1	Daily staff presence	Yes	Stanmer Management and Maintenance plan staff structure...	Management guide pdf
	7A 2	Up to date management plan	Yes	Stanmer Management Plan	Management guide pdf
8. Activities	8A 1	Available for public or educational events	Yes	Activity Plan, ONE Garden Brighton https://www.onegardenbrighton.com Volunteer plus website www	Activity plan for restoration project and web access for bookings and activities
9. Information and interpretation	9A 1	Clear entrance signage	Yes	Stanmer Interpretation Guide illustrations	Design manual for site interpretation
	9A 2	Information about where visitors can go and what they can do	Yes	Stanmer Interpretation Guide illustrations. Council website https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/leisure-and-libraries/parks-and-green-spaces/stanmer-park	Design manual for site interpretation, website for advice and direction

Heading	Ref	Desirable Criteria	Criteria Met? (Yes/No)	Location of Evidence	Format of Evidence
Count of Criteria met (Must exceed 10)			24		
1. Area	1B 1	None currently desirable (see Essential section)	No	N/A	N/A
2. Accessibility	2B 1	Green transport policy or plan for the site	Yes	Stanmer sustainable travel plan and brief for revised version	Travel Plan documents pdf
	2B 2	Additional facilities for less able visitors e.g. easy going trails, accessible seats and picnic benches, relevant site information in an accessible format, play equipment	Yes	Site masterplan and interpretation board	GIS extract
	2B 3	Evidence of progress towards the next level of equality standards (or equivalent level of delivery)	Yes	BHCC documents	Guide PDF
3. Character	3B 1	Management and promotion of the site's biodiversity, geo-diversity and historical environment	Yes	Stanmer management and Maintenance plan	Management document pdf
4. Facilities	4B 1	Outdoor recreation facilities e.g. water sports, adventure sports	Yes	Stanmer website, cycle hire	
	4B 2	Promoted self-guided health promoting activities	Yes	Enter page and para number	
	4B 3	Visitor centre	Yes	Interpretation points and welcome point at the in the walled garden see plan	Interpretation sign pdf
	4B 4	Play facilities	Yes	Site Photographs and plan	
	4B 5	Catering provision	Yes	Site guide showing tea rooms, One Garden Kitchen and kiosk	
	4B 6	Cycle or horse trails	Yes	Permissive bridleway plans	
	4B 7	Art or sculpture	Yes	Being developed as engagement in the Activity plan	
5. Links to local communities and neighbourhoods	5B 1	Outreach programme to engage and involve local people	Yes	Activity plan delivery	
	5B 2	Active promotion to less represented sectors of the community	Yes	Activity Plan delivery	
	5B 3	Outreach programme to engage and involve local schools and	Yes	Activity plan delivery	

		lifelong learning delivery			
6. Links to the wider countryside	6B 1	Links from the site to the rights of way network, permissive access routes or other adjoining public open space or open access areas. Connectivity between site and where people live	Yes	Site interpretation link to South Downs	
7. Management	7B 1	Permanent staff presence during the daytime	Yes	Stanmer Ranger/manager grounds team	
	7B 2	Opportunities for community involvement in practical or management tasks	Yes	Activity Plan Stanmer Organics Plumpton etc.	
	7B 3	Annual Action Plan / Work Plan	Yes	Management maintenance/Activity plan	
	7B 4	Achieved or working towards Green Flag Award (GFA) status	Yes	Condition of restoration project	
8. Activities	8B 1	Programme of walks or events	Yes	Activity Plan	
	8B 2	Programme of activities and events that promote healthy living and environmental awareness	Yes	Activity Plan	
9. Information and interpretation	9B 1	More detailed information and interpretation about the site and other issues	Yes	Activity Plan	
	9B 2	Brown and white tourist directional signs	Yes	Photographs	
	9B 3	Shown on OS map	Yes	OS Map	

Appendix 2 Consultation evidence and supporting statements from stakeholders

Plumpton College

College Principal Jeremy Kerswell (draft response full response for final report)

Having designated country park status would only further raise the profile of Stanmer, so can only be a good thing. ..., all those other stakeholders and particularly funders, would I'm sure also see this as being beneficial if it does contribute to greater numbers visiting the park and accessing the resources that they have funded.

The Living Coast Biosphere

Sarah Dobson, Programme Manager

The Living Coast UNESCO World Biosphere Region would support Stanmer Park's designation as a Country Park. The designation will assist in communicating the stand out benefits of the Park as a semi natural landscape accessibly located on the outskirts of the urban area of Brighton & Hove and as a gateway to the wider South Downs National Park, and will support The Living Coast's objectives of: conservation of nature and culture; sustainable development; and learning, engagement and awareness. The Living Coast is the key environmental partnership for Brighton & Hove, with The Living Coast Board and Partnership representing over 40 local organisations including community groups, arts and cultural organisations, national bodies, private organisations, charities and the local authorities.

South Downs National Park Authority

Andrew Lee Director of Countryside Policy & Management

On balance, we can certainly see the merits of applying for this status, provided that it is underpinned by the long-term public commitment of BHCC to Stanmer Park as an important natural asset and gateway to the National Park. As you know, our matched funding for the Parks for People project has been conditional on seeing better sustainable access, via the new green lane, and to raising awareness of the position of Stanmer Park as a gateway to the Downs - via use wherever possible of the National Park Shared Identity on the signage to be installed.

The identity toolkit was designed as a place brand for the National Park as a Protected Landscape, to be used by any third party not just our authority, and its prominent use by BHCC shows that you are custodians of an important part of the NP. I am therefore pleased that Paul has agreed with Ruth how the identity and a map of the NP can be incorporated. I would be concerned if any subsequent changes to the design of the signage, should Country Park status be granted by NE, resulted in a downgrading of the NP identity, and this would breach the conditions of our contribution to the HLF project.

Looking more broadly, there are huge opportunities to connect Stanmer Park with the Downs through the Whole Estate Plan, which brings Waterhall Golf Course and other key sites into play and could create nature recovery, carbon storage and enhanced public benefits on a very substantial scale.

Subject to the above we are very happy to lend our support to your bid,

Stanmer Residents Association (oral response is positive awaiting formal response)

National Lottery Heritage Fund

Mike Harding appointed monitor for the Restoration Project

NLHF is supportive of the registration proposal with the proviso that the management team ensure that within any promotion based on its accreditation that the unique landscape and historic significances are clearly set out.

Visit Brighton

Julia Gallagher Head of Sales Marketing & Partnership / Tourism & Venues

“The improvements being carried out at Stanmer Park and the Country Park designation will positively enhance the visitor experience. It is crucial that we provide quality experiences for leisure visitors to the City, constantly improving and innovating our current facilities. Enhancing the Stanmer Park experience will give more reasons for visitors to convert a day visit to a staying visit thus maximising the benefit of the visitor economy for the City.”

Low Carbon Trust, based at the Earthship Stanmer Park

Mischa Hewitt Director

It's a great idea and we're very supportive.