

Appendix B – Getting Building Fund Project Background Information

Name of Project	Seven Sisters Country Park Visitor Infrastructure Uplift Exceat, near Seaford, East Sussex
Responsible Upper Tier Local Authority	East Sussex County Council
Delivery Organisation	South Downs National Park Authority
Getting Building Fund value	Original GBF funding allocation: £200,000 Additional GBF funding allocation: £84,100 Total GBF funding allocation: £284,100
Project Description	The South Downs National Park Authority took over responsibility for the Seven Sisters Country Park in Summer 2021 and are in the process of implementing a new Business Plan. Fundamental to this Business Plan is a comprehensive refresh of the visitor offer, including upgraded physical access, new toilets, retail space for local businesses and refurbishment of 3 dilapidated properties. The delivery of the project will allow the Seven Sisters Country Park to open 364 days a year, showcase products from local producers, signpost visitors to local businesses and attractions and provide an accessible welcome for visitors with a year-round events programme.
Need for Intervention	<p>Despite its popularity, the Visitor Welcome at Seven Sisters has not, for many years, met the standards expected for an internationally recognised landscape. The Park has been in County Council ownership since 1971, but increasing visitor demands and tighter Council budgets mean it is now in dire need of investment to meet the needs of current visitors and to provide a marketable tourism proposition.</p> <p>An attractive, listed, former farmstead at Exceat, at the northern end of the Park serves as the main visitor arrival point, but buildings are dilapidated and most are now closed. A former threshing barn has acted as a visitor centre for many years, but is damp, dark and does not offer the facilities expected from a modern visitor centre, with a seasonal welcome desk, a few maps and a hotch-potch of information, some over 20 years old, set across split levels which makes half the barn difficult to access for anyone with restricted mobility. The centre did not open in 2020 (formerly open April-September only) and the small toilet block lacks any disabled access and is wholly inadequate for current visitor numbers.</p> <p>The need for this project has been identified in response to organisational, national and local drivers and local consultation.</p>
Reasons for seeking additional GBF funding	<p>The costs detailed in the original project Business Case were based on tenders submitted by contractors in 2020/21. Following award of the GBF funding, the Foxhole Cottages and Pump Barn works (elements of the wider project to be supported by GBF funding) were repackaged into a new phase and procurement of a contractor was undertaken.</p> <p>Since 2020/21, there have been significant challenges in the construction industry with implications for supply and demand, labour costs, impacts of COVID-19 and Brexit, as well as rising inflation and transportation costs</p>

	<p>which have all contributed to a significant increase in construction costs. As a consequence, the tender submissions received were significantly higher than anticipated. Cost increases include a 100% increase in the cost of roofing and cladding, 50% increase in the cost of doors – both internal and external and a 50% increase in the price of sanitaryware.</p> <p>Whilst additional internal funding was secured to assist in covering the cost increase, there remains a shortfall of £84,100 which needs to be bridged if the approved Business Case is to be delivered in full.</p>															
Project benefits	<p>Project benefits which are dependent upon GBF investment include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creation of 6.5 FTE jobs.• Creation of 1 x 1 bed flat for onsite warden• 131 sqm of high footfall retail space• 1 new superfast Broadband connection• 100 enterprises supported• Contribution towards increasing footfall and increase in visitor spend through the provision of the new retail space <p>East Sussex County Council and the South Downs National Park Authority have confirmed that the forecast project benefits remain unchanged from the original Business Case submission.</p>															
Additionality offered by the additional GBF funding	<p>If additional GBF funding is not awarded, it will be necessary to value engineer some elements of the project, resulting in reduced outputs. This value engineering could result in a reduced fit out of the refurbished cottages and the pump barn. This would result in a reduction in tourism opportunities and would have a negative impact on the spend per head outlined in the original project Business Case. Furthermore, fewer units would be ready and available for use by local businesses meaning that fewer enterprises than forecast will be supported by the project.</p> <p>The additional GBF investment will enable all elements of the original project scope to be delivered thereby safeguarding the forecast project benefits.</p>															
Financial Information	<table><tr><td>Funding Source</td><td>Original Funding Package (£)</td><td>Updated Funding Package (£)</td></tr><tr><td>Getting Building Fund</td><td>200,000</td><td>284,100</td></tr><tr><td>South Downs National Park Authority</td><td>1,700,000</td><td>2,070,900</td></tr><tr><td>Grant Funding</td><td>275,000</td><td>295,000</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>2,175,000</td><td>2,650,000</td></tr></table>	Funding Source	Original Funding Package (£)	Updated Funding Package (£)	Getting Building Fund	200,000	284,100	South Downs National Park Authority	1,700,000	2,070,900	Grant Funding	275,000	295,000	Total	2,175,000	2,650,000
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Risks to project delivery	<p>A number of risks have been identified in the application for additional GBF funding. The High impact risks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk of COVID-19 lockdown causing delays to project delivery – this risk has been mitigated through early discussion with the contractor to															

	<p>agree the approach to managing the delay and associated cost increases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main contractor insolvency – this risk has been mitigated through completion of required due diligence prior to formal appointment of the contractor. • Construction costs significantly higher than expected due to volatile construction market – whilst this risk has been realised, the risk of further cost increases has been mitigated through detailed contractor discussions and use of contract management for cost variations and scope change. • Delayed start to works in the Pump Barn as listed building consent required for some of the planned works – this risk has been fully mitigated as listed building consent has now been secured.
Delivery programme	Work is progressing onsite, with project completion expected in March 2023.
Outcome of ITE review	The project has sought to apply Value for Money Exemption 1. The ITE has confirmed that the project meets the requirements of this exemption.
Evidenced compliance with Assurance Framework?	Yes, the project does meet the requirements of the SELEP Assurance Framework.
Link to Project webpage	Seven Sisters Country Park Visitor Infrastructure Uplift - The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (southeastlep.com)