

Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Committee

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY POLICY & PROGRAMME COMMITTEE MEETING 2 JUNE 2015

Held at the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst at 10:32am.

Present:

Ken Bodfish (Chair)	Vaughan Clarke	Barry Lipscomb (Deputy Chair)
Deborah Urquhart	Pete West	
Margaret Paren (ex officio)	Norman Dingemans (ex officio)	

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive), Phil Belden (Director of Operations), Hélène Rossiter (Director of Corporate Services), Karen Everett (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Michelle Herrington (Acting Head of Finance), Anne Rehill (Performance & Project Manager), Alan Brough (Business Services Manager), Chris Manning (Water Policy Officer), Chris Fairbrother (Landscape Strategy Lead), Jonny Burke (Southern Water), Stella New (Member Services Support Officer).

ITEM 1: APOLOGIES

207. Apologies were received from Jo Carr and Sue Saville.

ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

208. There were none.

ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 3 MARCH 2015

209. The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING

210. Regarding actions to be taken forwards (minutes 190 and 201) the Director of Operations informed the Committee:

- The Committee's recommendation for the inclusion of conditions relating to broadband to Development Management applications for five or more residential properties recommended for permission, where infrastructure exists, had been passed on to the Development Manager.
- The Shared Identity toolkit had been released. Although the issue of a template had been raised, the many different ways in which the Shared Identity will be used meant that a standard template would not be an effective solution.

211. Regarding the new Intranet and Website (minute 170) the Director of Operations stated:

- The intranet, with new design and incorporating the Shared Identity, would be launched on 5 June. The Learning Portal was next on the schedule to be updated.

212. Regarding the Gatwick Airport Consultation (minute 171) the Director of Operations stated:

- Officers had met with a local Gatwick Airport campaign group whose concerns, shared by some 9 other similar groups, focused on the management of air traffic. Their concerns related to the height at which planes cross the National Park and the extent to which routes were dispersed or concentrated, and the need for more studies on runway options.
- The Committee commented:
 - The momentum gathering behind the campaign for a second runway at Gatwick.
 - Whether the SDNPA should have a position statement prepared in advance in order to enable a quick response.
 - The importance of ensuring the SDNPA response was based on an assessment of the potential impact of the proposal once the details of the scheme were known.
 - The concerns shared by West Sussex County Council (WSCC) with regard to tranquillity, and the importance of a partnership approach with WSCC if the second runway at Gatwick was to go ahead.

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- In response to queries, officers clarified:
 - It was not known when the Airports Commission would report on its preferred option for a second runway.
 - Once the proposal details were known, the impact to the National Park could be assessed in full, and the SDNPA's response considered by the Committee before submission.
 - Clarification would be sought as to whether the SDNPA had responded to the recent consultation on air quality, which was of concern to the National Park.
213. Regarding Affordable Housing (minute 172) the Director of Operations encouraged Members to attend the Local Plan Member Working Group which could focus on such issues through discussion of the emerging Local Plan.
214. Regarding the Volunteering Fair (minute 172) the Director of Operations advised the Committee that Members would be informed when the date had been confirmed, as an action to be taken forwards.
215. Regarding the issue of road side litter, the Deputy Chair of the Committee had drawn the issue of litter to the attention of the Campaign for National Parks. East Hampshire District Council (EHDC), Winchester City Council (WCC) and Hampshire County Council (HCC) had been working together to address the issue of litter at the Western side of the National Park.

ITEM 5: UPDATES ON PREVIOUS COMMITTEE DECISIONS

216. The Chief Executive updated the Committee with regard to the roll-out of the Shared Identity:
- The Communications team were handling all requests in order to ensure correct usage as this early stage, with the aim to move over to the online system by early August.
 - The legal document had been prepared, and an online version would be made available in time for August.
 - The Design Toolkit was being constantly updated with new examples of best practice, and the new Serpents Trail leaflet featuring the shared identity had been released just yesterday.
 - The provision of templates had been explored, but the circumstances in which the Identity might be used were too varied for this to be practicable. The Sense of Place Toolkit was being further developed to ensure it could provide the guidance needed by smaller organisations and communities.
 - Recent examples of larger roll-out projects included:
 - The Offham Chalkpit funicular railway
 - The Food & Drink Portal (to be launched on 22 June).
 - Meon Valley Trail signage and interpretation being worked on with HCC.
 - The Winchester City Mill exhibition launching on 19 June, which would feature a large 3D map of the SDNP.
 - Usage had been promoted through:
 - Providing high-level advice to key partners such as Weald & Downland Museum on their new interpretation gateway
 - Advising larger private projects such as Sullington Manor Farm who will be opening and interpretation centre with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.
 - Providing assets and advice on usage to smaller organisations including farmers, with 4-5 farmers having shown interest at each recent Farmers' Breakfast event.
 - Roll out through the SDNPA's own communication channels including the new website, intranet and Learning Portal, and new suite of leaflets (funded by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF)).

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- With existing funding (until March 2016), a new intern would be recruited to work 50% on administration of the Shared Identity, which would cost effectively relieve pressure on the Communications team.
 - The Committee commented:
 - Whether sufficient funds had been made available to enable an adequately swift rollout of the Shared Identity, and the need to discuss the prioritisation of resources.
 - The Shared Identity was a key component of the National Park's profile.
 - The need to raise the profile of the National Park, given the support of partners during the setting up period.
 - The roll-out was still in the first phase, and had not yet been made available to all.
 - The dynamism of the product, and the recent inclusion of the Shared Identity on all library cards in WSCC, which had required little input from the SDNPA.
 - In response to queries, officers clarified:
 - The SDNPA was operating within the level of resources that had been allocated within the existing Corporate Plan and Budget. It was for Members to consider whether to allocate more funding to the Shared Identity in next year's budget round.
 - One of the successes of the Shared Identity was that delivery of the rollout was largely undertaken by partners, and the speed of roll-out was not always within the SDNPA's control.
 - The need to ensure the Shared Identity was correctly used
 - Measures of success and learning points had been included in the Corporate Plan, and could be built upon using analysis being carried out by the Interpretation Officer.
217. The Committee commented on the recent press coverage of the resurfacing of the Meon Valley Trail:
- The success of the project, and the commendable handling of the project by SDNPA officers, particularly at public meetings where Members had been present.
 - In response to queries, the Chief Executive clarified:
 - The route had previously been inaccessible to the wider public, with frequently falling trees, and was now safer for all users.
 - The specification and choice of surfacing had been made to Hampshire County Council (HCC) standards for bridleways.
 - HCC ran a full consultation when the improvements were proposed, and a number of public meetings were held.
 - Negotiations were underway with regard soft verges and whether these could be provided on some stretches for the use of horse riders.

ITEM 6: URGENT MATTERS

218. The Committee commented on the recent outbreak of Bovine TB in West Sussex:
- Whether the SDNPA would release a statement.
 - The Communications team could monitor the situation.
219. In response to queries, officers clarified:
- There had been 2 recent cases of TB in the National Park, one at a commercial farm and another on a Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve.
 - Defra had moved very quickly to contain both cases, and the SDNPA would watch the situation with care.

ITEM 7: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

220. There was none.

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ITEM 8: FORWARD BUSINESS FOR 2015

221. The Committee received a verbal update from the Director of Operations.
222. The Committee commented:
- The need for Income Generation to be urgently considered.
 - The importance of raising the National Park's profile which would increase the success of any income generation programme.
 - Whether the input of Members of the Committee, which was currently limited to the formal committee process, could be improved through the implementation of Working Groups in order to better assist the SDNPA and involve Members further in the work of the Authority.
 - Items which could benefit from more involved input of Members included 'Options for Income Generation' and 'Strategic Priorities for the 3rd year of the 2014-17 Corporate Plan'.
 - With regard to a Working Group on strategic Corporate Plan priorities:
 - Budget priorities had been discussed in Autumn 2014 in an all Member workshop forum, and the collective views of Members could offer more valued input than those of smaller Working Groups.
 - A Working Group could enable in-depth evaluation of options before these were taken for formal decision, and facilitate and assist the decision making process.
 - The remit of the group would be to evaluate 'Strategic Priorities for the 3rd year of the 2014-17 Corporate Plan'.
223. In response to questions, officers clarified:
- The items due to be considered at a future meeting of the Committee would be brought in 2015 or early 2016
 - The Communications and Engagement Strategy item for the October meeting of the Committee would include a review of the progress in rolling-out the Shared Identity.
 - The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that Member reappointment to the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) panel would take place at the July AGM. The independent (non-Member) membership of the panel was currently under review given recent changes to streamline administration and reduce the size of the programme.
 - With regard to a Working Group on strategic Corporate Plan priorities:
 - The group would need to report to an all Member workshop.
 - As stated in Standing Orders 27, the Committee were able to pass a resolution to establish a Working Group, and to delegate to the Committee Chair and Director the formal agreement of the Terms of Reference.
224. It was proposed to establish a Working Group to evaluate 'Strategic Priorities for the 3rd year of the 2014-17 Corporate Plan, and the first iteration of the Corporate Plan for 2017-18 and beyond', to consist of 4 Members and chaired by the Deputy Chair of the Policy & Programme Committee, with delegation of the Terms of Reference to be agreed by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Policy & Programme Committee, and the Chief Executive. Following a vote, the proposal was carried.
225. **RESOLVED:**
1. That a Working Group to evaluate 'Strategic Priorities for the 3rd year of the 2014-17 Corporate Plan and the first iteration of the Corporate Plan for 2017-18 and beyond' be established. Membership of the Strategic Priorities Working Group will comprise of 4 Members and chaired by the Deputy Chair of the Policy & Programme Committee.
 2. To delegate the agreement of the Terms of Reference to the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Policy & Programme Committee.

ITEM 9: PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2014/15

226. The Committee considered the report by the Chief Finance Officer (PP9/15).

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227. The Committee commented:

- The large amount of carry forwards for relatively small budgets
- With regard to appeals costs:
 - The significant overspend on legal advice for planning appeals, and whether planning decisions taken by the SDNPA could be exposing the Authority to financial risk.
 - The importance of taking planning decisions in view of the National Park's Purposes and Duty, rather than avoidance of potential costs.
 - Planning appeals had been expected, and budgeted for in the Planning Reserve.
 - The SDNPA had only lost one appeal, which provided some evidence that that the approach to Planning decisions was robust.
 - Taking account of income as well as expenditure, the final figure did not represent an overspend, and the planning budget had therefore been well managed.

228. In response to questions, officers clarified:

- The budgets were already in existence, and the carry forwards were largely a result of unspent funds that were largely due to timing issues with project partners.
- The underspends had been taken into account and would be reported to the next meeting of the Governance Committee as part of the on-going budget monitoring.
- With regard to appeals costs:
 - As a new National Park in the populated South East, the SDNPA's appeals had been ground-breaking, involving rigorous major development tests against the National Park's Purposes and Duty.
 - The Authority had established a reputation for protecting the National Park, and the complex legal work to date had contributed towards the formation of the Local Plan, which was the first to be developed under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
 - The large number of total planning applications processed by the National Park.
 - The appeal costs were typical for a Local Authority, and had been included for transparency.
 - Appeal costs could only be claimed back within a defined set of parameters, and the SDNPA sought to recover these where applicable.
 - The process of recovering appeal costs was lengthy, and the SDNPA was obliged to disclose legal fees spent to date without accounting for costs that could potentially be recovered but were as yet unknown.
 - The overspend on legal advice from WSCC related to specialist expertise that was above the remit of the basic legal contract.
 - The Planning Reserve had not been used this financial year, and although it could be increased to eradicate variances, the budget had been mainly on target.
- The problems with Idox had now been resolved.
- The S106 monies had been received from many different developments within the National Park, and related to a variety of infrastructure including open space, highways and education.
- The SDNPA was working proactively with partner Local Authorities to ensure S106 monies were spent efficiently in view of the upcoming move to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- The Purpose & Duty fund would be transferred to the new Strategic Fund in 2015/16.

229. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1) Noted the provisional outturn position for both revenue and capital budgets for the financial year 2014/15.
- 2) Approved the following budget carry forwards to 2015/16 totalling £598,000:

Local Plan	£120,000
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IT Systems	£102,000
Neighbourhood Planning	£71,000
Miscellaneous Projects	£159,000
Staffing commitments	£30,000
Other commitments	£41,000
Purpose & Duty	£75,000

ITEM 10: ANNUAL REVIEW OF MAJOR PROJECTS FUND, THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND AND THE STAR CHAMBER

230. The Committee considered the report by the Performance & Project Manager (PPI0/15).

231. The Committee commented:

- Their support for the closer monitoring of the SCF panel, and whether the SCF could encourage projects in specific categories rather than relying on ad hoc requests for funding.
- In addition to the useful map showing geographical spread, an evaluation of the SCF project categories could provide evidence that the National Park's objectives were being met, with a balanced spread of project type and impact.

232. In response to questions, officers clarified:

- The match funding of £12 for every £1 spent by the SDNPA was circumstantial.
- With regard to the SCF:
 - A review of the SCF's criteria and approach was being carried out, and the impact on projects given the lower funding of a maximum of 50% could be assessed.
 - The criteria changes would allow the diverting of some bids to more appropriate funding streams including action groups.
 - Bi-annual panel meetings would facilitate a more competitive process and the best use of limited funds.
 - Where appropriate, use of the Shared Identity had been made a condition of funding approval.
- With regard to the Strategic Fund:
 - The Strategic Fund had been allocated £25K per year until 2017/18, and no assumptions made after that point.
 - A small number of projects committed to under the Strategic Fund were due to continue until 2021; however the fund was considered large enough to cover these costs.
 - The majority of the £354K was for project funding during this financial year and had been included in the budget.

233. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the report.

ITEM 11: WATER & CHALK OVERVIEW, TO INCLUDE AN UPDATE ON THE ROTHER PAYMENT FOR ECOSYSTEMS SERVICES PROJECT

234. The Committee received a verbal update from the Water Policy Officer.

235. The Director of Operations explained the concept of the SDNPA's Programme Boards to the Committee, and introduced the Water & Chalk Programme Board.

236. The Chair of the Committee welcomed Jonny Burke from Southern Water, who explained to the Committee that studies of nitrate trends were being carried out, and money was being directed for the first time towards investigation work that could influence the next business plan and investment strategy.

237. The Committee commented:

- The need for the SDNPA to engage with water companies at a high level, and raise key issues with Defra.

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- The Chief Executive of Southern Water had recently visited the National Park and been shown examples of catchment management and SDNPA-led evidence projects.
- The Chair and Chief Executive would be meeting with Tom Surrey from Defra and could raise the subject of the Big Chalk project if appropriate.
- The book 'What Nature Does for Britain' by Tony Juniper which highlighted the benefits of catchment management and how this had been cost effective for Thames Water.
- The complex nature of flood risk legislation and funding, for which County and Unitary Authorities had to bid.

238. In response to questions, officers clarified:

- The Environment Agency was the competent authority in term of UK compliance with of the Water Framework Directive, and had responsibilities with regard to obstruction of waterways, licensing regulation and the production of the River Basin Management Plan.
- Although the Environment Agency now had a stronger focus on coordinating activity, delivery of the Water Framework Directive was the responsibility of a number partners rather than a single organisation.
- Customer Challenge groups had been introduced as strategic forums that included water company boards, in order to scrutinise the business plans of water companies.
- The SDNPA was represented on the Customer Challenge groups of Southern Water, South East Water and Portsmouth Water, and had been successful in influencing Portsmouth Water's business plan to include catchment management in view of projected nitrate trends.
- Water companies had a statutory duty to supply drinking water, and were regulated by Office of Water Services (Ofwat) to ensure this was carried out cost effectively.
- Due to lack of robust evidence to suggest landscape improvements were more effective than building new treatment works, Ofwat had to date considered catchment management a speculative and risky approach.
- In partnership with the Environment Agency, partner organisations including the SDNPA had worked to provide evidence over the last 5 years to support the delivery of the Water Framework Directive by improving catchment management.
- Projects such as the Brighton CHAMP project could deliver evidence based research into nitrate trends.
- The Brighton CHAMP project would consider groundwater flooding, and a link could be made with the strategic Southern Regional Coastal and Flood Committee via Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) who were a flood risk management authority.

239. As an action to take forward, research into nitrates and impact on the landscape could be shared across the SDNPA, and included at NPA or an all Member workshop, with working examples.

ITEM 12: BRIGHTON CHALK MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP (CHAMP) PROJECT

240. The Committee considered the report by the Water Policy Officer (PPI1/15).

241. Jonny Burke from Southern Water informed the Committee:

- A rising trend in nitrate concentration had been identified in the Brighton chalk aquifer
- Transfer of water to the area from elsewhere would be difficult and costly.
- Public awareness that water came from chalk aquifer supplies was low.

242. The Committee commented:

- The land owned by BHCC was subject to long term Agricultural Holdings Act agreements, and only relatively minor environmental benefits such as access agreements could be achieved through the tri-annual rent review.

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- Whether the land could be returned to pastoral rather than agricultural use to avoid the use of nitrates, and how this could be achieved.
- The issue of water quantity, which led to poor quality of water where there was no alternative source.
- The final year of proposed funding for the project extended beyond the current period, and whether a condition could be added to provide the final instalment subject to availability of funds.

243. In response to questions, officers clarified:

- All the National Park aquifers were affected by nitrate loading and would continue to fail Water Framework Directive standards without intervention.
- The Brighton aquifer received the highest loading of applied nitrates to groundwater due to geological conditions including established pathways between the ground surface and the water table, and lack of application of catchment sensitive farming-type initiatives.
- Winter conditions including higher rainfall, and the application of nitrates to winter crops, had previously led to nitrate contamination, and in some instances the temporary suspension of water abstraction due to breaches of associated drinking water standards.
- Although forecasting anticipated the eventual deterioration of nitrates in vulnerable zones, in some cases it could take many years to meet Water Framework Directive standards.
- Catchment management modelling had indicated that a reduction of nitrate peaks could be achieved, and the Brighton CHAMP project could provide quantitative evidence of this.
- The project had been scrutinised by Star Chamber, and the Water and Chalk Programme Board.
- A prioritisation matrix had been omitted from the report, and would be included in future project reports.
- Table 1 provided a total budget breakdown for the project, and Table 2 provided a breakdown of cash requirements and associated cash contributions.
- The landowner contributions outlined in Table 1 had not yet been made available, however this was not considered an undue risk in view of the uptake rate of catchment sensitive farming initiatives from elsewhere across the National Park, and expression of willingness already voiced by the participants of the former Brighton tenant farmer project.
- The landowner contributions had not been included in Table 2 as they had not yet been secured and could not be considered a cash element.
- The Shared Identity would be included in the website, which would be hosted either by the Rivers Trust or Southern Water.
- Consideration could be given to working in partnership with the Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere to explore interpretation of aquifers, which had been trialled in Germany.
- The SDNPA had no secured funding beyond 2015/16 however needed to operate as a going concern, and commitment to project funding was no different to committing to a commercial contract.

244. It was proposed to amend the officer's recommendation to include the wording 'up to £100,000'. Following a vote, the proposal was carried.

245. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee approved the Brighton CHAMP project bid for Strategic Fund match funding of up to £100,000.

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 1:22pm.