

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

**SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
POLICY & PROGRAMME COMMITTEE MEETING 26 MAY 2016**

Held at the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst at 2.00pm

Present:

Ken Bodfish (Chair) Jo Carr Mark Dunn
Daniel Humphreys Sue Saville Pete West

Other SDNPA Members:

Heather Baker Neville Harrison Helen Jackson Karen Roberts

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside Policy & Management), Phil Belden (Director of Operations), Karen Everett (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Michelle Herrington (Finance Officer), Anne Rehill (Performance & Project Manager), Alan Brough (Business Services Manager), Nigel James (Countryside Manager), David Doxford (Sustainable Economy Officer), Jody Slater (Design Officer), Robin Parr (Governance & Support Services Manager), Stella New (Member Services Support Officer).

ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

145. There were none.

ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

146. Pete West declared a Public Service interest in Item 10 as a member of Brighton & Hove City Council.

ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 1 MARCH 2016

147. The Part I and II minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING

148. There were none

ITEM 5: UPDATES ON PREVIOUS COMMITTEE DECISIONS

149. There were none

ITEM 6: URGENT MATTERS

150. The Director of Planning updated the Committee with regard to Pondtail Wood:

- In April 2016, Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) were alerted to a number of activities that were taking place on the site that were potentially in breach of different areas of legislation; namely
 - 1) Tree felling, which fell within the statutory responsibility of the Forestry Commission
 - 2) Laying down of hardstanding, which if beyond Permitted Development limits fell within the responsibility of the SDNPA as the Planning Authority (dealt with by Mid Sussex under the hosted arrangement)
 - 3) The possibility that the hardstanding contained waste materials, which fell within the responsibility of the SDNPA as the Minerals and Waste Authority (Recovered Services from West Sussex County Council)
 - 4) The possibility that the waste materials may be contaminated, which fell within the statutory responsibility of the Environment Agency.
- A number of site visits had since taken place, by Mid Sussex District Council officers in the first instance, and then by SDNPA officers and the other authorities working in close cooperation.
- SDNPA rangers had also carried out a number of visits to the site.
- Following a site visit on 5 May by SDNPA officers, the SDNPA issued a Temporary Stop Notice relating to the laying of hardstanding on 10 May, which had no right of appeal, that ran until 6 June.
- The Forestry Commission had issued a restocking notice to ensure the woodland was suitably replaced.
- This remained an ongoing investigation and before 6 June officers would issue an

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enforcement notice and consider the evidence as to whether a permanent stop notice was appropriate.

ITEM 7: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

151. Cllr Sheila Marshall spoke on behalf of Poynings Parish Council with regard to the breach of planning control at Pondtail Wood. She commented:
- The local community relied on the SDNPA to take action where necessary
 - The need for measures to be taken to secure the site
 - Their concern that the gathering of evidence had been largely carried out by the community rather than the relevant agencies, and questioning if there was sufficient SDNPA staff to carry out enforcement.
 - There was a need for the SDNPA to coordinate activities between the relevant statutory agencies to ensure the appropriate levels of protection
 - There was a need for the public to be kept up to date with progress with regard to protection and restoration of the site.
152. The Chair stated that further discussion of the issues regarding Pondtail Wood was not within the remit of the Committee, however members of the Committee could make a brief statement. The following statements were made:
- Gratitude to the public speaker, and the general public who had taken time to write to Authority Members
 - The diligent and commendable efforts of the public to raise awareness, including through social media campaigns and public demonstrations.
 - Clarification was required regarding the events leading to the breach of planning and formal action being taken.
 - The public perception of the National Park as having a safeguarding role, and the importance of the SDNPA having an effective role in protecting the landscape and coordinating the action by all the statutory organisation, in order to retain the confidence of the public.
 - There was a need for continued effective communication between the regulatory bodies, landowners and the public.
153. The Chair asked the Chief Executive to summarise the next procedural steps.
- An enforcement notice would be issued, and if appropriate a permanent stop notice.
154. The Chair thanked Deborah Urquhart, who was leaving the Authority, for her useful and helpful contributions to the Committee, which she had previously chaired, and to the Authority as a whole
155. The Chair thanked Barry Lipscomb, who had left the Authority following the recent local elections, for his contribution to the Committee, and to the Authority as a whole.

ITEM 8: FORWARD BUSINESS

156. The Committee requested the following items to be considered:
- The prioritisation of Sustainable Transport and the Communications and Engagement Strategy.
 - The PMP and related issues was a matter for the Authority to consider, and could be better addressed through pre-NPA workshops, some of which also involved the South Downs Partnership, whose input regarding such matters had been very valuable.
157. Officers clarified:
- The 1 November Strategic Session could cover Sustainable Transport.
 - Progress of the Shared Identity could be considered at the 21 July committee meeting.
 - The PMP review could be considered for the 15 December Strategic Session

ITEM 9: PROVISIONAL OUTFURN AND BUDGET CARRY FORWARD REQUESTS

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2015/16

158. The Committee considered the report by the Chief Finance Office (Report PP6/16) and the 26 May 2016 Update Sheet.
159. The Chair stated that the Authority had the policy of ensuring adequate reserves to cover potential Planning appeal costs to enable the Planning Committee to make appropriate decisions that were not governed by the likelihood or otherwise of appeals.
160. In response to Member queries, officers clarified:
- The table at 6.3 should read ‘Balance at 31/03/2016’
 - The amount in reserves for Planning including future appeals and taking the Local Plan to completion was considered to be sufficient.
 - The total amount under S106 funds was accurate, and the Planning Performance Officer ensured that these were spent within the timeframe by the relevant Authority.
 - S106 funds were negotiated on a case by case basis, on a 3 or 5 year timescale. Officers would seek to identify S106 receipts that related to affordable housing and were nearing expiry for future reports to the Committee.
 - The Planning income rates were set by Government.
 - Recruitment to a small number of Planning posts was still ongoing.
 - The funds in General Reserves could be moved, subject to full Authority approval.
161. **RESOLVED:** that the Committee:
- 1) Noted the provisional outturn position for both revenue and capital for the financial year 2015/16.
 - 2) Approved the following budget carry forwards to 2016/17:

Local Plan	£67,000
CIL Projects	£48,000
Miscellaneous Projects	£43,000
Other commitments	£45,000
TOTAL	£203,000
Neighbourhood Planning – un-ringfenced grants	£126,000
 - 3) Recommend to the Full Authority to approve the following contributions to Earmarked Reserves for 2015/16 to be funded from underspends:
 - i) Repairs and Renewals Reserve – Vehicles £32,000
 - ii) Restructure/Redundancy Reserve £240,000
 - iii) Estates Reserve – residual surplus, provisionally £233,000

ITEM 10: FINANCIAL SERVICES CONTRACT – 2017 ONWARDS

162. The Business Services Manager informed the Committee that a formal tender would be delayed to allow a recent proposal from the Yorkshire Dales National Park regarding the possibility of shared financial services to be explored further.
163. The Committee considered the report by the Business Services Manager (Report PP7/16) and the 26 May 2016 Update Sheet, and commented.
- The depth of experience held with Brighton & Hove City Council could be difficult to replicate.
 - The importance of not having too prescriptive a functional specification, which could stymie innovative ideas from potential bidders.
164. In response to these and other queries, officers clarified:
- The SDNPA championed the use of shared services.
 - If it could be established that the Yorkshire Dales were able to provide the functional specification required by the SNDPA, they could be invited to tender for the contract alongside other providers in line with standard procurement process.

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- The tender process would consider social value in line with the SDNPA's procurement strategy.

165. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- 1) Approved the commencement of a procurement process leading to the appointment of a contractor to provide corporate financial services to SDNPA for a period of 3 years (and up to 5 with extensions) from April 2017.
- 2) Approved delegation of Authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Authority Chair and P&P Committee Chair to award contracts for the above, following a competitive process carried out under the terms of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

ITEM 11: ANNUAL REVIEW OF STRATEGIC FUND, AND THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND AND LOCAL PROJECT SUPPORT

166. The Committee considered the report by the Performance & Project Manager (Report PP8/16) and the 26 May 2016 Update Sheet and commented:

- It would be useful for both transparency and promotion to include information about projects on the SDNPA website, including project aims and timescale.
- The ambassadorial value of the Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF), which supported community projects with relatively small amounts of funding.
- The importance of ensuring a sufficiently high level of funding for the SCF in future budget rounds.
- The need to continue encouraging recipient communities to signpost contributions from the SCF fund, and to increase communication generally about what was being achieved, particularly through social media.
- The need for SCF activities to be focused, and ensure approved funds were spent.
- Members would welcome a presentation by SCF partners in order to highlight the work of the SCF.

167. In response to these and other queries, the Director of Countryside Policy & Management clarified:

- The Grass Roots fund and the SCF were complementary
- Development of a Charitable Trust could offer further possibilities for community funding.

168. **RESOLVED** That the Committee:

- 1) Received the overview of major project delivery and the year-end budget position of the Strategic Fund
- 2) Received the year-end position of the Sustainable Communities Fund and Local Project support

ITEM 12: EXTENSION TO CENTURION WAY SHARED USE PATH – DETAILED DESIGN

169. The Committee considered the report by the Countryside & Policy Manager (Report PP9/16), and the 26 May 2016 Update Sheet and commented:

- There was a need to have regard to the potential for accidents when designing shared space routes, particularly in remote areas without mobile phone coverage.
- A view that the surfacing should be free of gravel for the safety of commuting cyclists.
- The SDNPA's aim was to provide routes suitable for leisure cycling, with a surface suitable for shared use, in line with the National Park's Purpose 2.
- A view that cyclists would be safer using the shared Centurion Way route than on the main road, which was the current cycling route.

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170. Officers clarified that the SDNPA was supportive of the implementation of shared use routes, to include equestrian use.
171. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Recommended to the NPA the allocation of £150,000 from the Strategic Fund to meet the cost of carrying out the necessary studies and compiling detailed design and engineering drawings for the extension to Centurion Way shared use path from West Dean to the South Downs Way.
 - 2) Approved the letting of a contract by competitive tender for the above studies and design work subject to prior approval of the allocation of funds being given by the Full Authority.

ITEM 13: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

172. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (PP10/16), and commented:
- It was a much improved document with an improved tone, that had taken the majority of the Committee's comments into account, however further improvements could be made with regard to the inclusion of:
 - Sustainable transport, low cost camping, and a guide as to how to establish wild camping facilities on private land.
 - The theme of 'working land' in relation to all references to landscape.
 - Cycle parking and secure storage lockers under Sustainable Travel supporting infrastructure.
 - The employment opportunities including for young families provided by the sustainable and thriving tourism economy.
 - The economic value of non-car-borne visitors, who tended to spend more as they were not able to carry all necessary provisions.
173. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Endorsed the Sustainable Tourism Strategy attached as Appendix I to Report PP10/16.
 - 2) Noted the next steps to develop a framework of both existing and potential projects in discussion with partners.

ITEM 14: COAST TO CAPITAL (C2C) EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EAFRD) TOURISM COOPERATION GRANT APPLICATION

174. The Committee considered the report by the Sustainable Economy Officer (PP11/16), and commented:
- Whilst considerable work was required to secure initial European funding, further long term funding could follow.
 - The value of working with European partners with similar issues and aspirations in specific partnership deals.
 - Whether existing staff skills could be helpful in securing funding.
175. Officers clarified that European partners were being approached as part of a potential INTERREG bid relating to sustainable food networks, including chalk landscape partners in Northern France.
176. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:
- 1) Noted the success of the outline application
 - 2) Delegated authority to the Director of Countryside Policy & Management, in consultation with the Chair of the Policy and Programme Committee, to approve and submit the full application.

ITEM 15: WHOLE ESTATE PLANS UPDATE

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177. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (PP12/16), and commented:
- Whole Estate Plans (WEPs) were an innovative and exciting strategic development that would form a key part of the emerging Local Plan policies
 - The South Downs Land Managers Group had expressed support for the development of WEPs.
 - The strategic value of landowners' support for the wider aims and policies of the National Park.
178. In response to these and other queries, officers clarified:
- WEPs were not statutory documents and there was no legal requirement for public consultation. Producers of WEPs were therefore strongly encouraged to carry out engagement with local communities, and the Authority's endorsement of a WEP would be dependent on whether active engagement had taken place, and whether information gathered during the process had been acted upon.
 - The definition of an estate could not be done by acreage, as there was a number of other factors that needed to be considered including the number of employees and communities living within the estate boundary.
 - Holdings of over 300 acres were generally considered suitable for a WEP by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS)/Defra, however this was dependent on the whole farm picture including the listing of assets (including landscape), overall vision for the area and proposed future development.
 - Both privately and publicly owned estates could produce a WEP.
 - The development of WEPs offered wider relationship building opportunities.
 - The cost benefit to the Authority in charging for the provision of GIS data to estates, which would recoup some of the resource costs.
 - The forward planning benefit of having foresight of planning applications by estates, and being able to secure Planning Performance Agreements.
179. The Director of Operations stated that WEPs represented a valuable return on investment, supporting the delivery of the National Park's Purposes through the Planning system in conjunction with Countryside Management.
180. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted:
- 1) The progress of Whole Estate Plans
 - 2) The emerging guidance as set out at Appendix I of Report PP12/16.

ITEM 16: TO NOTE THE DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

454. Thursday 21 July 2016 at 2pm at the South Downs Centre.
181. The Chair thanked the Director of Operations, Phil Belden on behalf of the Committee for his invaluable work both in establishing the Sussex Downs Conservation Board, and for the South Downs National Park Authority.
182. The Authority Chair added her thanks to Phil Belden on behalf of the Authority.
183. Committee Member Jo Carr added her personal thanks to Phil Belden.

The meeting closed at 4.10pm.