

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

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING 24 March 2016

Held at Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst, West Sussex at 2pm

Present:

Alun Alesbury	Sebastian Anstruther	Ken Bodfish	Vaughan Clarke
David Coldwell	Mark Dunn	Neville Harrison	Daniel Humphreys
Doug Jones	Diana Kershaw	Barry Lipscomb	Gary Marsh
Gill Mattock	Robert Mocatta	Margaret Paren (Chair)	Ian Phillips
Sue Saville	Jim Sheppard	Deborah Urquhart	Pete West

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), H  l  ne Rossiter (Director of Corporate Services), Andrew Lee (Director of Strategy & Partnerships), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Nigel Manvell (Chief Finance Officer), Robin Parr (Governance & Support Services Manager), Rebecca Haynes (Member Services Officer), Alan Brough (Business Services Manager), Natalie Chillcott (Senior Planner, Minerals and Waste) & Andy Beattie (People & Places Manager).

External Presenters: Rupy Sandhu (West Sussex County Council).

OPENING REMARKS

260. The Chair:

- Reminded Members that, they did not represent their appointing bodies on the Authority, but, as a Member, were responsible for ensuring that the Authority achieves the National Park Purposes and Duty, and does so in a way that best suits the special characteristics of the National Park as a whole.
- Thanked outgoing Member Diana Kershaw for her valuable contribution to the Authority and especially the Planning Committee during her term of appointment.

ITEM 1 - APOLOGIES

261. Apologies were received from, Jo Carr, Norman Dingemans, Philip Ede, Barbara Holyome, Tom Jones & Karen Roberts.

ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

262. Sebastian Anstruther declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 12 and would withdraw from the meeting room during deliberation and decision on this item.

263. Doug Jones declared a public service interest in item 9 as a co-founder of Sheepwatch UK

264. Robert Mocatta declared a public service interest in items 19 & 20 as a member of East Hampshire District Council.

265. Neville Harrison declared a public service interest during item 15 as detailed in minute 300

ITEM 3 - MINUTES

266. The Part I minutes of the Authority meeting held on 2 February 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 4- MATTERS ARISING

267. NPUK Conference 2017: It was confirmed that this would be held during the October half term break and in line with conference agreements, up to four SDNPA Members would be able to attend.

Farmers Breakfasts: Over 60 farmers attended the three sessions where topics such as the Local Plan, Leader funding, countryside stewardship and cluster farm developments were covered, there was a lot of very good quality discussion time alongside the themed talks.

The South Downs Land Managers Group (SDLMG) had expressed that the Farmers Breakfast workshops were excellent, and they appreciated the opportunity to be able to have close discussions between key Authority staff and land managers. They noted that more farmers could benefit from attending the workshops and agreed to write an article for the next SDLMG newsletter to promote them wider.

ITEM 7 - URGENT MATTERS

268. There were none.

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ITEM 8 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

269. Steve Ankers spoke on behalf of the South Downs Society in regard to item 15 'Update on progress to investigate the options available to the SDNPA in setting up a charitable entity'. He commented that:
- The Society welcomed moves to increase the funds available for works and projects aimed at meeting National Park purposes. The Society however, aware of the report being considered, and the work in hand, was keen that new funding efforts should complement rather than compete with those existing bodies with complementary aims. They were keen to engage with the Authority and others with a view to seeking the most positive outcomes.
270. The Authority Chair gave an update to Item 15 in that Eversheds were the firm of lawyers that had been appointed to advise the income generation work and to examine the wider legal issues.
271. In light of the comments made by the public speaker the Authority agreed to debate the report 12/16 at item 15.

ITEM 7 – NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

272. It was proposed and seconded to exclude any Press and Public during items 19 & 20 on the basis that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if a member of the public were present during the items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the Authority and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exempt information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons set out in the report or to be discussed at the meeting (as applicable). Following a vote the proposal was carried.
273. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority will move into Part II for Agenda items 19 & 20 and exclude any members of the public and press from the meeting at that time.

ITEM 8 AUTHORITY CHAIR UPDATE

274. Authority Members received a verbal report from the Chair on the following:
- Launch of the National Parks Plan: Liz Truss, (Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), launched the national Parks Plan in the South Downs on 23 March 2016. The event, held at Butser Ancient farm was reported by BBC local news. Children from Hearn Farm School attended and topics on outdoor learning, Lidar and local food were covered within an hour. Liz Truss commented that she was excited by the work of the SDNPA and was clearly a great enthusiast for national parks.
- Leader Meetings: The Chair met with the leader of West Sussex County Council (WSCC) where the A27 was the main topic of discussion; WSCC anticipated that they would be holding a meeting with Highways England prior to the consultation on the route south of Chichester, and the SDNPA would be invited to attend. The Power of Competence was also discussed and how WSCC had used this to set up a property company. The role of the SDNPA in putting together a green infrastructure strategy to support the 3SC bid was also discussed.
- The Chair and the Chief Executive Officer met with their counterparts at Chichester District Council, where the A27 was discussed alongside affordable housing and the issues faced by authorities in attracting planning officers.
- Visit to the Broads NP: The Authority Chair met with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Broads Authority and the Chair of the Navigation Committee. As well as familiarising herself with the area they discussed matters of mutual interest relating to NPE & NPUK. The Authority Chair was impressed by a successful lottery bid the Broads had made, this successful bid suggested that the opportunity may exist for National Park Authorities to apply for external funding for some programmes which were currently paid for through the core funding.

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Defra Meeting: The Chair joined a delegation of 5 NP Chairs to meet with Tom Surrey to discuss shortcomings in the recent process for the selection of new SoS appointees to NPAs. The appointments were not criticised but the process itself. The discussion included; the length of appointment terms, the consequences for NPs of tightening these to one 4 year term and that the appointment date of 1 April did not align with local authority and Parish appointments to NPs. Defra acknowledged the issue. They saw no difficulty about changing the date of appointment, but would need to consult on the issue related to appointment terms.

Annual Member discussions: These were currently being carried out and to date the Chair had met with just under half of all Authority Members. These meeting were very useful and the Chair was grateful for Members giving up their time to attend.

275. In response to a question raised by a Member the Chair clarified that the proposed 4 year term of office for SoS appointees was initially a proposal from the Cabinet Office and not specifically for NPs. All NP appointments were made by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

ITEM 9 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PROGRESS REPORT

276. Authority Members considered the report by the Chief Executive Officer (Report 6/16)

South Downs National Park's key station gateways: The key station gateways events were held at Chichester, Horsham, Lewes, Brighton, Eastbourne, Petersfield, Guildford and Winchester.

Ministerial Visit: Copies of the 8 point Plan and a one page infographic were tabled. The Plan did not give national park authorities greater powers or funding but was an indicator of political 'buy in' towards national parks which was welcomed. The Plan was clearly influenced by achievements in the South Downs National Park. .

Rural Tourism: The stage 2 C2C bid would be due in July 2016 and if successful the Authority would have additional funding to support rural tourism.

Planning Appointments: The Authority had successfully recruited to all three vacant post in Planning Policy.

South Downs View: The latest edition of this paper which now contained more editorial content, was available from the South Downs Centre reception.

Meeting Reports: With the exclusion of large appendices, the length of papers for each meeting were reducing and the quality of reports were improving. In future, the aim was that reports would be more focused and have clearer recommendations.

277. An Authority Member commented that the Sheep Watch campaign encouraged farmers to report and log all sheep attacks and to encourage communities to bring dog owners and farmers together to encourage behaviour change. A toolkit would be designed to help support this initiative.

278. In response to questions, officers clarified:

NP Plan: The Plan was not designed to change the NP framework but includes Liz Truss's personal aspirations in regard to children's education.

Transport issues at 'honeypot hotspots' were a concern for the SDNPA and the Authority and Hampshire County Council had made several attempts to secure buses to enter Queen Elizabeth County Park (QECP). A sustainable transport expression of interest bid had been submitted to the LEP and meanwhile the cycle route in the area was almost completed. The Authority were also meeting with all partners with an interest in the Seven Sisters Country Park to discuss plans for the future. The Authority's objective was to work with partners such as the National Trust on issues such as car parking arrangements within the National Park.

Whilst visiting the South Downs, Liz Truss realised that a target of engaging 60 thousand children a year in national parks was nationally too conservative. The Authority currently engage with schools inside and outside the NP boundary.

Rural Broadband: There were still a large number of rural areas where broadband connection was an issue and a great deal had and would continue to be done by national

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parks to make this case to the mobile operators. The SDNPA was concerned that although mobile operators indicate a 95% coverage of the area, the reality for national parks was 75% and the strength of that broadband only 50%.

279. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority noted the progress made by the South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority) since the last report.

ITEM 10 BUDGET 2016/17 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

280. Authority Members considered the report by the Chief Finance Officer (Report 7/16).

281. In response to questions, Officers clarified:

- There was not a need for a contingency budget as the Authority had known and stable projections regarding expenses, pay and pensions. Contingency budgets were generally only considered necessary if expenditure was not known or easily predicted.
- The Direct employee budget was the same for 16/17 and 17/18 as some fixed term posts would come to an end, whilst the 17/18 forecast allowed for the cost of living increase of an equivalent sum.
- 'Other Income inc Grants' would specifically identify where the monies came from if a giving programme was in place.
- The restructure transition costs were dependent on the successful applicants to the vacant and new positions and the potential cost of any redundancy payments.
- The grass roots fund monies were spent by the Authority through the Area Teams. The Sustainable Communities Fund allocates monies with a condition that the grant must be spent within 12 months. The Authority could reclaim the unspent funds after this time to re allocate.
- The Volunteer Ranger Service have their own training budget and an extensive training programme for all volunteers.
- The new budget would give the Authority opportunity to take on a more enterprising strategic role and would enable the Authority to make investments, develop chargeable services, generate income and invest to save.
- Officers were confident that any slippage on the Local Plan project would not adversely affect the budget.

282. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority:

- 1) Approved the 2016/17 Revenue Budget as detailed in Appendices 1, 2 & 3 of report 7/16.
- 2) Approved the use of Revenue Reserves as set out in Section 4 of report 7/16
- 3) Noted the Medium Term Financial Strategy and resource projections

ITEM 11 TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2016/17

283. Authority Members considered the report by the Chief Finance Officer (Report 8/16)

284. In response to a question, Officers clarified that all banks and building societies that received government support were closely monitored and when they received less than 50% backing they would revert to commercial status and therefore be treated as such.

285. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority approved:

1. The Treasury Management Policy Statement 2016/17 and the Treasury Management Practices 2016/17 as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to report 8/16;
2. The Annual Investment Strategy 2016/17, including the ethical investment statement and benchmark risk factor of 0.05%, as set out in Appendix 3 to report 8/16

286. Authority Member Sebastian Anstruther left the meeting room

ITEM 12 APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT WEST SUSSEX JOINT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN

287. Authority Members considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report 9/16)

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288. An Authority Member commented that the Plan was a good example of partnership working and showed the importance of protected landscapes.
289. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority:
1. Approved the draft West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan attached as Appendix 1 to report 9/16 subject to amendments being made addressing the issues raised by the Planning Committee as outlined in Appendix 2 to report 9/16 for publication and consultation for eight weeks currently programmed to commence on 14 April in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
 2. Delegated to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Authority Chair the authority to determine what amendments should be made in order to address the issues raised by the Planning Committee and authority to make any further minor changes to the draft West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan with West Sussex County Council
290. Authority Member Sebastian Anstruther re-joined the meeting

ITEM 13 SDNPA RESPONSE TO HIGHWAYS ENGLAND CONSULTATION RE A27 PROPOSALS FOR CHICHESTER

291. Authority Members considered the report by the Director of Strategy & Partnerships (Report 10/16) and the revised tabled appendix 3.
292. It was proposed and seconded to amend recommendation 1) ii to remove the wording 'in favour of on line route'. Following a vote the proposal was carried.
293. It was proposed and seconded to amend recommendation 1) iii to change the word 'mitigate' to 'address'. Following a vote the proposal was carried.
294. It was proposed but not seconded to amend recommendation 1) iii to remove the word 'issues' and replace with 'negative impacts'.
295. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority:
- 1) Endorsed the Policy & Programme Committee recommendations referred to in paragraph 1.4 of report 10/16 and delegated the preparation of the National Park Authority's response to Highways England's consultation on the A27 at Chichester to the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Authority Chair. The formal response to include the following:-
 - i. The SDNPA considers that the impacts of the two proposed northern route options, 4 and 5, on the South Downs National Park, which is afforded the highest protection as a nationally designated landscape, and their impacts on the Purposes of the SDNP and its Special Qualities to be unacceptable and irreversible, and would have therefore strongly opposed either option 4 or 5 being taken forward as the 'preferred option'.
 - ii. The SDNPA welcomes the decision to remove the northern options from the route proposals for consultation;
 - iii. The SDNPA notes the proposals for the on-line route options and will continue to provide advice to address any identified issues.
 - 2) Re-affirmed its endorsement of the Position Statement for the A27 and endorsed the evidence base and its assessment of the potential impacts upon the Special Qualities and statutory purposes and agreed that this approach should underpin any responses to future road proposals.

ITEM 14 REVIEW OF MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT AND RELATED STANDARDS MATTERS

296. Authority Members considered the report by the Governance & Support Services Manager (Report 11/16)
297. In response to a question, Officers clarified that there was no obligation on Members to 'sign up' to provide support, and the list of Members would be compiled once the recommendation was agreed.

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298. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority:
1. Agreed the revised draft Members' Code of Conduct set out at Appendix 1 to report 11/16.
 2. Agreed the proposed 'Statement of support for Members who are the subject of a complaint' set out at Appendix 2 to report 11/16, including the delegations to Governance and Support Services Manager.
 3. Endorsed the Independent Person's conclusion that the Standards Sub-Committee should normally refrain from making any proposals arising from a case until the whole process had been completed

ITEM 15 UPDATE ON PROGRESS TO INVESTIGATE THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE SDNPA IN SETTING UP A CHARITABLE ENTITY

299. Authority Members considered the report by the Director of Corporate Services (Report 6/16.
300. Member Neville Harrison declared a public service interest as a member of the South Downs Society.
301. In response to questions, Officers clarified:
- The Director of Corporate Services had met earlier that day with the South Downs Society (SDS). Both the SDNPA and the SDS were committed to continued dialogue and working together on this matter.
 - The Authority would continue to progress, as agreed, with obtaining legal advice and would be requesting that Eversheds investigate, in detail, both the similarities and differences between the two organisations.
 - It was not the intention of the SDNPA, at this stage, to set up a membership based charity.

ITEMS 16 - 18 WERE FOR INFORMATION ONLY

ITEM 16 PLANNING COMMITTEE

302. The Authority noted the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on the 21 January 2016 and the 11 February 2016

ITEM 17 GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

303. The Authority noted the unconfirmed minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on the 25 February 2016

ITEM 19 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO EXTERNAL BODIES

304. The Authority noted the reports on The Lewes Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group and the Stanmer Park Board.

NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

305. The Authority moved into Part II for Agenda items 19 & 20 and excluded from the meeting any members of the public and press.

Chair

The Part I meeting closed at 4pm