

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 23 June 2016

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

Present:

Alun Alesbury	Sebastian Anstruther	Heather Baker	David Coldwell
Norman Dingemans	Janet Duncton	Mark Dunn	Neville Harrison
Barbara Holyome	Daniel Humphreys	Helen Jackson	Doug Jones
Tom Jones	Gary Marsh	Gill Mattock	Robert Mocatta
Margaret Paren (Chair)	Karen Roberts	Sue Saville	Amber Thacker

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), H  l  ne Rossiter (Director of Corporate Services), Becky Moutrey (Senior Solicitor) Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Nigel Manvell (Chief Finance Officer), Robin Parr (Head of Governance), Rebecca Haynes (Governance Officer), Anne Rehill (Performance & Project Manager), Lucy Howard (Planning Policy Manager) & Katherine Stuart (Senior Planning Policy Officer).

OPENING REMARKS

1. The Chief Executive Officer welcomed the Authority Members and members of the public to the South Downs National Park Authority Annual General Meeting; and thanked Alice Thorne for her informative pre NPA presentation on Secrets of the High Woods.

ITEM 1 - APOLOGIES

2. Apologies were received from, Ken Bodfish, Jo Carr, Vaughan Clarke, Philip Ede, Ian Phillips, Jim Sheppard, & Pete West.

ITEM 2 – ELECTION OF CHAIR

3. The Chief Executive Officer informed the Authority that nominations for the position of Chair closed 5 working days before the meeting and as Margaret Paren was the only nomination Margaret Paren was duly elected as Chair of the Authority until the AGM in 2017 and gave a short acceptance speech.

OPENING REMARKS

4. 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
5. New Members: The Chair welcomed the following new Members to the Authority:
 - Heather Baker: National Appointee - appointed by the Secretary of State (SoS)
 - Helen Jackson: National Appointee - appointed by the SoS
 - Amber Thacker: Local Authority Appointee - appointed by Winchester City Council
 - Janet Duncton: Local Authority Appointee - appointed by West Sussex County CouncilReappointments:
 - As the Chair of a Parish meeting and therefore having to be re-appointed on an annual basis; Neville Harrison had been re-appointed by the SoS for another year.Outgoing Members: On behalf of the Authority the Chair had written to each of the outgoing Members to thank them for their commitment, dedication and valuable contributions they had made to the SDNPA
 - Diana Kershaw
 - Barry Lipscomb
 - Deborah Urquhart
6. Queen’s Birthday Honours: The Chair informed the Authority that former Authority Member David Burden had been awarded a British Empire Medal for voluntary services to the Environment and the community in the South Downs. David was a founder Member of the South Downs National Park Authority and brought with him his extensive knowledge of the South Downs, its iconic breed of sheep and of farming more generally. The presentation of his medal will take place at the Memorial Hall at the South Downs Centre.

ITEM 3 - ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR

7. The Chair informed the Authority that nominations for Deputy Chair closed 5 working days before the meeting and as Norman Dingemans was the only nomination Norman Dingemans was duly elected as Deputy Chair of the Authority until the Authority AGM in 2017.

ITEM 4 - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

8. Tom Jones declared a public service interest in items 12 as a member of Lewes District Council.

MINUTES

9. The Part I minutes of the Authority meeting held on 24 March 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 6- MATTERS ARISING

10. Minute 274: Annual Member Discussions: These meetings had been completed and the common issues raised had been discussed at a Committee Chairs and SMT meeting and these were being taken forward.
Minute 297: -Standards Matters: a number of Members had signed up to provide support to colleagues who may be the subject of a complaint.
Minute 277: The Sheepwatch initiative continued to make progress. The NPA was in a position to contribute to these issues as part of the Heathlands Reunited Project and as part of the emerging Local Plan.
Minute 267: After the Farmers Breakfast the South Downs Land Managers Group said they would write an article for inclusion in their next newsletter. It was requested if they could be invited to circulate it to Authority Members.

ITEM 7 - URGENT MATTERS

11. The Authority had received a pre action letter that challenged the adoption of the Lewes Joint Core Strategy. As a result of this item 12 would be moved up the agenda to be considered after item 9. As the contents of the pre action letter received would remain confidential until any High Court proceedings had started, it was proposed and seconded to move into private session at Item 12 on the basis that it was 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 Paragraphs 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, being information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings, 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. This was to allow Members of the Authority to discuss the contents of the letter and to hear the Authority's position.
12. **RESOLVED:** That that the Authority will move into Part II (private session) for part of Agenda item 12 and exclude any members of the public and press from the meeting at that time.

ITEM 8 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

13. Dr Roger Smith spoke on behalf of Brighton & Hove Friends of the Earth, Campaign for the protection of rural England (CPRE) Sussex, Sussex Wildlife Trust, The South Downs Society (SDS) and Save Pondtail Wood, in regard to Pondtail Wood. He commented that:
 - The organisations welcomed the firm stance that the Authority was taking over the destruction of Pondtail Wood.
 - The lack of speed at which the various bodies involved took action was unacceptable. .
 - The Authority was urged to take the lead to safeguard the site, provide strong leadership, regular communication to keep the public informed and reassurance that the situation would not happen again.
 - It was suggested that the SDNPA reviewed how the statutory bodies worked in partnership, recognised the level of public interest in the fate of Pondtail Wood, restored public trust and to ultimately strengthen the protection of the National Park.

ITEM 9 – NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

14. It was proposed and seconded to exclude any Press and Public during items 19, 20 & 21 on the basis that it was 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 Paragraphs 3 & 5 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, being (3) information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Authority, and (5) Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings, 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.

15. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority will move into Part II (private session) for Agenda items 19, 20 & 21 and exclude any members of the public and press from the meeting at that time.

The public meeting closed at 2:21pm

The public meeting re convened at 2:37pm

ITEM 12 ADOPTION OF THE LEWES DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN: PART I, JOINT CORE STRATEGY

22. Authority Members considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report 14/16)

23. Authority Members commented:

- The concerns of the Planning Committee in regard to Old Malling Farm were noted in paragraph 2.1 of the report and it was disappointing that the Planning Inspector conclusions differed to those of SDNPA. The Authority needed to continue to work to avoid similar disappointments in the future.
- It was disappointing that other SDNPA recommendations such as protection of part of the site, conservation and access were overridden by the Planning Inspector.
- Despite the concerns regarding Old Malling Farm the Planning Committee had recommended to adopt the plan at their last meeting.
- Due process had taken place in regard to the Joint Core Strategy.

24. In response to questions, Officers clarified:

- Neighbourhood planning groups were being encouraged to use the SDNPA methodology for drawing settlement policy boundaries. This included the distance in which the boundary should be drawn in relation to the rear elevation of properties.

25. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority:

- 1) Adopted the Lewes District Local Plan: Part I, Joint Core Strategy, as changed by the Inspector's recommended main modifications to the Plan, as the basis for the planning of the National Park within Lewes District up to 2030 or until superseded by the South Downs National Park Local Plan; and
- 2) Delegated any other inconsequential changes to the text to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee

ITEM 8 AUTHORITY CHAIR UPDATE

26. Authority Members received a verbal report from the Chair on the following:

NPUK: At the National Parks UK AGM; Jacqui Burgess from the Broads Authority was elected as Chair. The main items for discussion was the progress of National Parks Partnerships (NPPL) and shared services.

NPPL had appointed a part time member of staff, and their website was live. To date no major sponsorship deals had been acquired and the company expected to be in profit before the start-up money was spent.

At the NPUK AGM the SDNPAs Director of Corporate Services had made a presentation on shared services. A small working group had been set up, with the aim of developing approach with NPAs buying into services. Local sharing of services would continue if more cost effective.

NPE: The SDNPA Chair was elected NPE Chair at their AGM. A 4-year Corporate Plan had been agreed where NPE would pro-actively work on policy and legislative changes. This Plan

was in addition to the Defra 25-year plan for the environment and the eight point plan, which all English NPAs were incorporating into their own corporate plans as appropriate.

The NPE Chair and deputies, would be meeting to discuss how to work together to ensure the English National Parks moved forward. They would be looking to update the NPE standing orders to ensure swifter and more positive decision making. The NPE Chair would also meet with the NPUK Chair along with officers of the two organisations to clarify the boundaries between them.

MP Visit: The Chair met the MP for Lewes, Maria Caulfield This had been a useful meeting where Maria commented that when meeting Ministers, she invariably gained their attention when mentioning subjects that supported the South Downs National Park.

Local Authority meetings: The Chair had attended two meetings with Mid Sussex District Council, one involving Fulking Parish Council and the other Poynings Parish Council, which also included the Forestry Commission and Environment Agency, to discuss the on-going issues at Pondtail Wood. As a result of the meetings it was agreed the Authority would take on a co-ordination role and take the lead in pro-active communications. The SDNPA website would be updated regularly with the latest information so that members of the public were better informed. Once further progress had been made all agencies would be involved in a 'lessons learnt' exercise, to ensure future complex situations were handled more efficiently.

SDLMG: The Authority Chair and Chief Executive had attended a regular meeting with the South Downs Land Management Group. This meeting had discussed the changes SDLMG were making to ensure they, the National Farmers Union (NFU) and Country Land and Business Association (CLA) worked more closely and effectively together. The group were updated on the progress of the SDNPA.

Longmoor meeting: The Authority Chair and Deputy attended one of their regular six-monthly meetings with the commandant of the Longmoor Ranges. The MOD owns the largest and most highly designated heathland within the National Park. At the meeting progress on the construction of the new cycle route was discussed. The MOD had made land available for this which would link the new town at Bordon into the National Park. The on-going problems associated with public access, including the behavior of dog walkers and night cyclists was discussed. Authority Officers were working with the military on the idea of having a public open day at which such issues could be tackled in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

27. Authority Members commented:

- Poynings Parish Council had reported that they had found the recent Pondtail Wood meetings very rewarding knowing they had the weight of 4 large authorities on their side and following this the 4 villages within the SDNP had agreed to embark on a joint neighbourhood plan
- Whilst Authority officers had been working very hard with Partners in regard to the issues at Pondtail wood, the public interest was high, the SDNPA Authority's reputation may have been damaged due to lack of communication.
- Night time cycling was an issue around Longmoor and LED lighting on bikes interfered with night vision used by the military during night manoeuvres.

ITEM 9 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PROGRESS REPORT

28. Authority Members considered the report by the Chief Executive Officer (Report 13/16)

CIL Charging Schedule: The Examiner's report on our CIL Charging Schedule had been received, which recommended that the schedule should be approved without changes and confirmed that the different levels of the levy had been appropriately set. The final schedule would be taken to the 22 September NPA meeting for consideration for adoption and implementation.

Dark Skies: Authority Members attention was drawn to the new leaflet which was tabled for their information. Overwhelming support for Dark Night Skies had been shown at the recent South of England Show. Ambitious plans were being drawn up for an International dark skies festival which would take place every February. This event would hopefully link

with TV programmes, involve local celebrities and the Authority would be providing school children the opportunity to use large powerful telescopes.

Director of Countryside Policy & Management update: Andrew Lee had had his operation, been discharged from hospital and was making good progress. It would, however be some time until he was able to return to work.

29. Authority Members commented:
- It was pleasing to see that the recent teachers' conference had the best attendance and that the Authority had charged for this event.
 - The Egrets Way Committee were very grateful that the Authority's Chief Executive Officer had kindly accepted the invitation to open the new section of the shared cycle path.
30. In response to questions, officers clarified:
- A digital link to the Dark Night Skies leaflet was available and would be circulated to members
 - The Authority was in the process of producing a 10 year Cycle plan which planned to give cyclists off road options.
31. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority noted the progress made by the South Downs National Park Authority since the last report.

ITEM 13 POLICY FRAMEWORK AND STANDING ORDER UPDATES

32. Authority Members considered the report by the Head of Governance (Report 15/16).
33. Authority Members requested the following changes to be made to Standing Orders:
- Include the word 'has' after the word 'and' and before the word 'agreed' and replace the word 'will' for 'may' after the word 'decisions' and before the word 'also' in the first paragraph of section 3 in public participation at Planning Committee section (page 22 of Appendix 1)
 - To remove the second sentence of paragraph 8.2 'decisions in relation to the appointment of members to a committee are reserved to meetings of the full Authority'
 - Terms of Reference for the Governance Committee to be amended to include "to advise the Authority on changes to its Standing Orders".
34. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority:
1. Agreed the changes to standing orders set out at Appendix 1 to report 15/16 and as set out in minute 33.
 2. Agreed the delegation to the Governance Committee in relation to the process for the appointment of the Authority's External Auditors.
 3. Agreed to delegate to the Monitoring Officer authority to amend the Authority's policy framework to reflect the changes to the Senior Management Structure of the Authority.
 4. Agreed to delegate to the Monitoring Officer authority to amend and republish the terms of reference for the Sustainable Communities Fund Grant Panel to replace references to the Director of Corporate Services with Director of Countryside and Policy Management.
 5. Delegated Authority to the Governance Committee to oversee the process of recruitment of an Independent Person, including the ability to establish a selection panel from amongst its members to interview candidates and make a recommendation to the Authority for appointment

ITEM 14 APPOINTMENTS OF COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

35. Authority Members considered the report by the Head of Governance (Report 16/16) and noted the tabled appendix 2.
36. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority:
- 1) Appointed the Governance Committee, Planning Committee and Policy and Programme Committee with their current terms of reference, as the committees necessary to discharge the functions of the Authority.

- 2) Appointed the Membership of Committees as set out in Appendix 2 to report 16/16 as tabled at the meeting.
- 3) Appointed the Members to outside bodies and panels until the Authority AGM in 2017 as set out in Appendix 4 to report 16/16 with the effect that previous such appointments were now revoked
- 4) Agreed, for purposes of Standing order 8.1(e), that, in line with the Authority's established practice, the Committees appointed by the Authority may not arrange for the discharge of the Authority's functions by a sub-committee save that the Governance Committee may appoint the Standards Sub-Committee to discharge functions in relation to the hearing of complaints made against Members under the Members' Code of Conduct. All Committees retained powers under Standing Order 27 to establish Member Working Groups.

ITEM 15 POLICY & PROGRAMME COMMITTEE MINUTES

37. Authority Members were asked to ratify the recommendations to the Authority for approval from the Policy & Programme Committee meeting held on 26 May 2016.
38. It was proposed and seconded to amend recommendation 2 to include the words 'up to' before '£150,000' following a vote the proposal was carried.
39. In response to questions officers clarified:
 - If the Authority supported the allocation of £150k it could allow for a further year of continuity for a cycling officer.
 - The Centurion Way extension was approximately 5km and involved substantial engineering works
40. **RESOLVED:** That the Authority:
 1. Approved 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
 2. Approved the allocation of up to £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

ITEMS 16 - 18 WERE FOR INFORMATION ONLY

ITEM 16 PLANNING COMMITTEE

41. The Authority noted the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on the 10 March, 14 April and 12 May 2016

ITEM 17 POLICY & PROGRAMME

42. The Authority noted the unconfirmed minutes of the Policy & Programme meeting held on the 1 March 2016.

ITEM 19 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO EXTERNAL BODIES

43. The Authority noted the report on The Sustainable Communities Fund.
44. Member Doug Jones, Chair of the SCF Panel recapped on the value that funding from the SCF made to communities. Small groups that received funding from the SCF gained confidence in seeking other funding and it also supported the Authority's Purposes and Duty.

NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

45. The Authority moved into Part II (private session for Agenda items 19, 20 & 21 and excluded from the meeting any members of the public and press.

Chair

The public meeting closed at 3.33pm