

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 29 MARCH 2018

Held at the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst at 10.00am

Present: Helen Jackson (Chair), Sebastian Anstruther, Tim Burr, Jo Carr, Chris Dowling, Russell Oppenheimer, Sue Saville, Lewis Doyle (Independent Member) and Carole Nicolson (Independent Member).

Ex-officio Members: Margaret Paren and Norman Dingemans.

SDNPA Officers: Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive Officer), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside and Policy Management), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Nick Heasman (Countryside and Policy Manager), Vicki Colwell (Major Planning Projects Officer), Liz Gent (Project Management Officer), Jeremy Burgess (Landscape and Biodiversity Lead – Water), Veronica Craddock (Infrastructure and Environment Strategy Lead), Amanda Elmes (Learning, Outreach and Volunteer Lead), Andy Beattie (Countryside and Policy Manager), Vicky Lawrence (Countryside and Policy Manager), Mike Hughes (Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager), Steven Bedford (Principal Accountant), Alan Brough (Head of Business Services), Robin Parr (Head of Governance) and Catherine Sydenham (Committee Officer).

Also Attended by: Kathleen Downes (Internal Auditor)

OPENING REMARKS

234. The Chair opened the meeting.
235. The Chair welcomed all those present and stated that:
- The meeting was being webcast by the Authority and would be available for subsequent on-line viewing. Anyone entering the meeting was considered to have given consent to be filmed or recorded, and for the possible use of images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purpose.
 - SDNPA Members had a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority furthered the National Park Purposes and Duty. Members regarded themselves first and foremost as Members of the Authority, and acted in the best interests of the National Park as a whole, rather than as representatives of their appointing body or any interest groups.
236. Members were reminded that this meeting was Sue Saville's final meeting as a Member of the Authority. The Chair invited Sue Saville and Margaret Paren to speak.
237. Sue Saville paid tribute to the establishment of the National Park, the staff at the Authority and her fellow Members.
238. Margaret Paren thanked Sue for her work over the past 8 years, particularly in her role as Chair of the task and finish group which oversaw the development of the shared identity.

ITEM 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

239. Apologies were received from Ken Bodfish, Janet Duncton, Mark Dunn, Philip Ede, Daniel Humphreys and Pete West.

ITEM 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

240. Sebastian Anstruther – Public Service Interest in Agenda Item 13 as a trustee of the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust.

ITEM 3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY 2018

241. The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 27 February 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ITEM 4 MATTERS ARISING

242. The reduced assurance rating from 'substantial assurance' to 'reasonable assurance' in relation to planning income was due to the level of unrecovered income. The team had

prioritised this issue and it was being addressed.

243. It was clarified for the Committee that the acronym SIEM was the IT security industry acronym for “Security Incident and Event Management”.

ITEM 5 URGENT MATTERS

244. There were none.

ITEM 6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

245. The Committee were advised there were three public speakers and that they would speak ahead of the related items.

ITEM 7 NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

246. The Committee was asked to consider whether, in respect of Agenda Items 18 & 19, the public, including the press, should be excluded from the meeting 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 have been 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 and business affairs of individuals, companies and other organisations, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exempt information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information. This conclusion was reached on the basis that whilst there was a public interest in maintaining transparency of Authority proceedings in relation to commercial activities it was felt that on balance this was outweighed by the requirement of the National Park Authority to be able to discuss commercial activities and fully consider the implications of its actions or proposed actions without commercially sensitive information being released into the public domain.
247. The Committee did not wish to discuss any matters relating to Agenda Item 18, hence, it was agreed that the confidential minutes of the previous meeting would be agreed as a correct record.
248. **RESOLVED:** It was resolved that the Committee would move into private session at the appropriate time to consider Agenda Item 19.

ITEM 8 HIGHFIELD WHOLE ESTATE PLAN

249. Mr William Mills addressed the Committee as the owner of the Highfield Estate.
250. The Major Planning Projects Officer introduced report (PR08/18) and gave a presentation.
251. The Committee made the following comments:
- The involvement of parents and children of the school in the development of the WEP was commended.
 - Other schools with similar sized landholdings should be encouraged to follow this example.
 - Exemplar areas for the WEP included the biomass system and its community engagement.
252. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to endorse the Highfield Whole Estate Plan.

ITEM 9 IFORD WHOLE ESTATE PLAN

253. Mr John Robinson addressed the Committee as the owner of the Iford Estate.
254. Mr Lee Scott addressed the Committee as the agent for the Iford Estate.
255. The Major Planning Projects Officer introduced report (PR09/18) and gave a presentation.
256. The Committee made the following comments:
- The WEP was a good example of the real value these plans had in providing a useful focus for the estate.
 - The outstanding track record of conservation and the holistic approach to natural and cultural heritage stood out.

- The WEP mapped the estate's achievements, a strategic consideration of future challenges and how plans could be managed.

257. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to endorse the Iford Whole Estate Plan.

ITEM 10 INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY, CHARTER AND ANNUAL PLAN 2018/19

258. The Committee considered the report from the Internal Auditor (PR10/18).

259. The Committee made the following comments:

- Did the ORBIS shared service contract between the three local authorities have a time limit?
- Was the Committee content that processes related to planning income would not be considered until 2019/20?
- The Audit should look at IT as a whole so that a comprehensive review would be produced.
- There should be a strategic approach to the use of CIL funds and the Authority should have been seen to be taking a creative and constructive approach to the use of these funds.
- Who was responsible for undertaking a Quality Assurance Review of the audit service in the Authority?

260. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- The arrangement for shared services was an ongoing partnership between three authorities. For the South Downs National Park Authority that meant greater depth of knowledge and resilience as there was a larger team that could assist if needed.
- All previous recommendations and findings in relation to planning income would be followed up and reported back to this Committee until they were satisfactorily resolved; although there was no full audit planned.
- The Internal Audit Service underwent annual self-assessment and an independent review every 5 years.

261. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to approve the Internal Audit Strategy, Charter and Annual Plan (2018/19).

ITEM 11 PROPERTY AND ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

262. The Committee considered the report from the Head of Business Services (PR11/18).

263. The Committee made the following comments:

- Taking on ownership of properties is a long term investment and should be considered by the Enterprise and Investment Task and Finish Group as part of the wider context of the Authority taking ownership of assets. Any purchases should be considered as part of the Authority's Investment Strategy.
- A minimum 25 year lease was considered to be a long commitment in a changing financial environment. Shorter leases with break clauses or shared properties with other public bodies should also be considered.
- Were budget or resources for this not currently established?
- The Authority should not be holding a budget for property that it felt obliged to spend.
- The Authority should provide an excellent working environment for its workforce.
- The Enterprise and Investment Task and Finish Group had established a set of criteria by which the Authority would assess any future acquisitions.
- A similar investment-per-head should be made at area offices as had been made at the South Downs Centre and the accommodation should be of an equivalent standard.
- What was the situation with the Western Area Office and what message was being

given to staff who worked there?

- Support for the flexibility in the paper to purchase or lease properties. Officers should have the flexibility to negotiate the best outcome, not necessarily having to rigidly meet a 25 year minimum lease.
- There was also the potential for building new accommodation rather than leasing or purchasing existing accommodation.
- Flexibility of working spaces and shared premises or a designated gateway should be a criteria of any properties under consideration.

264. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- A longer term investment would allow the Authority to make capital investment in properties.
- The Authority had very specific requirements for its area offices which included gateway and interpretation elements. It was difficult to identify suitable premises, but the right balance between security and investment was needed.
- The Authority held an estate reserve fund, but specific budgets had not been identified as discussion on potential properties were at early stages. Fully costed proposals for any options would be brought forward at the appropriate time.
- Suitable premises for the Western Area Office were being actively sought. The current premises were relatively good, however, only on a short term lease.

265. An amendment to the recommendations was proposed and seconded to enable officers to further develop the criteria against which to assess premises for their suitability.

266. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to

1. Note the current operational shortcomings of the individual area offices.
2. Agree the necessity of finding premises that meet all of the South Downs National Park Authority's needs and provide stability through ownership or long term secured tenancy and support officers in developing value-for-money criteria to achieve this.

ITEM 12 CORPORATE PLAN – BRIDGE YEAR 2018-19

267. The Committee considered the report from the Director of Countryside and Policy Management (PR12/18).

268. The Committee made the following comments:

- In the 5 year plan Town Centres should be included under Sustainable Business and Communities. There was an opportunity for the Authority to provide leadership on improving and enhancing Town Centres to attract people to the National Park by committing officer time to this.
- Correction to page 44. At the previous NPA meeting it had been agreed to 'endorse' rather than 'adopt' Parish Plans, Village Design Statements and Landscape Character Assessments. Whole Estate Plans should also have been included with these.
- Zero-based budgets were considered to be resource greedy.
- Further details needed to be provided on the Measures of Success.
- What was the nature of the partnership between this Authority and Historic England and the division of labour in regards to the conservation and protection of scheduled monuments.
- Should one of the measures of success be whether particular species of wildlife return or increase or was this implicit in the words 'good or improving condition'?
- Had the CIL Infrastructure Business Plan been produced?
- What was the definition of core work? This seemed somewhat at odds with zero-based budgeting and the capacity needed for this.

- Some of the headings could have reflected the upcoming agenda for the National Park Authority.
- How were key priorities identified?
- Where key priorities addressed the eight point plan for National Parks this should be highlighted.
- Where were the measures of success that reflected the Authority's performance such as Member Survey Results and staff feedback, performance and turnover?
- The majority of content in category five should be incorporated into the first three categories.
- Only by trying out the plan during the 2018/19 bridge year would it be known if it worked.

269. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- Work needed to be done to bring the National Park into the towns, looking at the use of Ranger time and how Neighbourhood Plans were followed up. This would require a shift of or new resources.
- Value-based-budgeting was to be trialled as part of the Corporate Plan where the value for money of a budget was assessed.
- The whole set of indicators for the National Park Authority needed to be reviewed as measures. The Authority possibly had too many measures and some where collection of data was difficult, so there was a need to be more proportionate in the future.
- Historic Monuments were the responsibility of Historic England, however, Authority Officers had acted as a bridge between Historic England and landowners.
- The CIL Infrastructure Business Plan would be considered by Planning Committee.
- As most of the Authority's work outside of Development Management was project based the phrase 'core work' was used to provide a distinction between ongoing work and high priority projects which would require significant commitment.
- Key priorities were identified through discussions with both senior managers and their teams.
- Category four in the plan covered internal organisational performance and measures.

270. An amendment to the recommendations was proposed and seconded to ensure the comments of the Committee on the draft Corporate Plan were addressed.

271. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to

1. Note the draft Corporate Plan 2018-19 (as set out at Appendix 2) and recommend its approval to the NPA meeting in April 2018 subject to the comments made by the Committee being addressed.
2. Note the proposed approach for the 2019-24 Corporate Plan (as set out in Appendix 1) and the proposed changes to format.

ITEM 13 PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

272. The Committee considered the report from the Performance and Projects Manager (PR13/18). The Central Area Countryside and Policy Manager commented on the Food and Enterprise Zone (FEZ) and the Landscape and Biodiversity Lead - Water commented on the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust (ARRT).

273. The Committee made the following comments:

- Would the document be online and user friendly and how much input had the farming community had into the document?
- Arun District Council should have been included within section 9 of the document.
- The ARRT were very grateful for the help they had received and the officer was doing

an excellent job.

- How was post-project sustainability managed, e.g. Whole Estate Plans?
- Although FEZ had not achieved its initial aims it had other outcomes which were of value. The Authority should be entrepreneurial, be prepared to take risks on projects and accept a certain level of failure.

274. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- The document would be online and advice would be sought on making it more user friendly. The NFU had been consulted and the South Downs Land Managers Group asked to review the document and produce the foreword.
- Work such as Whole Estate Plans had been subsumed into the core work of the Authority. The Authority was improving in accounting for post-project work.

275. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to

1. Receive the project evaluations for the Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) and the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust Project Officer
2. Note the recommendations for learning at Appendix 2.

276. The Committee took a break at 11.50am.

277. The Committee recommenced at 12.00pm.

ITEM 14 RAMPION WIND FARM UPDATE

278. The Committee considered the report from the Eastern Area Countryside and Policy Manager (PR14/18) which was introduced by the Director of Countryside and Policy Management and the Project Management Officer who gave a presentation.

279. The Committee made the following comments:

- Was the £29k for Truleigh Hill habitat and access improvements considered value for money?
- Some concern was expressed about the project approval.
- How would the new Truleigh Hill habitat be maintained?
- Were measures for the success of the projects and plans for suitable engagement and publicity in place?

280. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- An additional £20k was also provided by Veolia towards the Truleigh Hill habitat and access improvements. This was a partnership project with the youth hostel which included on the ground and educational work with the aim of creating and exemplar habitat on the South Downs Way.
- Projects were assessed internally through a robust process to support the delivery of the management plan, which in this case produced a showcase habitat in a high visibility area. Section 106 funds had strict guidelines and criteria on their use and the Truleigh Hill habitat and access improvements met the guidelines and criteria.
- The future maintenance of the Truleigh Hill habitat was the responsibility of the Truleigh Hill Youth Hostel and The Conservation Volunteers.
- Clear and robust project objectives and communication plans were set out during project approval.

281. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to

1. Note the update on the ongoing monitoring of the cable route construction and reinstatement activity of the Rampion Scheme.
2. Note the allocation to date of the Mitigation Fund to four small grants.

ITEM 15 PROJECT APPROVAL – TRULEIGH HILL LANDSCAPE PROJECT

282. The Committee considered the report from the Performance and Projects Manager

(PR15/18) which was introduced by the Infrastructure and Environment Strategy Lead.

283. The Committee made the following comments:

- The project seemed like a good opportunity and the two stage process made sense, but clarity was requested on the decision making process, future review of this proposal and the Committee's future input into the action plan.
- This seemed like the approval of a feasibility study and as the study progressed possible outcomes should be brought back to P&R Committee at the appropriate time.
- Did this represent value for money? Could this be re-presented as a one year feasibility study?
- Was the Authority rushing to spend Section 106 funds if the use of them was time limited?
- It would be good to achieve a transformational project like this at Truleigh Hill.
- The Authority should be prepared to take risks on projects such as this but assurances should be there to ensure the Authority is committing funds wisely.
- This was a golden opportunity to improve an iconic site that was currently an eyesore in the National Park.
- Members would welcome a workshop or site visit regarding the Truleigh Hill project.
- Would there be representation from user groups and target audiences within the steering group or project governance?
- Once there was a clear picture of possible outcomes the Committee would like further input.
- A future workshop on the use of Section 106 funds may be useful for Members.
- The recommendation should be amended to ensure the project returned to Committee for further input into the outcomes of the project.

284. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- The decision under delegated powers by the Director of Planning, set out in Paragraph 1.2, was necessary as this was a commitment of Section 106 funds.
- The Rampion Mitigation fund and Section 106 fund were both required to be spent within 10 years.
- Projects were reviewed through an extensive and robust project management process which includes consideration by both the Operational Management Team and the Senior Management Team. Any projects considered by P&R Committee would have been through this process and therefore officers did believe them to represent good value for money.
- The Truleigh Hill project would be managed in the same way as other projects during which it would come back to P&R Committee for a mid-term review and an end of term project evaluation.
- It was advised that the Committee should consider approving the full two years as it was not only a feasibility study but also had other outcomes.
- Officers would be happy to discuss the project further at Committee as input from Members was very much welcomed.
- User groups and target audiences on the steering group would be welcomed.
- A project officer would be employed to undertake this on a two year contract who would be able to engage with Members further.

285. An amendment to the recommendations was proposed and seconded.

286. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to endorse the release of £84,000 from the Rampion Mitigation Fund for the Truleigh Hill Landscape project on the basis that the matter

is brought back to the Committee for consideration at an appropriate midway point.

**ITEM 16 PROJECT APPROVAL – SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK
AUTHORITY PROJECTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHANGING
CHALK HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND BID BY THE NATIONAL TRUST**

287. The Committee considered the report from the Performance and Projects Manager (PR16/18) which was introduced by the Eastern Area Countryside and Policy Manager.
288. The Committee made the following comments:
- Members and Officers needed to take care to ensure projects were not being subdivided so as to come in under the £100k approval limit for P&R Committee.
 - Would there be an ongoing maintenance requirement for the Dewponds Project?
 - The suggestion on page 30 of 38 of the project report about money raised potentially being made available for annual maintenance of Dewponds was welcomed.
 - Who would be spending this money and what would it be spent on?
 - Further clarity on the grazier project was requested.
 - Is the Committee is being asked to approve both the cash contribution of £90k and the in-kind support of £176k, an overall cost to the Authority of £266k?
 - Concern was expressed over the establishment of the grazing stock and if this would mean the Authority would own stock.
 - Could this be a grazing for the market scheme?
 - The wider projects assisted in the delivery of the Partnership Management Plan.
 - Good to be part of a larger vision for chalk grassland.
 - Could some of the money be contributed to conservations bodies who already have grazing stock?
 - What was the project timeline?
289. In response to questions officers clarified that:
- There would be ongoing maintenance required for the Dewpond. If a Dewpond was restored a management agreement would be put in place with the landowner.
 - There would be project scrutiny from the National Trust and the HLF. This was a two stage project which we would show support for through full match funding at this point. Stage one would be detailed scrutiny of how stage two would proceed. If the bid was not successful then the Authority could consider undertaking this independently.
 - The National Trust would be the lead body on this project and would control the finances.
 - There were a significant number of other projects as part of the whole HLF bid which highlighted the context of this project.
 - Following on from a 2016 survey on the state of chalk grassland in the National Park it was recognised there was no economic case for farmers to graze this. A conservation grazing scheme was considered to be an appropriate approach.
 - The Committee was being asked to prioritise the condition of the chalk grassland in the eastern downs for the next 5-7 years and staff and volunteer time against that a full breakdown of which was included in the project submission papers.
 - Approval for staff resourcing was not needed from the Committee, however, it was useful that the in-kind resources were included.
 - The Committee was being asked to approve the Authority's contribution to a wider project.
 - The Authority would not own livestock as part of this project.
 - The aim of the project was for it to be self-sustaining and potentially open up new

markets for the livestock.

- A model was required for sites that were not currently grazed.
- The grazier would not be employed by the Authority and the stock would not be owned by the Authority so a partner would be required.
- The submission was in August 2018, if the bid was approved phase one would start in early 2019, the phase two bid would be submitted in 2020, then if approved delivery would start in 2021.

290. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to

1. Approve the release of £90,000 from the Strategic Fund for the Grazier project.
2. Note the release of £25,000 from the Strategic Fund for the Dewponds project.

ITEM 17 SDNPA RESPONSE TO ESSO PIPELINE CONSULTATION

291. A copy of the Authority's draft response to the ESSO Pipeline Consultation was tabled.

292. The Committee considered the report from the Wealden Heath Countryside and Policy Manager (PR17/18) and gave a presentation.

293. The Committee made the following comments:

- Although paragraph 5 of the draft response followed a similar approach to that taken on other responses to infrastructure consultations, such as the A27, ESSO should not be asked to put forward a scheme that the Authority did not believe was practicable. Paragraph 5 should therefore be amended to reflect a more proportionate view of the long term impacts of proposed routes.
- Paragraph 9 should be clarified to ensure the response indicated the Authority's preference for options D or F rather than G.
- In principle the Authority should be objecting to major development in the National Park, subject to the major development test.
- A comparison between the impact of laying the ESSO pipeline and laying the Rampion cable would be useful.
- Care needed to be taken so that the Authority was not drawn into deciding which route was better. If this was considered major development should the Authority be content with a route through the National Park when there was a possible route outside the National Park?
- Robust consideration of other routes outside the National Park had taken place, in line with the major development test, and these had concluded that the route outside the National Park was impractical.
- Had any risk assessment been conducted on the impacts of a rupture of the pipeline?
- Had ESSO committed to a mitigation or compensation fund?

294. In response to questions officers clarified that:

- The impact of laying the ESSO pipeline was less than that of laying the Rampion cable as the working corridor of 20m to 30m and the size of pipe were smaller on the ESSO pipeline. The corridor could be reduced to 6m where required and the route of the pipeline was significantly more flexible than the Rampion cable.
- There was the potential for permanent damage to the National Park as identified in the evidence reports. ESSO had already raised a number of these issues and alternative routes were included in the proposals with the possibility of further negotiation.
- The planning context of some areas now in the National Park had changed since the installation of the original pipeline, such as Chawton Park and Alice Holt which were now designated landscape, so it was felt the Authority was justified in requesting the pipeline leave the park to avoid these areas.
- No biodiversity impacts had been identified which would raise significant concern,

however, there were protected species along the route and the Authority would support the alternative pipeline route which avoided the chalk downland at Stephen Castle Down.

- On other infrastructure schemes, where there were viable alternative routes outside the park and justification for their exclusion from the consultation process had not been provided the Authority had objected to the scheme. In this case the route outside the park was considered to be much less viable and clear reasons for this had been set out and accepted by officers.
 - The pipeline route had been selected to avoid source protection zones. The route would be identified with markers and the pipeline was monitored and contained shutdown valves. It was unknown whether a risk assessment was in place, however, it was considered highly unlikely.
 - ESSO had committed to initial mitigation by design. The Authority would seek all possible benefits for the National Park from this scheme, however, the scheme would have a lower impact than other infrastructure schemes such as those put forward by Highways England.
 - The Authority would have a significant monitoring role in the delivery of this scheme.
295. An amended recommendation was proposed and seconded to update the draft response to address the comments of the committee.
296. **RESOLVED:** The Committee resolved to
1. Note the proposed scheme for the replacement pipeline.
 2. Note the impacts on the Special Qualities of the South Downs National Park.
 3. Recommend that the updated draft response to Esso tabled at the meeting, as amended to address the comments of the Committee, be agreed by the NPA including a request that ESSO produce a fully costed scheme of mitigation and compensation before selecting the preferred route and going to formal consultation to allow proper consideration of the route
 4. Endorse Members' and appropriate Officers' continued engagement with the specific consultation and technical groups that ESSO has set up, to ensure NP purposes are fully represented.
297. The meeting was closed to the public, including the press, and moved into private session at 13.54.

Signed