



South Downs

National Park Authority

Agenda Item 10  
Report NPA19/20-01

Report to	<b>South Downs National Park Authority</b>
Date	<b>2 July 2019</b>
By	<b>Authority Chair</b>
Title of Report <b>Note</b>	<b>Authority Chair Update</b>

**Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to note the update from the Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority.**

## **I. Update on Activities**

- I.1 This report cover the main external activities I have been engaged in since my last report to the May NPA. For new Members, I have attached explanatory notes about the organisations I refer to.
- I.2 On 06 June, I chaired a meeting of National Parks England (NPE)<sup>1</sup>. The Board discussed the forward Business Plan and amended it to upgrade the work on climate change. The expert group will therefore be re-activated under the lead of Richard Leafe, CEO for the Lake District National Park. The Board agreed a paper on Rural Development in English National Parks. A draft of this had previously been provided to the Glover Review<sup>2</sup> as part of NPE's forward road map. This paper is largely the work of Andrew Lee, to whom we all gave thanks. I am pleased to say that the recent Lords Select Committee Report on the rural economy echoes much of what is said in our own paper. We received an update on ELMS<sup>3</sup>, on which there had been much recent confusion over what was being asked of NPAs. A subsequent meeting between the lead officer on Farming, Kevin Bishop from Dartmoor, and Defra has overcome many of the concerns and it is hoped that the trials can now proceed as

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<sup>1</sup> National Parks England

This is a not for profit company owned by the nine English National Park Authorities and the Boards Authority. It is the conduit with Government and Parliament on matters of common interest to all NPAs. It has a small London-based office comprising three part-time staff and buys in a communications resource. Its Board comprises the Chairs of the 10 Authorities and it elects its Chair from the Board Members. Much of the work of NPE is through groups of expert officers drawn from the Authorities and led by one of the National Park Authority CEOs, otherwise known as National Park Officers (NPOs).

<sup>2</sup> Glover Review

A review of English National Parks being undertaken by a panel headed by Julian Glover, editor of the Evening Standard. The review was set up under the Environment 25 Year Plan to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the legislation under which the national parks are designated.

<sup>3</sup> ELMS - Environmental Land Management System.

This will replace CAP and Defra are running a series of trials to test various aspects of the new scheme. All NPAs save for the New Forest have trials approved by Defra.

planned. We received an update on the 25 year Environment Plan<sup>4</sup> progress. A number of points made by NPE have been accepted by Defra but further work is needed to embed landscape enhancement in national parks in thinking around the plan. There are also concerns about the need for better interpretation of forestry and woodland into the ELMS scheme. Finally, we approved a protocol for working with the AONBs.

- I.3 I have had one of my regular catch-up meetings with the Chair of the AONB Association. We agreed a concerted approach to Defra on the need to incorporate into the forthcoming Environment Bill strengthened powers related to the weight afforded to national parks and AONBs statutory bodies and undertakers.
- I.4 I have also had a regular catch-up meetings with Nick Herbert, the MP for Arundel and the South Downs. I briefed him on the progress of the Local Plan and Partnership Management Plan and ELMs. We discussed the forthcoming consultation on the A27 at Arundel, though without any knowledge of what will be proposed. I have also had an introductory meeting with the new leader of Chichester District Council. We agreed the need for greater engagement between the NPA and council members with wards within the SDNPA boundary. Apart from the training session scheduled on the Local Plan we will set up a session in September covering non-planning matters including the Partnership Management Plan.
- I.5 I also attended a meeting of the Shadow Board for Transport for the South East. Apart from the matter which is covered later in the agenda, the main item was a presentation by Keith Williams, the independent chair of Department of Transport review into Railways. He expects to report in the autumn and said his review hopes to refocus thinking onto consumers and their needs. We also discussed the priorities for the Main Roads Network and agreed the forward Governance arrangements.
- I.6 Staying with roads I attended a meeting in my capacity as Chair of NPE with Executive Board Members of Highways England. We agreed to launch the Memorandum of Understanding between the two bodies at an event in the Lake District, probably in late July. We had hoped to be able to discuss the detail of the forward 5-year road building programme for the strategic network (RIS2) and its impact on national parks. However, as with much Government business, announcements have been delayed until later this year.

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**South Downs National Park Authority**

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Appendices	None
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer; Head of Governance.
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	N/A

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<sup>4</sup> 25-Year Environmental Plan

Published by Defra in January 2018. This sets out government policy on how it intends to improve the environment by 2043. There is much in the plan which directly relates to National Parks.