

Report to	<b>South Downs National Park Authority</b>
Date	<b>19 December 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 I will start as usual at the national level. Last week I participated in the first stage of the wind-up of the not-for-profit company, National Parks UK, the board of which comprises the Chairs of the UK's 15 national parks. As devolution to Scotland and Wales has gathered pace, so too has the divergence of the policy frameworks for national parks in the three countries. It was decided to replace the company with a much looser arrangement to continue to provide induction training, the bi-annual conference, marketing and branding and other shared services. The formal business was followed by a Chairs' forum at which the guest speaker was Dame Fiona Reynolds. Amongst her numerous roles she was a member of the Glover Review.
- I.2 In October I attended the AGM of National Parks England, another not for profit company that acts as the conduit between the English National Park Authorities and Whitehall and Parliament. As I had completed the maximum three terms as Chair, I handed over to Carl Lis, the Chair of the Yorkshire Dales NPA. As well as the usual items on an AGM agenda we discussed Climate Change, which fed into our own workshop on the subject, Health and Well-being and the Glover Review. We were joined for part of the meeting by Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England. Apart from the Glover Report we discussed closer working between national parks and Natural England.
- I.3 I also attended the AGM of National Park Partnerships, the company set up by the UK's fifteen NPAs to attract corporate sponsorship. The first few years of the company's existence have not been without their challenges but I am pleased to say that under their new Chair, Catherine Hawkins, who has much experience in this field, the company is now moving forward positively and with greater buy-in from the NPAs.
- I.4 In the margins of this meeting I, and the Chief Engineer of Highways England signed an MoU which sets out our ways of working on road building and improvements that could impact on National Parks.
- I.5 Prior to these meetings I had my final meeting as Chair of NPE with Lord Gardiner. This was a joint meeting with the Chair of the Association of AONBs. The meeting discussed the procedure that should be put in place to ensure NPA and AONB input into the Government's response to the Glover Review and the strengthening of s62 of the

Environment Act 1995 and its AONB equivalent. Although this was recommended in the Glover Review the timing of when the necessary statutory change might be made is far from clear, which is disappointing.

- I.6 The fact that this was a joint meeting was significant: an early pointer to the direction of travel post Glover with increased emphasis on joint working between NPAs and their AONB equivalents. An illustration of this is that last week, along with several other NPA Chairs, I attended the AONB Chairs' conference. One of the themes of their day was Nature Recovery Networks and their Action Plans to address the issue. This adds greater weight to the work we are already undertaking in this area, with a major conference on the subject hosted at the South Downs Centre on 29 November which included our neighbouring AONBs, Local Authorities and NGO partners.
- I.7 Along with a number of other Members I attended the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Confirmation Order for the South Downs National Park in Ditchling. Robin Crane, the Chair of the South Downs Campaign and I both made speeches. Unfortunately the General Election intervened and prevented Hilary Benn attending to give the keynote address. Nevertheless, it was an excellent celebration of an extremely important day for the South Downs National Park.
- I.8 The General Election has curtailed my usual catch up meetings with MPs and others. However, I have met with the new Leader of West Sussex County Council and Lewes District Council. Both are very keen to extend their inter-relationship with the National Park and we have a meeting already in the diary for the New Year with the Leader of WSCC and his relevant Cabinet Members to discuss issues of mutual interest.
- I.9 Finally, I had a catch up with the Lord Lieutenant of West Sussex, Susan Pyper, who is also President of the South Downs National Park Trust. I also attended the splendid Trust fund-raising dinner at the Rolls Royce plant near Chichester, a tribute to the hard work put in by the Trust on behalf of the National Park.

## **MARGARET PAREN**

### **Authority Chair**

### **South Downs National Park Authority**

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