

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING

Held at 2.00pm on 19 December 2019 at the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH.

Present:

Alun Alesbury	Sebastian Anstruther	Heather Baker	Ken Bodfish
Janet Duncton	Thérèse Evans	Doug Jones	William Meyer
Robert Mocatta	Russell Oppenheimer	Margaret Paren (Chair)	Ian Phillips
Henry Potter	Vanessa Rowlands	Andrew Shaxson	Isabel Thurston
Diana van der Klugt	Richard Waring		

South Downs National Park Authority Officers:

Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside and Policy Management), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Alan Brough (Head of Business Services), Nigel Manvell (Chief Finance Officer), Robin Parr (Head of Governance) and Richard Sandiford (Senior Governance Officer).

Also attended by:

Julie Fawcett (Chair of the South Downs National Park Trust), James Winkworth (Head of Marketing and Income Generation), Andy Beattie (Countryside and Policy Manager – Wealden Heaths), Anne Rehill (Performance and Project Manager) and Jeremy Burgess (Landscape and Biodiversity Lead – Water).

OPENING REMARKS

137. The Chair informed those present of general housekeeping matters.

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

138. Apologies were received from Helen Burton, Chris Dowling, Barbara Holyome, Helen Jackson and Gary Marsh.

ITEM 2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

139. The following declarations of interest were made:

- Alun Alesbury, Sebastian Anstruther, Ken Bodfish, Janet Duncton, Thérèse Evans, Doug Jones, William Meyer, Robert Mocatta, Russell Oppenheimer, Ian Phillips, Vanessa Rowlands, Andrew Shaxson, Diana van der Klugt, Richard Waring - Agenda Item 13, Public Service Interest as members of the National Trust.

ITEM 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2019

140. The minutes were approved as a correct record of the Authority meeting held on 1 October 2019.

141. It was proposed, seconded and agreed to consider Agenda Item 13 in private session for the following reason:

- That in respect of Agenda Item 13 the public, including the press, should be excluded from the meeting 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 and business affairs of individuals, companies and other organisations, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining transparency of Authority proceedings in relation to its negotiations with commercial third parties it is felt that on balance this is outweighed by the requirement

of the National Park Authority to be able to discuss the term and details of its negotiations and fully consider the implications of its actions or proposed actions without commercially sensitive information being released into the public domain.

ITEM 4. MATTERS ARISING

I42. Members were updated on:

- Minute 72. The judicial review against the South Downs Local Plan had failed.
- Agenda Item 7. The preferred route announcement from Highways England on the A27 at Arundel would not be made until 2020.
- Agenda Item 14. The consultation on the Single Issue Review of Soft Sand had been delayed until the beginning of 2020.
- Agenda Item 15. The Public Affairs Strategy was, and would be, kept under review as the Authority's consideration of Climate Change and Biodiversity continued.

ITEM 5. URGENT MATTERS

I43. There were none.

ITEM 6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

I44. There was none.

ITEM 7. AUTHORITY CHAIR UPDATE

I45. Authority Members considered the report from the Authority Chair (Report NPA19/20-19) and received the following updates from the Chair:

- Letters had been written to all incoming MPs in the area of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) highlighting that the Authority Chair would be very happy to meet with them should they wish to.
- Some matters of note raised in the Queen's speech included the Government continuing to take steps to meet net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 including a bill enshrining in law principles and targets, the hosting of the COP26 conference in 2020, and a ban on the export of polluting plastics outside of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and to establish a new, world leading regulator in statute.

I46. Members made the following comments:

- Please could the Chair notify Members when meeting their local MP as Members may also wish to attend the meeting.
- Paragraph 1.4 – Was there any discussion on the A27 Arundel at the meeting with the Chief Engineer of Highways England?

I47. In response Members were advised:

- The meeting with the Chief Engineer of Highways England was specifically for the purpose of signing the MoU in her capacity as Chair of National Parks England.

ITEM 8. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PROGRESS REPORT

I48. Authority Members considered the report from the Chief Executive (Report NPA19/20-20) and received the following updates from the Chief Executive:

- Members were notified about the Chief Executive's urgent action taken in relation to the winding up of National Parks UK, as per the recent email circulated to Members.
- Officers would continue to push for the inclusion of the Section 62 duty in the upcoming Environment Bill.

149. Members made the following comments:
- Paragraph 5.2 – Officers were congratulated on having Prof. Sir John Lawton as one of the speakers at the forthcoming Biodiversity and Rewilding Member Day.
 - Paragraph 5.3 – Would Members be updated further on the Nature Recovery Network?
 - Paragraph 5.5 – Where were the 10 town centres this engagement was taking place?
 - Paragraph 6.2 – The Youth Action Days and the increase in the Instagram following was encouraging.
 - Was there any update on joint work with Chichester Harbour AONB?
150. In response Members were advised:
- The Authority was also hosting a dinner with Prof. Sir John Lawton and key NGO representatives as part of his visit.
 - Members would be updated on the Nature Recovery Network as part of the Biodiversity and Rewilding Member Day in January.
 - As well as the town centres within the SDNP the Authority would also be visiting town centres outside the park, to a total of 10 locations as part of the 10th Anniversary celebrations.
 - SDNPA Officers had met with those from Chichester Harbour AONB about volunteering and youth engagement, in particular our similar practices in school engagement. There were also meetings planned to discuss green corridors between the AONB and the SDNP and possible future Member engagement.
151. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to note the progress made by the South Downs National Park Authority since the last report.

ITEM 9. SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK TRUST UPDATE

152. Authority Members received a verbal update and presentation from the Chair of the South Downs National Park Trust on the following:
- Ongoing partnership working.
 - Income and expenditure since the foundation of the trust including the income types received and how the income had been allocated.
 - Work to build awareness of the trust and to increase its supporters including events at Woolbeding Gardens and Rolls Royce.
 - Appeals such as those for the South Downs Way, Beelines, and Trees for the South Downs.
 - The Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) Endowment.
 - The Chair thanked the trustees, the Chair of the SCF fund and SDNPA officers for their work.
153. Members made the following comments:
- This report indicates that the Trust's success had exceeded expectations. The Chair of the Trust and SDNPA officer involved were complimented for the key role they had played in this success.
 - The Chair of the SCF Fund expressed his thanks to the Chair of the Trust and the members SCF panel, including the two trustees who were also now members of the panel.

- Had the Trust considered assisting where car parks along the South Downs Way were in danger of closure or where access was poor?

154. In response Members were advised:

- The Trust was considering future involvement in car parking. If there were concerns about access to the South Downs Way these should be raised with Andy Gattiker, the Authority's South Downs Way Lead, who could then discuss potential improvements with the Trust.

ITEM 10. APPROVAL OF REVISED PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN

155. Authority Members considered the report from the Director of Countryside Policy and Management (Report NPA19/20-21) and received the following additional information:

- That grammatical and spelling errors would be corrected as part of the proofing process.
- That the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) would be published in January 2020 alongside the launch of the new SDNP website and launched in March 2020 as part of the 10th Anniversary celebrations.

156. Members made the following comments:

- The PMP read as vibrant and current public policy. Officers should be credited with being ahead of the curve in regard to the Landscapes Review.
- The Member Task and Finish Group and all officers involved in the production of the PMP were thanked, along with all partners who were willing to play their part.

157. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:

1. Note the responses to the statutory notifications under section 66 (7) of the Environment Act 1995 (The Act), and the wider distribution of the draft amended Partnership Management Plan to the Parish Councils with land within the National Park.
2. Agree, pursuant to section 66(6)(a) of the Act, that it was expedient to amend the Partnership Management Plan and that, taking into account the responses received, the proposed amendments were appropriate.
3. Agree to amend the content of the Partnership Management Plan as set out in Appendix 1.
4. Agree the content of the Report on the Review specifying the amendments made as set out in Appendix 2, to be published alongside the amended Partnership Management Plan.
5. Delegate authority to the Director of Countryside Policy and Management in consultation with the Chair of the Authority to approve the final design of the amended Partnership Management Plan and publish it together with the Report on the Review, sending a copy of each to the Secretary of State.

ITEM 11. APPROVAL OF CHAMP2 (CHALK MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP) PROJECT

158. Authority Members considered the report from the Landscape and Biodiversity Lead - Water (Report NPA19/20-22).

159. Members made the following comments:

- Could it be clarified why the engagement and range of the work seemed to be extremely limited?
- The project was very worthy and to be supported. How could the limited scope of this project be expanded to the rest of the SDNP?

- How was Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC), as the major landowner in the project area, being encouraged to increase their engagement in the aims of this project?
- It was hoped the principles of this project could be picked up by the Authority as the Planning Authority and other authorities providing planning services on our behalf with the aim of integrating these solutions into the new developments.
- How was the issue of chemicals other than nitrates on the land being addressed?
- Awareness of the pressures on farmers was needed. Assistance and persuasion was needed in order to effect the needed change.

160. In response Members were advised:

- The focus of the project was working with private companies to target interventions at identified nitrate hot spots in the Brighton Chalk Block. Approximately 40 farmers in the ChaMP project area had engaged in workshops and field meetings.
- There were a number of areas of ongoing work of the Authority across the National Park which were working with landowners and the water companies to address similar issues.
- Policies already in place in the South Downs Local Plan supported efforts to improve water quality and reduce usage along with supporting documents such as the Sustainable Development Supplementary Planning Document which was in development and the Roads of the South Downs document.
- The Chief Executive, along with one of the Members of the Authority, had met with the Leader of BHCC to discuss the management of the downland estate including the target to be carbon neutral and the development of a Whole Estate Plan by BHCC.
- Part of the evidence base for the ChaMP project was a study identifying all chemicals that were affecting the Brighton Chalk Block. Although the ChaMP project focusses particularly on nitrates there were other projects across the National Park looking at ways to address issues caused by other chemicals and how to reduce their usage.

161. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:

1. Approve the involvement of the South Downs National Park Authority in the ChaMP 2 project (2020-2025);
2. Approve the allocation of £100,000 from the Strategic Fund, to be allocated as a contribution of £20,000 per year for the five years of the project.

ITEM 12. RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH EAST

162. Authority Members considered the report from the Countryside and Policy Manager – Wealden Heaths (Report NPA19/20-23) including the table revision to Section 4 of the report. Members were also informed that the importance of walking and cycling would be expanded upon in the response.

163. Members made the following comments:

- The Authority should encourage bodies such as Transport for South East (TfSE) to think on a local level as well as a regional level, such as focussing on the intra town and village routes including the important role of buses for these routes.
- The proposed statutory powers for TfSE would not include responsibility for buses; this would remain the responsibility of Highways Authorities.
- Paragraph 4.2 should be reworded to emphasise the need to move quickly away from car dependency and road building to focus on and encourage greater use of public transport.

- Paragraph 4.5 should be reworded so that rather than seemingly giving the go ahead to development in Protected Landscapes it focussed instead on the importance of developments making a positive contribution to the landscape.
- The solutions proposed in the document did not actually go very far in addressing the problems. There needed to be better solutions which rather than being mainly urban centric were applicable in the wider area, a large part of which was rural.

164. An amended recommendation was proposed, seconded and approved.

165. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to delegate authority to the Director of Countryside Policy and Management, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, to prepare and submit the Authority's response to TfSE's consultation on the Draft Transport Strategy for the South East welcoming the draft strategy's focus on 'Sustainable Route to Growth' and including the recommendations set out in the revised Section 4 of this paper and taking into account the Member comments at the meeting.

ITEM 13. WEALDEN AREA OFFICE PROPOSAL – HEATH BARN FARM

166. The meeting was closed to the public, including the press, and moved into private session at 3.40pm.

171. The meeting returned to public session at 4.11pm. Janet Duncton and Isobel Thurston had left the meeting at 4.06pm.

172. An amended recommendation was proposed, seconded and approved.

173. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:

1. Note the position regarding the estimated refurbishment costs of Heath Barn and the proposed lease arrangements with the National Trust.
2. Agree to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, to negotiate and sign the terms of a lease with the National Trust on the basis described in the report, and taking into account the comments of Authority Members at the meeting, in particular regarding the inclusion of a right to assign the lease, and to proceed with the refurbishment of Heath Barn Farm, also as described, should a lease be agreed,
3. To make the necessary allocation of funds (£678,000) to this project from the Estates Management Reserve.

ITEM 14. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

174. Authority Members noted the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 12 September 2019, 10 October 2019 and 14 November 2019.

ITEM 15. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

175. Authority Members noted the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 26 September 2019.

176. The Chair closed the meeting at 4.14pm.