

Report to	<b>South Downs National Park Authority</b>
Date	<b>26 March 2020</b>
By	<b>Authority Chair</b>
Title of Report <b>Note</b>	<b>Authority Chair Update</b>

**Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to:**

**1. Note the update from the Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority.**

**1. National Picture**

- 1.1. The general election and its aftermath curtailed contact until relatively comparatively recently.
- 1.2. The National Parks England (NPE) meeting on 29 January anticipated the attendance of Lord Gardiner, re-appointed as the National Parks Minister. However, he declined due to business in the Lords though has subsequently met with Car Lis, the Chair of NPE. This together with staffing problems at NPE meant the agenda for the meeting was lighter than usual and attention was focused on the upcoming financial settlement and how that might be influenced.
- 1.3. Recently I have had meetings with Damian Hinds, the MP for East Hampshire and Peter Kyle, the MP for Hove. The latter was accompanied by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch, the Shadow Environment Minister in the Lords. At both meetings we discussed the critical importance of the post-Brexit environmental farming scheme, farm clusters and the need to strengthen the s62 duty in the Environment Act of 1995, preferably in the Environment Bill. We also discussed climate change and the rural economy and I updated them on the Local Plan and the Partnership Management Plan.
- 1.4. I have upcoming discussions with Gillian Keegan, the MP for Chichester; Steve Brine the MP for Winchester and Flick Drummond, the MP for the Meon Valley. I will update members on these discussion at the Board meeting.

**2. Local Councils**

- 2.1. Shortly after he became Leader of West Sussex Council (WSSCC) I met with Paul Marshall and we agreed that regular meetings between him and the relevant portfolio holders in his cabinet and myself and my deputy, together with senior officers, would be a helpful way forward. The first of these meetings took place on 3 February. It was a very useful meeting and a number of actions were put in hand. We agreed that it was important that action on climate change and the environment needed to be co-ordinated across our areas and that the existing MoU on Highways should be updated and reflect the arrangements put in place between NPE and Highways England. Subsequently I have agreed with the Deputy Leader of Hampshire County Council and his Director of

Highways that we should explore what might be included in such MoU with Hampshire County Council.

- 2.2. I have also had one of my regular meetings with the leader of Chichester District Council and we agreed that the session arranged between their councillors and our Member had been a great success and should be repeated. A similar session is in the diary with East Hampshire District Council and others will be arranged later in the year with Winchester City Council, Horsham District Council and Lewes District Council. A meeting has also been arranged with the Winchester City Council Cabinet to explore the scope for strategic alignment on environmental issues.

### **3. 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

- 3.1. The Celebration in November in Ditchling to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the signing of the confirmation order was a great success despite the absence of Hilary Benn who was prevented from attending by the General Election. That deficiency was put right by his unveiling a plaque on the 10<sup>th</sup> February on the wall of the tea room where he had signed the confirmation order in 2009.
- 3.2. Our own major celebration will, as members know, take place on 31 March, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the South Downs National Park when we will have a lunchtime event followed by a formal dinner in the evening. There will be a capacity attendance of 170 at the lunchtime event including our youth ambassadors, stakeholders, partners and many of our own officers. The evening event, which will also be at full capacity, will be attended by the Lord Lieutenants of all three counties as well as many partners and others that have contributed to the success of the National Park. The theme for both events will be the first 10 years and our 10 main successes during that period.

### **4. NPA Appointments**

- 4.1. Members are aware that, owing to the General Election, Sebastian Anstruther, Ken Bodfish and myself have been offered and have accepted a 3 month extension to our membership of the NPA to 30 June 2020. By then five of our seven nationally appointed seats will be vacant.
- 4.2. The recruitment process is now underway. I will be joining the panel which will short list on the day after our NPA meeting, with interviews scheduled for 11 and 12 May. The new members will be appointed on 1 July. From what I have heard there is a very strong list of prospective Members for the South Downs.

### **5. Transport**

- 5.1. On 26 February I attended an extra ordinary meeting of the Shadow Board for Transport for the South East. The main item on the agenda was feedback from the public consultation on the transport strategy to be submitted to the Department of Transport. Over 3000 responses were received, the vast majority from supporters of Friends of the Earth. That said, the responses from different categories of respondents was very similar and can be listed in no order of importance as:
  - Support for the main thrust of the strategy and its objectives
  - The need for a better alignment of transport strategy and planning
  - The target for zero carbon of 'by 2050' is not ambitious enough.
- 5.2. Much of the discussion related to the third bullet. There was much agreement around the table that the target needed to be more ambitious but that it was not possible to change to an earlier date since some authorities were better placed than others to achieve specific dates. A revised formula should be available for the next Board meeting in April, which will discuss the draft strategy to be presented to Government.

- 5.3. Finally I should mention that, along with Barbara Holyhome, I attended a meeting of the Communities Against Noise and Speed Group, which is concerned primarily about the impact of some motorbikes on the environment in the Hampshire part of the SDNP. I am pleased that two of the Local MPs whose constituents are most affected by this issue are raising the issue with central Government.

**MARGARET PAREN**

**Authority Chair**

**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	<b>N/A</b>

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