

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at 10.30am on 6 July 2021 in the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH.

Present:

Alun Alesbury, Heather Baker, Annie Brown, Tim Burr, Angus Dunn, Therese Evans, Melanie Hunt, Doug Jones, Maggie Jones, William Meyer, Martin Osborne, Ian Phillips, Henry Potter, Vanessa Rowlands, Andrew Shaxson, Isabel Thurston, Richard Waring and Stephen Whale.

South Downs National Park Authority Officers:

Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Alan Brough (Head of Business Services), Mike Hughes (Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager), Robin Parr (Head of Governance) and Richard Sandiford (Senior Governance Officer).

Also attended by:

Kelly Porter (Major Projects Lead).

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OPENING REMARKS

1. The Chief Executive welcomed all present and informed them of general housekeeping matters.

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. Apologies were received from Barbara Holyome, Chris Dowling, Diana Van Der Klugt, Janet Duncton, Robert Mocatta, Russell Oppenheimer and Gary Marsh.

ITEM 2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

3. The election process was presided over by the Chief Executive and the Authority was informed that nominations closed at 4pm on 21 June and as Ian Phillips was the only nomination, Ian Phillips was duly elected as Chair of the Authority until the Authority AGM in 2022 or the end of his appointment as a Secretary of State Member, whichever may be sooner.
4. The Chair gave an acceptance speech and chaired the rest of the meeting.

ITEM 3. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR

5. The election process was presided over by the Chair and the Authority was informed that nominations closed at 4pm on 21 June and as Vanessa Rowlands was the only nomination, Vanessa Rowlands was duly elected as Deputy Chair of the Authority until the Authority AGM in 2022 or the end of her appointment as a Secretary of State Member, whichever may be sooner.
6. The Deputy Chair gave an acceptance speech.

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

7. The Chair made the following comments:
 - Members and members of the public were reminded that 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 would act in the best interests of the National Park as a whole, rather than as representatives of their appointing body or any interest groups.
 - The Chair informed the Authority that agenda items 16 and 17 were to note. These items were taken as noted as no Member indicated that they had any matters related to these items that they wished to discuss.

ITEM 4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

8. There were none.

ITEM 5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 25 MARCH 2021

9. The minutes of the Authority meetings held on 25 March 2021 were approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment of minute 216, bullet point 6, to read "... and it was *hoped that* a travel grants scheme could be developed ...".

ITEM 6. MATTERS ARISING

10. There were none.

ITEM 7. URGENT ITEMS

11. There were none.

ITEM 8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

12. The Chair invited Vic lent to address the meeting, representing the South Downs Network, on the subject of the Highways England M3 Junction 9 scheme.

13. Vic lent made the following points:

- The scheme would destroy important protected habitats and would not support nature recovery.
- New roads induced traffic and would not help the country meet its net zero and other climate targets.
- Highways England (HE) seemed to have paid no heed to the 25 year environment plan in developing this scheme.
- The South Downs Network supported the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's suggestion of a green bridge.
- The SDNPA should strengthen the comments made in its response to HE.

ITEM 9. NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

14. The Chair asked the Authority if any Member wished to raise any point of accuracy in the Part II minutes of the previous meeting at Agenda Item 18. As no Member wished to raise any point of accuracy the Chair informed the Authority that the meeting would not move into private session to consider the Part II minutes of the 25 March 2021 meeting.

ITEM 10. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PROGRESS REPORT

15. The Chief Executive introduced report (NPA21/22-01) and reminded Members of the content. The Chief Executive referred to the following updates since the report had been published:

- The launch of the new nature recovery campaign, "Renature", on Monday 5 July and the significant coverage the campaign and new video had already received. The new video was shown to the meeting.
- The legal documentation for the transfer of the ownership of Seven Sisters Country Park had been finalised and the SDNPA hoped to take ownership next week.
- There were currently an increased number of enforcement issues across the National Park.
- Two new SDNPA publications had been released, one on Natural Flood Management Measures and the other a guide to the Serpent Trail.
- The SDNPA has recently released a Draft Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document for comment. The consultation ran from 28 June to 6 September, following which the comments made would be considered. The final document would be presented to Planning Committee for adoption.

16. Members made the following comments:

- The video was impressive and inspiring. Members should seek to get their communities involved in renaturing.
- What was the quantity of the deferred CIL payments and when did the Authority expect to receive the monies?
- Was a wash-up session for the recent parish workshops planned?
- Was the Authority close to filling the remaining vacancies on the South Downs Partnership (SDP)?
- Would the National Farmers Union (NFU) and Country Land and Business Association (CLA) be involved in the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) panel? Also, how much freedom did the Authority have to do what was best for the SDNP?
- Antisocial issues in some areas of the National Park had not reduced. Land managers in some areas needed all the help they could get in addressing them. It was important to educate people and get the new Countryside Code into schools.
- There was concern about some of the carbon offsetting schemes coming forward, that they were only good for protected landscapes at the cost of the surrounding urban areas.
- Were parishes able to use Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds for things other than infrastructure projects?
- It was good to see the planning function was meeting government targets and the next P&R Committee would be considering the contribution of planning to the Partnership Management Plan (PMP).
- Would meetings of the SDP take place in a forum that Members could observe? Also, how often was it expected that SDNPA and SDP Members would meet together?
- How was the Authority ensuring an appropriate amount was spent on planning enforcement, not only by the SDNPA but also by other authorities within the SDNP?
- With the Rampion windfarm consultation beginning on 14 July how would the Authority be publicising the consultation?

17. Members were advised:

- The amount of CIL funds deferred amounted to a six figure sum, however, the monies were not lost, only deferred. As the regulations for CIL deferrals ended at the end of July 2021 the deferrals were only temporary.
- Officers would be arranging a wash-up session with Members on the Parish Workshops.
- Although the two vacancies on the SDP remained and work was ongoing to fill them this would not delay the SDP starting its work
- The FiPL panel included both the NFU and the CLA. The Authority's approach was that this work must be farmer led and we were able to ensure it was South Downs focussed and we will be applying it to our management priorities.
- CIL could only be used for infrastructure projects.
- It was down to the SDP to decide how their meetings were held, however, its independence was also important. It was envisaged that SDNPA and SDP Members would meet annually, as was set out in the terms of reference previously agreed by the NPA.
- The SDNPA had always ensured funds were available to take appropriate enforcement action in the form of a planning reserve. Also, a new enforcement officer had recently been recruited. The Authority was aware there was some work to do with host

authorities and new section 101 agreements that had recently been sent out included in them the need for robust enforcement.

- It was the developer's responsibility to promote any consultation, however, the SDNPA would also be raising awareness of the consultation through its newsletter and social media outlets.

18. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to note the progress made by the South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority) since the last report.

ITEM II. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

19. The Head of Governance and Support Services introduced the report (NPA21/22-02) and reminded Members of the content.

20. Members made the following comments:

- An inaccuracy was identified in Appendix 4 as Therese Evans should have been identified as the Campaign for National Parks representative during the last year. Therese Evans confirmed that she had no objection to Vanessa Rowlands taking over the role.
- Concern was raised about the current process of the Authority appointing Chairs and Deputy Chairs of committees, as revised by the Authority at its meeting on 25 March 2021. It was suggested that Standing Orders should be redrafted to revert the process back to enable the individual committees to appoint their own Chairs and Deputy Chairs. However, this view was not held by the majority of Members.
- In previous years a representative from the SDNPA had been appointed to the West Sussex Rural Partnership. Had the status of the organisation changed?
- It was suggested that HARAHA may no longer have been operational and it was queried whether another organisation had taken over its role?
- It was proposed that the wording proposed to be removed from the P&R Committee Terms of Reference should be reinstated to ensure the committee retained its oversight and decision making role in this matter. Members agreed that officers needed the flexibility to be able to bid widely for additional funding, but felt the wording already made provision for this.

21. Members were advised:

- The Authority had been advised that the West Sussex Rural Partnership was winding down and a representative was no longer required.
- Officers would look into the status of HARAHA and whether another organisation had taken over its role and may require a representative.

22. It was proposed, seconded and agreed to amend recommendation 1 to include the words "subject to the reinstatement of the wording struck out at paragraph 3.1 of the Policy and Resources Committee terms of reference".

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

1. Appoint the Planning Committee, Policy and Resources Committee and Appointments, Management & Standards Committee with the updated Terms of reference set out at Appendix 1, subject to the reinstatement of the wording struck out at para 3.1 of the Policy and Resources Committee terms of reference, as the committees necessary to discharge the functions of the Authority.
2. Appoint the Membership of Committees until the Authority AGM in 2022 as set out in Appendix 3 to this report.
3. Appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair of Planning Committee until the Authority AGM in 2022 as set out in Appendix 6 of this report.
4. Appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair(s) of Policy & Resources Committee until the Authority AGM in 2022 as set out in Appendix 6 of this report.

5. Appoint the Members to outside bodies and panels until the Authority AGM in 2022 as set out in Appendix 5 to this report.
6. Agree, for the purposes of Standing order 8.1(e), that, in line with the Authority's established practice, the Committees appointed by the Authority may not arrange for the discharge of the Authority's functions by a sub-committee. All Committees retain powers under Standing Order 27 to establish Member Task and Finish Groups.
24. The Chair expressed his thanks to Doug Jones and Alun Alesbury for their role as Chairs of the Planning and P&R Committees over the past year.

ITEM 12. NEW PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS FROM PLANNING

25. The Director of Planning introduced the 'Community Benefits of Planning' and 'Design' videos and advised that they would be available on the SDNPA YouTube channel in the near future.
26. Members made the following comments:
 - When developments funded by CIL from the SDNPA were completed was there ever a physical acknowledgement of the contribution from the SDNPA at the development? Although not necessarily appropriate for housing developments, they could be considered for village halls, pavilions, etc.
 - The videos were a good example of the new way the Authority needed to communicate.
 - The Authority needed to ensure that our landscape-led approach was explained in a way that was understandable for the general public.
27. Members were advised:
 - Information on SDNPA funding was included in new home starter packs.
28. The meeting took a break at 12.50pm and resumed at 1.30pm.

ITEM 13. BUDGET MONITORING 2020/21: PROVISIONAL OUTTURN POSITION

29. The Head of Business Services introduced report (NPA21/22-03) and reminded Members of the report content.
30. Members made the following comments:
 - Due to the amount of money saved, could more local plan examinations be held virtually?
 - How did the budget carry forward compare with that of previous years?
 - What was the purpose of the affordable housing reserve?
 - How did the Authority come to require a bad debt provision?
31. Members were advised:
 - The Planning Inspectorate were keen to return to in-person examinations as soon as possible.
 - The carry forward was largely project driven due to the pandemic and was high compared to previous years.
 - The affordable housing fund was an important provision and was used to assist organisations in bringing forward and purchasing more affordable homes.
 - The bad debt provision arose from the stewardship of Chapel Common. Although the debt was being pursued there was a possibility it would not be able to be recovered.

32. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:
1. Note the provisional 2020/21 revenue outturn position of a net £496,000 below budget variance for the 2020/21 financial year.
 2. Approve the revenue budget carry forward requests from 2020/21 to 2021/22 of £1,174,000 as set out in Appendix 2.
 3. Approve the following Capital variations as detailed in paragraph 3.5;
 - a) (£275,000) reprofile to the 2020/21 financial year to fund completion of Phase 2 and future phases of the National Park Signage Project;
 - b) (£26,000) reprofile to the 2020/21 financial year to fund two new vehicles to replace the aged Nissan Navara pickup trucks.
 4. Approve the use of £35,000 revenue below budget variance as a contribution to the Affordable Housing Reserve and the balance of £461,000 be transferred to the General Reserves as set out in section 3.6
 5. Note the Treasury Management overview and position as at financial year-end 2020/21.

ITEM 14. RESPONSE TO HIGHWAYS ENGLAND'S SECTION 42 STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON THE M3 JUNCTION 9 IMPROVEMENTS SCHEME

33. The Major Projects Lead introduced the report (NPA21/22-04), reminded Members of the content, updated Members that any reference to the Dark Skies Technical Advice Note should now refer to the updated advice released within the last week, and gave a presentation.
34. Members made the following comments:
- The tone of the response and that it was only a holding objection was disappointing. As a major development, there were clear statements about the effects of developments in national parks and what the Authority should expect. Under the current situation, and as HE had failed to listen to previous comments and joint asks, the response should be much stronger and should be a clear objection.
 - If possible, as part of the response, could we also press the green bridge idea?
35. Members were advised:
- HE had been clear that a green bridge was not part of this project but that another team within HE were considering it.
36. Maggie Jones left the meeting at 2.00pm.
37. It was proposed, seconded and agreed to amend the recommendations to approve the principles of the draft response at appendix 5 and to delegate the agreement and submission of a consultation response to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Authority.
38. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:
1. Approve the principles of the draft consultation response to Highways England's as set out in Appendix 5, and
 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, to agree and submit a consultation response incorporating the comments of the National Park Authority.

ITEM 15. UPDATES TO THE SCHEME OF GENERAL DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTORS

39. The Head of Governance introduced the report (NPA21/22-05) and reminded Members of the content.

40. In light of the discussion at Agenda Item 11 it was proposed, seconded and agreed that recommendation 1b would be removed.
41. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:
1. Agree to amend the delegation of functions to the Chief Executive to include the power to:
 - a) make such decisions and take such actions he considers necessary, in line with any conditions imposed by Defra, and where appropriate taking into account any recommendations received from the Local Assessment Panel, any guidance issued by Defra and any professional advice received, to deliver the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme including but not limited to, the appointment and administration of the Local Assessment Panel and the approval of grant funding applications, irrespective of value; and;
 2. Agree to amend the delegation of functions to the Director of Planning to include:
 - a) Where a Development Consent Order has been granted by the relevant Secretary of State, the Director of Planning shall determine the discharge of requirements imposed by the Development Consent Order which relate to SDNPA as the Local Planning Authority.
 3. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary updates to and republish the Authority's Standing Orders for Regulation of Authority Proceedings and Business.

ITEM 16. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

42. Authority Members noted the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 11 March 2021 and 15 April 2021.

ITEM 17 POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

43. Authority Members noted the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 25 February 2021 and 29 April 2021.

ITEM 18 PART II MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2021

44. The part II minutes of the Authority meeting held on 25 March 2021 were approved as a correct record.
45. The Chair closed the meeting at 2.10pm.

Signed _____

Dated _____

