

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

### **AUTHORITY MEETING**

Held at 2.00pm on 19 October 2023 in the Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH.

Present:

Heather Baker, Annie Brown, Antonia Cox, John Cross, Debbie Curnow-Ford, Peter Diplock, Chris Dowling, Janet Duncton, Mark Fairweather, Joan Grech, Melanie Hunt, John Hyland, Maggie Jones, Gary Marsh, Stephen McAuliffe, William Meyer, Robert Mocatta, Jerry Pett, Steven Ridgeon, Vanessa Rowlands, Andrew Shaxson, Daniel Stewart-Roberts, Vicki Wells and Stephen Whale.

South Downs National Park Authority Officers:

Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive), Andrew Lee (Director of Countryside Policy and Management), Tim Slaney (Director of Planning), Louise Read (Monitoring Officer), Nigel Manvell (Chief Finance Officer), Claire Tester (Planning Policy Manager), Ruth James (Communications and Engagement Manager), Mark Alden (Nature Based Solutions Manager), Richard Sandiford (Head of Governance), and Jane Roberts (Governance Officer).

### **CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS**

79. The Chair welcomed all present and informed them of general housekeeping matters.
80. 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.

### **ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

81. Apologies were received from Alun Alesbury, Tim Burr, Janet Duncton and Theresa Fowler.

### **ITEM 2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

82. The following declarations were made:
  - Chris Dowling declared a public service interest in Agenda Item 9 as an East Sussex County Councillor.

### **ITEM 3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 11 JULY 2023**

83. The minutes of the Authority meeting held on 11 July 2023 were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendment:
  - Item 4, bullet point one, Janet Duncton West Sussex District Councillor, amend title to West Sussex County Councillor.

### **ITEM 4. URGENT MATTERS**

84. There were none.

### **ITEM 5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

85. There was none.

### **ITEM 6. NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

86. 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 15. 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 previous meeting

## **ITEM 7. AUTHORITY CHAIR UPDATE**

87. The Authority Chair introduced the report (NPA23/24-10).
88. Members made the following comment:
- South Downs Commercial Operations Ltd had recently appointed Adam Coxon to the Board.

## **ITEM 8. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PROGRESS REPORT**

89. The Chief Executive introduced the report (NPA23/24-11) and provided the following updates:
- Anita Kerwyn-Nye had been appointed as a new Director to replace Andrew Lee who would be leaving January 2024.
  - Urgent Actions taken since the last Authority Meeting on 11 July 2023.
    - Submission of the Permitted Development Rights consultation.
    - Submission of Plan-Making Reforms consultation
    - Approval of additional £50k towards the replacement sewage treatment works at SSCP.
  - SDNPA Response to the State of Nature Report (tabled).
90. Members made the following comments:
- Could a copy of the Permitted Development Rights consultation response be circulated by Member Services automatically rather than Members being notified of urgent actions and having to request a copy? Was this required by Standing Orders?
  - Paragraph 3.9 There was concern over the route of Rampion and with the lack of constructor engagement.
  - Paragraph 4.4 Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Sussex were doing their first briefing for landowners, farmers and foresters, how would it fit in with other schemes? Hampshire County Council (HCC) were going to brief its Members Wednesday 25 October on Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), what did 'work underway' on stakeholder management actually mean?
  - Paragraph 3.5, what was the timeline and deadline for receiving the projects? Junction 9 of the M3 roundabout, had there been any update on if the National Highways were listening to the SDNPA?
  - Thanked Maggie Jones for her work on strengthening the Section 62 duty on public bodies, outlined in Paragraph 2.2. It was a disappointment that the power of competence was not included. Was there scope to work with another body who already had the power of competence to use theirs?
  - There were worrying aspects in the planning sector with permitted development rights, including high streets with the SDNPA having no influence. Paragraph 3.7 part of the Natural England (NE) Glover consultation response, when would this be available to look at?
  - The Rother Summit was very exciting for the National Park.
91. Members were advised:
- The Permitted Development Rights consultation response was posted on the website and the link to that was circulated to Members. Notification only was required in Standing Orders.

- Frustrations had been heard from the Rampion project, and they were following their own path, the SDNPA had tried to engage with the project.
- SDNPA had seen the HCC presentation and it appeared they had set a huge task for themselves, and it remained to be seen what value the LNRS would add to the work currently being undertaken. The guidance was also confusing with the overlap of the Environmental Improvement Plan and 30 by 30.
- The timeline for receiving the projects should be in place in 2024. The types of projects and guidance of what an LNRS would look like had not yet been set. The network of the LNRS indicated where you could invest to build a green infrastructure network. The County Councils (CC) had been given the job of pulling it all together.
- Any delays in CC LNRS would not delay what the SDNPA was doing, it would be just seen as added value.
- Paragraph 3.5, the examination of the M3 Junction 9 improvements scheme had been attended by officers and had been making submissions partly with Winchester City and Hampshire County Councils, a good joint effort. It was expected the scheme would go ahead.
- The Authority could not use another organisation's power of competence.
- The NPE response was already available and could be viewed on the SDNPA website.

92. **RESOLVED:** The Authority noted the progress made by the South Downs National Park Authority (the Authority) since the last report.

93. Jerry Pett joined the meeting at 14.11pm.

#### **ITEM 9. EAST SUSSEX MINERALS AND WASTE PLAN – MAIN MODS**

94. The Planning Policy Manager introduced the report (NPA23/24-12).

95. **RESOLVED:** The Authority:

Agreed that the Proposed Modifications to the Submission draft of the Joint South Downs National Park Authority, East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council Waste and Minerals Local Plan Review Revised Policies document, and its supporting documents, be published for a representation period of eight weeks.

#### **ITEM 10. SOUTH DOWNS MANIFESTO**

96. The Director of Countryside Policy and Management introduced the report (NPA23/24-13).

97. Members made the following comments:

- Could the South Downs Partnership's asks be shared when completed?
- Endorsed the use of 'note' rather than 'approve' for recommendation No.2.
- There was concern expressed by some Members about the 'asks' being politicised. Also, about mission creep and that this looked like a larger remit for the Authority with more powers but no extra resources to carry things out which could move the Authority away from its core purposes and duty. Caution was suggested in how these 'asks' were used.
- This was not considered contentious by some Members and that it was standing up for nature in the SDNP on the basis of a flat cash settlement and what the Authority felt it was important to be doing.
- The SDNPA needed to be taken seriously in the national debate. This was an opportunity to raise the profile and was a helpful tool.

- The SDNPA had a duty of care for future generations. It had set out a broad framework to move things forward.
- The five asks identified barriers which prevented the SDNPA from fully delivering its statutory purposes in the most efficient and effective way.
- In relation to Ask 1:
  - One of the key asks was to support farms and land managers, why not businesses?
  - The SDNPA should facilitate the distribution of money which was elsewhere coming to the SDNP.
- In relation to Ask 3:
  - Who currently had responsibility for nature reserves?
  - Consideration should be given to the SDNPA's role given Natural England monitored the performance of National Nature Reserves (NNR).
- In relation to Ask 4:
  - There were concerns with the Freedom to Roam Campaign for National Parks. Some people experience anxiety going into the countryside and need guidance.
  - Could it be perceived that the SDNPA was diverting money away from the public health budget?
  - What was "X" and who would decide it?
  - The wording might need adjusting as a lot of social prescribing already took place.
  - Given the evidence that access to countryside was good for mental health, could the ask be for funding for a pilot project around social prescribing to the SDNP?
  - How could you see this implemented? Social prescribing would come via a GP referral and County Council's generally no longer had funding available for discretionary services.
  - Who would fund it, who's budget? Public Health England (PHE) would need to be involved in discussions on this.
- In relation to Ask 5:
  - Agreed that any penalties for polluters in the park should be spent within the SDNP.

98. John Cross left the meeting at 15.01.

99. Members were advised:

- Recommendation 1 should have been 'endorse' rather than 'approve' and the paper would be brought back to a future National Park Authority meeting for approval.
- Mission creep is best avoided through the Corporate and Management Plans.
- In relation to Ask 1:
  - The key ask could include support to businesses.
- In relation to Ask 2:
  - Would like to invite partners to the Summit, directing the investment in the SDNP.
  - If demand was higher than what could be delivered, a pilot would be good for the delivery of Green Finance, which could then be scaled up.
- In relation to Ask 3:

- Many NNRs were publicly owned; ones owned by Natural England received funding. Many NNRs and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in public ownership were in poor condition.
- In relation to Ask 4:
  - The language from Right to Roam did not feature in the SDNP document. Many other national parks did want to use the wording from Right to Roam.
  - In relation to the public health budget there had been numerous studies showing that getting people into nature was better value than giving people a medical prescription.
  - The CEO had supported the mental health charity Grow, and there was evidence being out in the countryside was good for people’s mental health.
  - The SDNPA Health and Wellbeing Officer was in contact with both PHE and County Council regarding resource, funding and making a case for public wellbeing, which should have common cause. The Authority was not fighting for the same money but working with NHS England and the County Councils.
- In relation to Ask 5:
  - Any penalties for pollution in the SDNP should be spent within the park and not held with the Treasury, would be more efficient.

100. It was proposed, seconded and agreed to amend recommendation No.1 to “Comment on ...” rather than “Approve ...”; and to insert a new recommendation No.2 to “Note that the NPA will approve the final form of words of the SDNPA’s five key asks and their surrounding narrative at a future meeting” and to remove the original recommendation No.3 and replace with the original recommendation No.2.

101. **RESOLVED:** The Authority:

1. Commented on the use of the five key asks and their surrounding narrative (Appendix 1) as the basis for SDNPA advocacy work ahead of the next General Election;
2. Noted that the NPA will approve the final form of words of the SDNPA’s five key asks and their surrounding narrative at a future meeting; and.
3. Noted the Call to Action from the Campaign for National Parks (Appendix 2).

## ITEM 11. 2024 SUMMIT

102. The Communications and Engagement Manager introduced the report (NPA23/24-14).

103. Members made the following comments:

- Would green finance work in the wider area, or just the SDNP?
- Would there be pre-reading prior to the day to allow attendees to sign up to an accord?
- SSSI’s, due to their designation, were currently exempt from private finance, would that also be the case for NNRs?
- Banks and consultants would like to be involved, had there been any consideration to charging them a fee to attend which could then go to funding another in the future?

104. Members were advised:

- Landowners were key to good green financing.
- Outputs would be not just within the South Downs National Park but also across the whole region. Attendees would be encouraged to agree and adopt a set of principles

with partners for a joined-up approach, to empower landowners to deliver nature recovery and work with other National Parks to roll out.

- The direction of travel indicated by the 21 February consultation response from Defra was that SSSIs would be able to benefit from some private finance mechanisms, but the situation around SSSIs and NNRs would be clarified once the BNG regulations were published on 30 November.
- There would be pre-reading so that experts and delivery partners would not turn up without prior knowledge. There would be an emerging draft of the accords prior to the summit.
- Had not previously considered charging a fee to attend the day and sign up to the accord, but something that would be taken away and considered.

105. **RESOLVED:** The Authority endorsed plans for the South Downs Green Finance Summit.

106. Heather Baker left the meeting at 15.20pm

107. Robert Mocatta left the meeting 15.22pm

## **ITEM 12. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES**

108. The Head of Governance introduced report (NPA23/24-15).

109. Members made the following comments:

- The Chair welcomed Vicki Wells and Antonia Cox to the SDNPA and congratulated Steven Ridgeon on being appointed Deputy Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee.

110. **RESOLVED:** The Authority:

1. Agreed the appointment of Vicki Wells to the Policy and Resources Committee until the Authority AGM in 2024 as set out at Appendix I of this report;
2. Agreed the appointment of Antonia Cox to the Planning Committee until the Authority AGM in 2024 as set out at Appendix I of this report; and,
3. Noted the election of Steven Ridgeon as co-Deputy Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, alongside Maggie Jones who was appointed at the AGM.

111. Peter Diplock left the meeting at 15.27pm

## **ITEM 13. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES**

112. Authority Members noted the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 8 June and 13 July 2023.

## **ITEM 14. POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES**

113. Authority Members noted the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 23 February and 20 July 2023.

## **ITEM 15. PART II MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11 JULY 2023**

114. The part II minutes of the Authority meeting held on 11 July 2023 were approved as a correct record.

115. The Chair closed the meeting at 15.28pm.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_