

Agenda Item 6
Report NPA23/24-16

Report to **South Downs National Park Authority**
Date **12 December 2023**
By **Authority Chair**
Title of Report **Authority Chair Update**

Note

Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to note the update from the Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report outlines the activities of the Chair and the Members of the SDNPA since the last NPA meeting on the 19 October 2023.

2. Update

Member Activity

2.1 In October, Members attended a workshop on the developing Local Plan. This was an overview of the strategic thinking towards potential allocation of sites. The session was well attended and members were in agreement that they wanted to see more affordable housing being delivered as well as the environmental benefits of sustainable buildings and positive green infrastructure.

In advance of a paper going to the Planning committee on the allocation of Community Infrastructure levy, there was a full member workshop on the subject in November. This gave new members an opportunity to understand SDNPA's CIL collection and allocation process and for all members to contribute to how this year's allocation was being shared. A final paper will be approved by the Planning committee.

National Landscapes launch

2.2 I attended the launch, on 22 November, of the National Landscapes. This is the new name for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The rebranding is part of a big project to highlight and strengthen the national importance of these landscapes.

2.3 National Parks and National Landscapes are two of the partners in the Protected Landscapes Partnership which Defra hope to be able to launch by the end of the year. National Trails and Natural England being the others. I was pleased to attend and support our landscape colleagues as they sought to increase their national profile through their new identity. The event also provided a good opportunity to connect with our close neighbours in the Surrey Hills NL, High Weald NL and Chichester Harbour NL. We have much in common with these designations in terms of geology, agriculture, and population pressures.

National Park Partnership AGM

2.4 I attended the National Parks Partnership AGM hosted at the Peak District NPA at the end of October. National Park Partnership is the body that supports the UK's 15 National Parks

work with a range of commercial, sustainability and philanthropic partners at a national level. This year has seen a successful partnership with BMW and their Recharge In Nature project. Alongside a number of pending EV Charging Points at Seven Sisters, this partnership has also contributed to the Trust's "Pounds for Ponds" initiative. This project has restored 10 dew and nature ponds this year, including those at Newbarn Farm and Foxhole Cottages.

- 2.5 We were given presentations on the evolution of NPP's work with regards to developing new commercial partnerships and opportunities for private finance in nature. SDNPA's ReNature credits were quoted as an example of innovation in this area.
- 2.6 Many of our members are appointed to outside bodies. This report also records the invaluable work they do representing the Authority at these meetings.

National Park Societies Annual Conference

- 2.7 Tim Burr is the SDNPA member appointed to Campaign for National Parks' council as an observer. In this capacity he attended the National Park Societies Annual Conference, in October, which was held in the Lake District NP. Societies from nearly all the English and Welsh National Parks were represented and the theme of the conference was *Sandford Principle: Sacrosanct or Stale*, with successive sessions headlined *Practice, Politics, Protest*. "There was general support for the Sandford principle, and some desire to strengthen it, for example against second homes and CO2-emitting activity. At the workshop on "Parks for All" it was even argued that access was not an end in itself, but rather the need to increase visitor, staff and member diversity in National Parks."
- 2.8 Next year's conference is being hosted by the South Downs Society, so will be on our doorstep.

Campaign for National Parks AGM

- 2.9 Tim Burr reported that "I duly attended the Council and AGM of the Campaign for National Parks this afternoon. Ruth Bradshaw, Policy and Research Manager, presented on progress with their 'Health Check' on nature recovery and habitat condition in the English (and Welsh) National Parks, which was the main item on the agenda. This, apparently, is only the first of a succession of 'health checks', and similar reviews of other areas of National Park activity are promised for the future.
- 2.10 It was conceded that people working in the National Parks were doing good work under difficult circumstances, but Ruth asserted that 'a lot more action was needed'. The 'exponential' growth of threats to nature was compared with the 'linear' response from its guardians. I pointed out that, with flat cash funding over four years now, National Parks were actually undergoing an 'exponential' reduction in real resources in the face of compound rates of inflation. But we were fighting back, with growing charitable income via the Trust, and an entrepreneurial approach to the emerging markets in environmental credits.
- 2.11 Janette Ward stood down at the AGM as Chair of the Trustees. Her successor is Andrew McCloy, a former Chair of both the Peak District NPA and of National Parks England.

Hampshire 2050 Summit

- 2.12 Debbie Curnow-Ford attended the Hampshire 2050 Summit.
[Hampshire 2050 Vision for the Future](#)
- 2.13 The workshop event was hosted by Hampshire County Council (HCC) but HCC Leader, Cllr Rob Humby, stressed that HCC was facilitating the partnership. Attendees were appointed to 1 of 4 workgroups where they discussed and prioritised in order of importance 1 of the 4 previously agreed Strategic Priorities:
- Changing Climate
 - Changing Environment
 - Changing Economy
 - Changing Population and Society

- 2.14 The priorities were shortlisted by strategy and then overall:
- 1 Improving health, care and wellbeing.
 - 2 Deliver the infrastructure we need for the future – both physical and digital
 - Joint 3 Decarbonise both commercial and household transport in Hampshire, providing credible alternatives and planning for the future
 - Joint 3 Work towards a clean environment (air, water, soil) with increased biodiversity and enhanced landscapes.
- 2.15 We received an excellent presentation from Dmitrijs Meiksans, Youth Parliament representative for Northwest Hampshire on the priorities for young people (definition 10 – 19 years old).
- 2.16 Thank you to members John Cross (Chichester DC), Stephen McAuliffe (Arun DC) and Tim Burr for attending the River Rother summit, as mentioned in the CEO's Report.

Member Changes

- 2.17 Sadly, William Meyer is no longer a member of the Authority. He is moving home and has had to stand down from his parish council. As a parish member for East Sussex, this means he can no longer stay a member of SDNPA. I would like to thank him for his service to the Authority, where in his previous role as the member from Lewes District council, he was a member of the Planning Committee and then a Director of South Downs Commercial Operations Ltd (our Trading Company).

3. Conclusion

I am happy to respond to any questions that may arise from this update and will provide any further updates as needed at the meeting.

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Authority Chair
South Downs National Park Authority

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Appendices	None
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive; Head of Governance.
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	None

