

**SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Held at: 10.00am on 14 December 2023 at The Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre.

Present: Heather Baker (Chair), Antonia Cox, Debbie Curnow-Ford, Janet Duncton, John Hyland, Stephen McAuliffe, Robert Mocatta, Andrew Shaxson and Daniel Stewart-Roberts.

Officers: Rebecca Moutrey (Senior Solicitor), Mike Hughes (Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager), Kelly Porter (Major Projects Lead), Nikki Allen (CIL Planning Officer), Richard Fryer (Senior Governance Officer) and Jane Roberts (Governance Officer).

**OPENING REMARKS**

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and informed those present that South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Members had a primary responsibility for ensuring that the Authority furthered the National Park Purposes and Duty. That 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**

127. There were apologies for absence from Alun Alesbury, John Cross and Gary Marsh.

**ITEM 2: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

128. The following declarations were made:

- Debbie Curnow-Ford declared a public service interest in Item 6 as a Hampshire County Councillor.
- Janet Duncton declared a public service interest in Item 6 as a West Sussex County Councillor.
- Robert Mocatta, declared a public service interest in Item 6 as an East Hampshire District Councillor and Hampshire County Councillor.
- Daniel Stewart-Roberts declared a public service interest in Item 6 as a Lewes District Councillor.

**ITEM 3: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 9 NOVEMBER 2023**

129. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**ITEM 4: UPDATES ON PREVIOUS COMMITTEE DECISIONS**

There were none.

**ITEM 5: URGENT ITEMS**

130. There were none.

**ITEM 6: INFRASTRUCTURE BUSINESS PLAN 2023**

131. The Officer reminded Members of the report (PC23/24-19).

132. The following speaker addressed the committee in support of the application:

- Councillor Lee Scott, speaking on behalf of Fittleworth Parish Council.

133. The Committee considered the report by the Director of Planning (Report PC23/24-19) the updates and commented as follows:

- The Chair noted this was a good news story, giving grants of £2.5 million to support communities and enable them to further benefit from development in the SDNP.

### Agenda Item 3

- Table I of the report listed example green infrastructure projects, which included microgeneration energy schemes. Could the definition of microgeneration be provided?
- There could be applications for up to 70 solar panels for personal use, clarification on the size of an application should be given.
- Page 69, Liss Parish Council were looking to extend Liss Railways Station Platform with the project cost of £1m. Would the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) help in the future with the project, or would the Authority's criteria mean that this project would always be outside the scope of funding?
- The SDNPA needed to facilitate access to the park. How far beyond the South Downs National Park (SDNP) boundary could potential funding go, and would it just be Parishes that crossed the border that would benefit?
- The Table on pages 30/31 identified different categories that fitted into the purposes and duty of the Authority. Transport was listed only for purpose 2, but was it actually relevant to both purposes and duty? Would this limited classification reduce the appetite for approving transport projects?
- Was the balance right between encouraging applications and not raising expectations unnecessarily on unsuccessful applications leading to wasted effort by applicants?
- Was the SDNPA casting the net too wide on applications?
- Match funding was encouraged, and it was outlined in the report.
- The Chair outlined that Officers had conversations with applicants prior to receiving their applications. There was an excellent spread of projects across the park, would have liked to have seen more Nature Recovery (NR) project applications. However, could only respond to what applications were being submitted but would encourage more NR applications in the coming year.

#### 134. Members were advised:

- Microgeneration energy schemes were defined as small scale community lead projects such as small scale PV on roofs and small wind turbines. Some villages were also considering ground source heat pumps which would be included.
- The Liss Railway Station platform extension project was listed in the infrastructure business plan, but was not recommended for 2023 as the project was still awaiting Network Rail to complete the feasibility work. The Authority was working with Councillor Smith, who was leading on the project, and he was talking with other potential funders to help deliver the project.
- How far beyond the SDNP boundary funding would go would be dependent on the project and what benefit it provided to people who lived and worked in the park. It would be assessed on a case by case basis, the example given was Egrets Way.
- The Table on page 30/31 outlining the infrastructure business plan and transport could be adjusted, as a judgement was made at the time of writing the report, all three categories could be included.
- It was important to get the right balance to encourage the right applications. Applicants were advised on the process, on how to put applications together and informed that the process was very competitive.
- There was always a balance in casting the net too wide on applications for funding, and experience generally showed that there was more concern if people were unaware of potential funding than perhaps if an application was unsuccessful. The CIL process was comparatively simple and the team were available to provide assistance.

**135. RESOLVED:**

The Planning Committee:

1. Approved the Infrastructure Business Plan 2023 (attached at Appendix 2 and 3);
2. Approved:
  - the in-principle allocation of the Community Infrastructure Levy 2022 /23 receipts of £2,590,800.70 to the projects identified in paragraph 4.4 of this report, and to delegate authority to the Director of Planning to undertake any further assessment of the projects prior to the final allocation of funds as detailed within paragraphs 4.7 and 4.8 of this report, to determine the final allocations of funds up to £2,590,800.70 in respect of those projects and to authorise payments accordingly;
  - the ring-fencing of the 2022/23 Community Infrastructure Levy funds for three years and should the funding of these infrastructure projects (identified in paragraph 4.4) no longer be required after three years, the money would be made available for other projects within the Infrastructure Business Plan, and
3. Delegated authority to the Director of Planning to make minor amendments to the wording and formatting within the Infrastructure Business Plan 2023 prior to publication. Any such amendments shall not alter the meaning of the document.

136. The Chair closed the meeting at 10.25pm

**CHAIR**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

