

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING

Held at 2.00pm on 17 December 2020 using Zoom Video Conferencing.

Present:

Alun Alesbury, Heather Baker, Annie Brown, Tim Burr, Chris Dowling, Janet Duncton, Barbara Holyome, Melanie Hunt, Doug Jones, Baroness Jones of Whitchurch, Michael Lunn, William Meyer, Robert Mocatta, Russell Oppenheimer, Martin Osborne, Ian Phillips (Chair), Henry Potter, Vanessa Rowlands, Andrew Shaxson, Isabel Thurston, Diana van der Klugt, Richard Waring 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), Alan Brough (Head of Business Services), Nigel Manvell (Chief Finance Officer), Robin Parr (Head of Governance), Richard Sandiford (Senior Governance Officer) and Sara Osman (Governance Officer).

Also attended by: Julie Fawcett (Chair of the South Downs National Trust), Aimee Felus (Project Manager for The Aquifer Partnership (TAP), Ruth James (Communications and Engagement Manager) and James Winkworth (Head of Marketing and Income Generation).

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

121. The Chair welcomed all present and stated that:

- Due to the current Coronavirus pandemic the South Downs Centre and Memorial Hall remained closed for public meetings until further notice, hence the meeting of the South Downs National Park Authority was held using the Zoom Cloud Meetings software.
- The meeting was being webcast by the Authority and would be available for subsequent on-line viewing. Anyone entering the meeting was considered to have given consent to be filmed or recorded, and for the possible use of images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purpose

122. The Senior Governance Officer reminded Members of the protocol that would be followed during the meeting.

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

123. Apologies were received from Thérèse Evans and Gary Marsh.

ITEM 2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

124. The following declarations of interest were made:

- Stephen Whale, Vanessa Rowlands and William Meyer each declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16, as one of the recommendations was to appoint them as Directors of the South Downs Commercial Operations Limited trading company.
- Janet Duncton and Richard Waring declared personal interests in Agenda Item 10 as they both were Trustees of the South Downs National Park Trust.

ITEM 3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2020

125. The minutes of the Authority meetings held on 15 October 2020 were approved as a correct record.

ITEM 4. MATTERS ARISING

126. There were none.

ITEM 5. URGENT ITEMS

127. There were none.

ITEM 6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

128. The Chair invited Vic lent, speaking on behalf of Tony Whitbread, as a representative of the South Downs Network, to address the meeting.
129. Vic lent made the following points:
- He commended the SDNPA's work on climate change and nature.
 - The South Downs Network would like to see the SDNPA response to Highways England's preferred, grey route for the A27 Arundel, which was announced on the 15 October 2020.
 - He encouraged the SDNPA to engage in a significant way with Highways England, Transport for the South East (TfSE) and West Sussex County Council to ensure that the best sustainable transport solutions were implemented along the south coast.
 - The South Downs Network did not consider it sufficient to acknowledge that the ban on petrol and diesel cars by 2030 was a step in the right direction, and urged the SDNPA to do their utmost to protect the sensitive and beautiful landscape, whether the final route was inside or outside of the South Downs National Park.

ITEM 7. NEED FOR PART II EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

130. The Chair asked the Authority if any Member wished to discuss any matters contained in Appendix 4 of Agenda Item 16. As no Member wished to discuss any matters in Appendix 4 of Agenda Item 16 the Chair informed the Authority that the meeting would not move into private session to discuss Appendix 4 of Agenda Item 16.

ITEM 8. AUTHORITY CHAIR UPDATE

131. The Authority Chair introduced report (NPA20/21-15) and reminded Members of the content. The Chair gave an update on:
- Recent meetings with Caroline Ansell, MP for Eastbourne, and with the leader of Hampshire County Council that had been very useful.
 - His attendance at a meeting to discuss South East and East Protected Landscapes (SEEPL), which involved a significant discussion on nature recovery and included representatives from the National Association of AONBs and Natural England.
132. Members commented that:
- It was noted how active the Chair had been since his appointment in Summer 2020, with many meetings with MPs and key stakeholders.
133. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to note the update from the Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority.

ITEM 9. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PROGRESS REPORT

134. The Chief Executive introduced report (NPA20/21-16) and reminded Members of the content. The Chief Executive referred to the following updates since the report had been published:
- There had been five confirmed cases of Covid-19 amongst staff. As a precaution, the South Downs Centre had been closed to Officers on 15 December and was planned to reopen on 4 January 2021 if Government guidance allowed. This would not affect the running of the organisation.
 - A recent bid for funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund Green Recovery Challenge Fund under the title of "Generation Green" had been successful. This was undertaken by the National Parks England (NPE) Educators Group, in partnership with the Scouts/Guides, YHA and other partners. £2.5m was awarded in total, with more than £0.5m allocated to the 10 English National Parks. This 16-month project would provide valuable support towards achieving the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) outcomes. The project would prioritise young people from

BAME groups, disadvantaged backgrounds and coastal communities and enable the retention nationally of 20 jobs, the creation of 10 new jobs, 30 Kickstart placements, 7 apprenticeships, and 659 skilled volunteer roles in the outdoor sector.

135. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:

- The Cotswolds, The Chilterns and the Dorset/East Devon Coast group have well-articulated local campaigns for National Park status. The CEO had met with several of the candidates recently to share best practice.
- All of the above mentioned groups were interested in the SDNPA planning model of working with host authorities, as there were many parallels between areas in terms of striking a balance between countryside and people pressures.
- The SDNPA had kept the apprenticeship scheme going and had taken on three new business apprentices since September.

136. Members commented that:

- They welcomed the letter from the Housing Minister stating that National Parks would be classed as protected zones in the system proposed in the Planning White Paper.
- The recent award successes for the Authority were noted and officers thanked for their hard work and achievements.
- They congratulated the successful “Generation Green” funding bid, which would pave the way for important work with young people, and hoped that further bids would be submitted for the forthcoming Green Recovery Challenge Fund round.
- It was noted that the work being undertaken demonstrated that the Authority was responding well to the direction of travel set out in the Glover Review on protected landscapes.

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

ITEM 10. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK TRUST

138. Authority Members considered a verbal update from the Chair of the South Downs National Park Trust (SDNPT) on the following points:

- The SDNPT had raised £504,000 in 2019-20, which was the second highest amount of charitable income generation by any National Park in England. This was a great achievement considering that the SDNPT was only established in 2018 and comprised only 2 officers.
- The support from the SDNPA to cover operating costs until 2021 had ensured that 100% of every donation went towards delivering much-needed projects within the National Park.
- The Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) had allocated £20k to local community groups and a joint endowment between the Trust and the SDNPA has been established.
- The bid to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund had succeeded at Stage 1, securing funds to develop a full Stage 2 proposal to support community-driven climate action work in the Ouse Valley between Lewes and Newhaven.
- Public facing campaigns, such as Bee Lines and Trees for the Downs, had been a great success. The latter will support the targeted planting of 50,000 trees over the next year with advice and support from SDNPA officers, and funding from South East Water had been secured to continue the project for a further five years. The first tree planted was featured on the TV programme *Escape to the Country* which was available to view internationally.

- The Trust provided a good return on investment, and further fund raising proposals were planned throughout the coming year to support community projects which deliver against outcomes of the PMP. Members were encouraged to share information about the Trust with their networks and communities.
- I39. In response to questions, Offices advised Members of the following:
- Corporate funders were using the shared identity through the trust.
- I40. Members made the following comments:
- Members congratulated the Trust for its achievements in such a short period of time and with such a small officer team. It was noted that the strength of partnerships was a key to driving this success and that it was important to support the partnership model going forward.
- I41. The Authority thanked the Chair of the South Downs National Park Trust for her update.

ITEM 11. UPDATE ON THE AQUIFER PARTNERSHIP (TAP)

- I42. Authority Members considered a verbal update from the TAP Project Manager on the following points:
- The project began as Brighton CHAMP in 2016 and was relaunched as The Aquifer Partnership (TAP) this year. It was a collaboration between the SDNPA, Southern Water, the Environment Agency and Brighton and Hove City Council. The aim of the partnership was to address rising levels of nitrates in aquifers which provided drinking water. Nitrate levels were rising worldwide, and this project aimed to showcase how nature-based solutions reduced pollution into aquifers by up to 80%. It was one of the few projects nationally which looked at sustainable drainage in both rural and urban areas
 - TAP had supported university research, worked with farmers and golf courses to look at nitrate reduction measures, and taught in schools about how Rainscapes and Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs) prevented water run-off in urban areas.
 - Plans for the following year included delivering workshops for land managers.
- I43. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:
- TAP was seeking to work with the two other water companies in the National Park area. They had good links with Portsmouth Water, who had been working on this issue with farmers in their area for some time.
 - TAP also sought to work with Local Authorities and developers to ensure ground water and SUDs are included in relevant policies, especially for redevelopment of brownfield sites.
 - Golf courses could make a significant contribution towards reducing nitrates in aquifer water. Pyecombe Golf Course provided a good example of reduced use of fertilisers, herbicides and fungicides and. TAP were looking to spread awareness to other golf clubs using this example.
 - Key sources of nitrate pollution in aquifers included farming and water run-off from roads. This had informed the focus of work for the TAP, supporting farmers to move towards conservation agriculture, and promoting SUDs.
- I44. The Authority thanked the TAP Project Manager for the informative update.
- I45. The meeting adjourned for a 5 minute break.

ITEM 12. SOUTH DOWNS PARTNERSHIP

- I46. The Director of Countryside Policy and Management introduced report (NPA20/21-17) and reminded Members of the content.
- I47. The Chair of the Authority reminded Members of the background to the South Downs Partnership (SDP) and the need to re-establish it as a key mechanism for delivering the new

2020-24 Partnership Management Plan (PMP). If approved the Authority would first seek to appoint an independent Chair of the Partnership, with the aim that the SDP be operational by summer 2021.

148. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:

- The format for the new South Downs Partnership sought to build on the success of the previous SDP. It should help the SDNPA deliver the outcomes of the PMP and the Climate Change Action Plan.
- The costs of setting up, and officer time used to run the SDP, were considered modest in view of the added value it would bring in helping the SDNPA deliver on the outcomes of the PMP. The SDNPA could facilitate projects through the SDP, rather than provide project management resource to delivering specific projects.
- The sectors identified to make up the SDP had been thoroughly discussed. It was important to ensure the new SDP sought to ensure broader participation in the PMP and engagement with the National Park.
- The SDP could utilise the Citizens Panel to get feedback on its work from individuals living in the National Park.
- Although there was only one role specifically dedicated to farming and forestry, the SDNPA would continue to work with farmers, foresters and rural businesses, and other SDP roles might well be occupied by people from these backgrounds.
- It was confirmed that the wording in Appendix 3 should read *15 individuals as a lead from each identified area (plus an independent Chair)*.

149. Members made the following comments:

- Farming and forestry were underrepresented in the sectors identified to make up the SDP, and finding a farmer who was also an expert in forestry could be challenging.

150. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to agree:

1. The terms of reference for the South Downs's partnership attached at appendix 4;
2. The revised stakeholder engagement framework and the format for the new South Downs Partnership set out in appendices 2 and 3 (as corrected);
3. To delegate authority to the Director of Countryside Policy and Management, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, to select and appoint the chair and members of the South Downs Partnership, and to determine the basis of that appointment including the terms and conditions for the Chair and members of the partnership.

ITEM 13. SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITMENTS

151. The Director of Countryside Policy and Management introduced the report (NPA20/21-18) and reminded Members of the content. The recommendation would ratify the direction of travel towards net zero carbon equivalent with targets set for the SDNPA and for the National Park as a whole. These were set out in Appendix I to the report.

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

1. Note the climate and nature emergency that had been declared by a number of partner organisations
2. Agree the Authority's commitment to contribute to addressing the climate and nature emergency by:
 - a) Setting a target for the South Downs National Park Authority to become a 'Net-Zero' Organisation by 2030;

- b) Working with our constituent Local Authorities and other partners, in particular local communities and landowners, to deliver actions that respond effectively to the climate and nature emergency; and
 - c) Working towards the South Downs National Park becoming 'Net-Zero with Nature' by 2040, as set out in Appendix I
3. Adopt the action plan for delivery of these commitments as set out at appendix 2.

I53. Annie Brown and Martin Osborne left the meeting.

ITEM 14. COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

I54. The Communications and Engagement Manager introduced the report (NPA20/21-19) and reminded Members of the content.

I55. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:

- One of the issues raised by the Glover review of Protected Landscapes was that many people were still not engaged with the landscape and National Parks so the strategy demonstrated how the SDNPA could engage with groups we were not currently reaching and monitor this progress.
- Officers acknowledged the challenge of measuring the success of engaging with a wide variety of people, however, data provided through social media and news channels indicated that the SDNPA was reaching new audiences.
- Fresh, high quality online content was important to encourage new audiences to engage with the National Park and the work of the Authority.
- Officers noted that whilst the strategy focused on the central work of the Communications and Engagement Team, communications and engagement happened across the work of the Authority and was the responsibility of all staff and Members.

I56. Members made the following comments:

- Officers were thanked for a very good report.
- Communication was a key part of the work of the Authority and it was important to ensure that we continued to work in collaboration with partners on our communications and engagement

I57. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:

- I. Approve the updated Communications and Engagement Strategy 2021-25 as set out in Appendix I.

I58. Michael Lunn left the meeting.

ITEM 15. PUBLIC AFFAIRS STRATEGY

I59. The Communications and Engagement Manager introduced the report (NPA20/21-20) and reminded Members of the content.

I60. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:

- Whilst it was recognised that other organisations often outsourced public affairs, officers felt that this was not necessary for the SDNPA as the Public Affairs Strategy would be delivered by officers from across the organisation alongside the Communications and Engagement Team, who were well resourced.
- It was stressed that there was a need to focus on three issues only to maximise impact and to ensure adequate resources were available, in particular, staff expertise. Where specific expertise was needed, external sources would be sought.

161. Members made the following comments:
- Members commended the paper and fully supported the three key priorities which would form the basis of the strategy. It was agreed that focus was important and that resources should not be spread too thin.
162. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:
1. Agree the Public Affairs Strategy as set out at appendix I to include the three priority areas of Future of Farming, Nature Recovery and Engaging young people with nature, for the period January 2021- December 2023;
 2. Delegate Authority to the Chief Executive to make the necessary final changes to the strategy to reflect the priority areas agreed by the NPA;
 3. Agree that the annual delivery plan would be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Authority; and
 4. Note that the measures for each objective, as set out in the annual delivery plan would be reviewed by SMT on an ongoing basis.

ITEM 16. ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPANY LIMITED BY SHARES

163. The Chair and the Head of Governance introduced the report (NPA20/21-21) and reminded Members of the content. This paper followed on from a paper considered at the May 2020 NPA meeting where the Authority agreed to establish a trading company to deliver activities for a commercial purpose, initially at the Seven Sisters Country Park. This report sought approval for the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and the appointment of a Chair and Directors of the trading company. If approved, the issue of how the company's start-up capital was to be provided would need to come back to the NPA for approval, alongside an operating agreement and business plan.
164. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:
- Some matters relating to the Authority's role as shareholder of the trading company would be delegated to Trevor Beattie as CEO of the Authority. The Directors would take on the main body of work required by the trading company.
 - The report sought to ensure that "teckal status" was achieved for the company. The Authority had control to appoint and remove 5 directors to the trading company and the company would then be able to appoint a further two independent directors. This was normal practice for Local Authorities with wholly owned entities.
165. Members made the following comments:
- The Authority supported the recommendation and agreed there was a need to further develop commercial skills within the organisation.
166. The Chair thanked SDNPA Officers Tim Slaney, Andrew Lee and Authority Members Vanessa Rowlands, Stephen Whale, and William Meyer for putting themselves forward as directors of the company.
167. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:
1. Approve the Memorandum and Articles of Association and Conflict of Interests Policy set out at appendix I and delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Authority to amend and finalise the documents in accordance with ongoing specialist advice.
 2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to authorise the share capital of company of up to £100 on the basis that the Authority would subscribe for all the shares.
 3. Note that a proposal for the making of a loan/investment to the company would be brought to a future meeting alongside the operating agreement.
 4. Agree the appointment of SDNPA Officers Tim Slaney and Andrew Lee and Authority Members Vanessa Rowlands, Stephen Whale, and William Meyer as Directors of the company.

5. Agree the appointment of Stephen Whale as Chair of the Board of the Company
6. Note that the directors of the company would undertake a process to appoint Independent directors (up to a maximum of 2) in line with the memorandum and articles of association.
7. Agree the amended appendix 7 of the Authority's Standing Orders for Regulation of Authority Proceedings and Business as set out at appendix 3.
8. Note that the operating agreement between the SDNPA and South Downs Commercial Operations Limited would be presented to the NPA for agreement in March 2021.

ITEM 17. CO-OPTEE ROLE DESCRIPTION AND ALLOWANCES

168. The Chair and the Head of Governance introduced the report (NPA20/21-22) and reminded Members of the content. The principle of additional co-optees for the Policy and Resources (P&R) committee had been agreed at the 15 October NPA meeting. It was further agreed that officers should commission a single-issue review of the allowances scheme to consider the payment of an allowance to Co-opted Members of the Policy and Resources Committee. The review had been undertaken and had proposed role descriptions and an allowance for new and current co-optees. If agreed the updated allowances would be payable from 17 December 2020 and published on the Authority's website
169. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:
- Co-optees would be invited to attend all events, workshops and meetings. They would not have a vote but would be able to present to the P&R Committee and provide additional voices for Members to consider when making decisions.
170. Members made the following comments:
- Members welcomed co-optees for the valuable role they could play in putting forward voices the Authority did not usually hear from, and helping to further inform decision making.
171. **RESOLVED:** The Authority resolved to:
1. Agree the role description for Co-opted Members set out at Appendix 1
 2. Note the report of the independent Single Issue review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances set out at Appendix 2;
 3. Approve the revised scheme of Members allowance at Appendix 3 to include the payment of a Co-optees' Allowance of £2,970 per annum to the "new model" Co-optees and an allowance of £1,980 per annum to the Independent (CIPFA) Co-optees.
 4. Note that subsequent increases would take place, without reference back to the NPA, each year until 2024 in line with the indexation provisions set out in the scheme.
 5. Agree that the change to the members' allowance scheme would take effect from 17th December 2020.
172. Janet Duncton left the meeting.

ITEM 18. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

173. The Chair and the Head of Governance introduced the report (NPA20/21-23) and reminded Members of the content. The proposed changes to committee membership would make committees more manageable, whilst creating flexibility to use the strengths and skills of Members to support the work of the Authority. The proposals took into account the requirement to ensure an appropriate balance of Local Authority (LA) and Secretary of State members (SoS), including Parish Members, on committees (as provided for in legislation). This paper was brought before Members as the appointment to committees was a matter for the NPA to decide.
174. In response to questions, Officers advised Members of the following:

- The appointment of members to committees would be kept under regular review. Should a task end, or strategic role become redundant, their reappointment to a committee would come back to the NPA for approval. Of primary consideration for any review would be the requirement that committees maintained the appropriate balance of SoS and LA members, and that meetings were able to be quorate and make effective decisions. If the Authority was satisfied on both counts, Members could be considered for other supporting roles.

175. Members made the following comments:

- The Chair of the Planning Committee thanked William Meyer for his service on the Planning Committee, and welcomed Richard Waring to the Committee.
- The Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee thanked Helen Burton, Chris Dowling and Richard Waring for their service on the Policy and Resources Committee.

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

1. Agree to amend the membership of the Policy and Resources Committee by removing Authority Members Helen Burton, Chris Dowling and Richard Waring from the committee, noting that the membership of this committee will now total 12 members plus Co-opted Members
2. Agree to amend the membership of the Planning Committee by removing Authority Member William Meyer from the committee and appointing Authority Member Richard Waring to the committee
3. Note the roles that would be performed by members removed from the committee as set out at para 3.1.

ITEM 19. PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES

177. Authority Members noted the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 8 October and 12 November 2020.

ITEM 20 POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

178. Authority Members noted the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 24 September 2020.

179. The Chair closed the meeting at 5.40pm

Signed _____

Dated _____

