

Report to **South Downs National Park Authority**  
Date **17 October 2024**  
By **Head of Governance**  
Title of Report **Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies**  
**Decision**

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**Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to:**

- 1. In its capacity as Shareholder, remove Stephen McAuliffe, Chris Dowling and Stephen Whale as Directors of South Downs Commercial Operations Ltd;**
  - 2. Appoint Stephen McAuliffe as a Trustee of the South Downs National Park Trust;**
  - 3. Appoint Chris Dowling and Stephen Whale to the Policy and Resources Committee;**
  - 4. Appoint the Appointments, Management and Standards Committee as set out in section 2 of this report; and,**
  - 5. Appoint Paul Bevan to the Planning Committee, provided that the committee appointment shall take effect from the date of Paul Bevan's appointment to the Authority by the Secretary of State if later than the date of this decision.**
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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At its AGM in July 2024 the Authority agreed its annual review of arrangements for discharging its decision-making responsibilities, in particular the delegation of responsibilities, and making of appointments, to Committees. Further to the appointments made at that meeting, this report seeks changes to the appointments to the Planning Committee, Policy and Resources (P&R) Committee, and the Appointments, Management and Standards (AMS) Committee. An additional appointment to the South Downs National Park Trust (the Trust) is proposed.
- 1.2 Also, following the Authority's decision at its meeting in July 2024 to terminate the operating agreement with South Downs Commercial Operations Ltd (The Company) to manage Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP), the Authority, in its capacity as shareholder, is recommended to remove the Members who currently act as Directors of the Company.
- 1.3 Under Schedule 7 paragraph 13(3) of the Environment Act 1995, the Authority has a duty to secure that the division of local authority appointed Members and Secretary of State appointed Members on any Committee is (as nearly as possible using whole numbers) in the same proportion as required in the case of the Authority itself.

**2. Issues for consideration**

South Downs Commercial Operations Ltd

- 2.1 The Authority, at its meeting in July 2024, took the decision to bring the management of SSCP within the Authority and to terminate the operating agreement with the Company. As the management of SSCP was the sole focus of the Company under the approved business plan there is currently no other trading for the Company to undertake and the Company

will fall dormant following the 2024/25 financial year. The operating agreement between the Authority and the Company for the management of SSCP terminated on 9 October 2024 and there is no further business for the Board of Directors to transact. Therefore, the Authority is recommended to remove Stephen McAuliffe, Chris Dowling and Stephen Whale as Directors of the Company so that their time, knowledge and skills can be used elsewhere by the Authority.

- 2.2 As a dormant company, SDCOL will still be required to have at least one Company Director. This will be an officer of the Authority who will also undertake the relevant administrative functions to satisfy the requirements of Companies House.

South Downs National Park Trust

- 2.3 The Authority currently has two Members appointed as Trustees of the Trust. The Authority may appoint up to four Members as Trustees of the Trust as long as they do not form more than one third of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees currently has ten Trustees, eight of whom are not appointed by the Authority. Therefore, it is proposed that the Authority appoint Stephen McAuliffe as third Authority appointed Trustee to the Trust. Stephen will bring a new and useful set of skills to the Board of Trustees, in particular, his skills as an ecologist.

P&R and Planning Committee appointments

- 2.4 With Chris Dowling and Stephen Whale proposed to no longer be serving as Directors of the Company, it is proposed they be appointed to the P&R Committee.
- 2.5 Paul Bevan was elected by East Sussex Parishes to be one of their two elected appointees to the Authority and it is proposed his skills and experience will be best employed on the Planning Committee. Appointments of parish elected Members to the Authority are formally made by the Defra Secretary of State. Unfortunately, due to the general election and post-election prioritisation for a new government, Paul’s appointment to the Authority has been delayed. Therefore, it is proposed to appoint Paul to the Planning Committee, subject to his formal appointment to the Authority by the Secretary of State. If the Authority approves this approach, once he is appointed to the Authority, he will be able to take up his appointment to the Planning Committee immediately.

Appointments, Management and Standards Committee

- 2.6 The Authority, at its meeting in December 2023, expanded the membership of the AMS Committee from three to five members in order for the Committee to undertake the recruitment of the Authority’s permanent Chief Executive. Now that the recruitment and appointment of the Chief Executive has been completed, it is proposed that the membership revert back to three members.
- 2.7 The proposed membership of the AMS is set out below.

Members	Substitute Members
Authority Chair	Daniel Stewart-Roberts (LA)
Authority Deputy Chair	Melanie Hunt (SoS)
Jerry Pett (LA)	

**3. Options & cost implications**

- 3.1 The Authority could decide not to make the proposed appointments. However, the proposed appointments support previous decisions of the Authority and are in line with the Authority’s approach that all Members be appointed to a committee of the Authority and that the Authority also appoint suitably skilled Members as Trustees of the Trust.
- 3.2 The costs associated with the administration of the decision-making structures of the Authority are met from within the Authority’s core budget.

#### 4. Next steps

- 4.1 Officers will take the necessary administrative steps to deliver the new committee memberships and outside body appointments.

#### 5. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	The administration and meeting costs of Committees is covered by existing Authority staff and budgets.  Attendance at Outside Bodies' meetings will be a valid duty for the purpose of travel and subsistence allowances.  Members of the Authority are paid allowances in accordance with the Authority's Scheme of Allowances.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Effective decision making contributes to the efficient running of the Authority.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	Effective decision-making contributes to the delivery of all PMP Outcomes and Corporate Plan objectives.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	SDNPA Members are appointed to a number of roles on outside bodies.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	Effective Committees at the Authority play an important role in sustainable practices and development, as set out in the Partnership Management Plan, Local Plan and various Supplementary Planning Documents, and in monitoring the performance of the Authority against its Climate Change Action Plan.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	All Members are eligible to be considered for Committee places and outside bodies. The operation of Committees meets the obligations of the Equality Act 2010 and reasonable adjustments will be made to support Members and members of the public to participate.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None

Implication	Yes*/No
Are there any Data Protection implications?	Personal data relating to this decision has been and will continue to be managed in accordance with the Authority’s information security policy and in compliance with Data Protection legislation.

**6. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

- 6.1 Members who have been newly appointed to Committees may be required to undertake training in the role and responsibilities of such Committee.
- 6.2 The Authority is the planning authority for the South Downs National Park, and any new appointees to the Planning Committee must undertake the required level of training before they can take part in the decision-making process.
- 6.3 Where the membership of a committee includes ex officio appointments depending upon the person elected or appointed to the relevant office, it could mean that, at any given time, the membership of that committee may arguably not comply with the requirements of the legislation referred to in paragraph 1.3 (i.e. requiring there to be slightly more Local Authority Members than Secretary of State Members) . At the current time the offices of Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority are filled by Secretary of State appointed Members. Due to the remit of the AMS Committee, in particular, in performing its role in the management and performance management of the Chief Executive, it is considered important that the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority are always members of the AMS Committee.

**RICHARD SANDIFORD**

**Head of Governance**

**South Downs National Park Authority**

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Appendices	None
SDNPA Consultees	Chief Executive Officer, Director of Planning, Director of Landscape and Strategy, Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer, Head of Finance and Corporate Service.
External Consultees	None
Background Documents	<a href="#">Authority Standing Orders</a>