

**MINUTES**

**of an Executive Committee Meeting  
held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2013**

**at**

**Downs Barn, Sompting  
at 6.00 p.m.**

EC Members Present:

Mike Tristram (MT)  
James Cooper (JC)  
David Taylor (DT)  
Nigel Clutton (NC)  
Christopher Passmore (CP)  
Stan Abbott (SA)

Gwenda Tear (GT)

Ex officio Members:

John Archer (JA)  
Tim Broomhead (TB)

National Park Authority:

Phil Belden  
Pete Currell

EC Members' Apologies:

William Wolmer  
Simon Ward  
Andrew Thomas  
James Youatt  
Sabrina Harcourt-Smith

Ex officio Members' Apologies:

William White  
Robin Edwards

1. **Apologies and Welcome**

MT welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. In particular, he welcomed Phil Belden and Pete Currell from the National Park Authority, who were in attendance to give a presentation and up-date on the draft Management Plan.

2. **Presentation by SDNPA**

Phil Belden and Pete Currell from the NPA joined the meeting to up-date the Committee on the findings following the consultation period for the draft Management Plan.

252 responses were received which included collective responses from SDLMG\NFU and CLA. People appear to be happy with progress so far with 70%-80% confirming a high level of satisfaction.

The NPA recognise that the profile and importance of farming is not highlighted enough and they will raise this by changing the order (farming\forestry\water), enhancing the context and will use photographs to illustrate to people that farming is important. They will also include farmers and landowners in partnerships\projects and this is now listed in the delivery framework. Farming is not reflected in any outcome and a minor change will be made to this to include land management. The NPA also realise the importance of raising the profile within

the document for farming and industrial food production, the importance of farming on the landscape and how it will continue to change and that arable and grassland are equally important.

The issues of farmers\landowners is still to be dealt with. The NPA are considering the delivery framework to use and this is still under review. They are also looking into how future partnerships and land managers will work together and the delivery framework.

The Management Plan will become an on-line live document, giving the ability for it to be constantly up-dated.

Outcomes – in the current draft Management Plan there is no link to farming\forestry. Outcome 1 deals with this. Development and cumulative change has been brought into Outcome 1. Outcomes will be reviewed every 5-10 years.

Indicators – MT had submitted extensive representations as to indicators including land management. One new agri-environment indicator proposed is to be included. Other indicators are seen as outputs rather than outcomes. Less indicators are wanted by the NPA. These will not be re-assessed every year.

MT asked whether it would be possible to include more of SDLMGs proposed indicators as 'key data indicators' (another SDNPA measure) even if they were not included as management plan indicators.

Special Qualities - the principle underpinning the policies is of no lasting harm to the special qualities eg any harm will not last more than 5 years.

Incentives – a minor change to Policy 14 and the future thinking plan to develop new incentive schemes has been agreed. This is an important area with schemes such as HLS and its replacement. It will give an opportunity to work together.

Water pollution – the context has been changed to show other sources of pollution, and that it is not just down to farmers.

Open Access – the glossary has been changed.

Rural Crime – this may be added to the delivery framework.

A meeting was held today to go through the amendments to the Management Plan and to agree the changes. A revised draft will now be submitted to the Senior Management Team and if they are happy it will then be discussed with the NPA meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2013.

It has been difficult to change some indicators because they cannot be measured. The NPA will look at these again.

The flavour and body of the Plan has not changed a lot especially People and Places. It currently reads that it is about visitors, but it needs to recognize land managers' work so that they are motivated. The Plan also needs to be aimed at people who can make a difference e.g. RSPB\SDLMG etc. and not just the general public.

MT thanked PB and PC for providing the up-date. The consultation period has done a lot to rectify the problems in the draft. MT read out an extract from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan (page 4 - attached). The Statements are impressive and should be added to our NPA delivery framework,

which is open at the moment. Their first Guiding Principle of Delivery: "Work with and through local people" – MT pointed out difference between this and an approach centred on partnerships with large government and non government organisations.

NC made the point that in the early days of the NPA, they held many public meetings in order to get public acceptability and keep farmers and landowners happy. The NPA still need to do this – but how, and how do we measure this activity? Various ways have been discussed e.g. websites. Should each Ranger report from their area? They would have a good picture and an opportunity to report back and liaise with others. Rangers will give some thought to this. There is also a need to have mechanisms for the work of local businesses individuals and communities to be recognized. This item will be discussed again in a year's time, as this is the first Management Plan.

Delivery framework – larger scale projects, e.g. NIA, will be put individually on website to progress. Smaller projects will be mapped.

Future direction of things post Management Plan – need to see Rangers out on farms more. The NPA do not do rights of way work now, this is a responsibility for the Local Authority. Local Authorities have looked to the NPA to take over the funding of various facilities e.g. toilet cleaning\local bus routes, but the funding is not there and it is not feasible.

There is concern that the Rangers are not as visible as they were previously. They appear to be doing far more agri-environmental schemes and administration behind the scenes. There is potential to increase number of ranger staff as the Authority moves from strategic planning to more operational delivery. It is hoped that they will be able to engage with all the local Parishes, but there are 180 in the National Park. They are however, helping to deliver funding schemes for local areas e.g. electric bikes. Farmers must get in contact with their local offices – it has to work both ways. The Rangers do not have time to walk the rights of way like they used to. The NPA need to speak to Local Authorities about retaining rights of way repairs etc. Gates and stile repairs are now the landowners' responsibility but they should be able to get 25% towards their costs.

There needs to be clear channels of communication between the Rangers and farmers, and farmers need to know how to contact them. Ruth Coleman is suggesting ways of communication, which could include Ranger notes\newsletters twice a year to show what they have been doing. A link could also go onto the SDLMG website.

Volunteers – it is hoped that there will be more work for them in the winter months.

New enviro-management schemes – there will be individual and also group schemes in 2015. The NPA want to work with SDLMG to get a group together. A group scheme may be able to secure more funding. **Action David Ashcroft consider**

NPA\SDLMG area meetings – suggested three times a year in each area – East Sussex, West Sussex and Hampshire. Invite farmers and Rangers along too. Discussions could include subjects such as CAP reform. All meetings need to be well planned and the NPA are trying to organise meetings with 5-6 local parishes at once. They need to be seen to be creating good links with landowners etc., which is good PR. **Action WWo/EC to consider how this idea relates to current and future program of SDLMG meetings.**

Sustainable Communities Fund – there is on-going dialogue with Neil Slatter. A dewpond application is being used as a test case for how due diligence procedures can be applied in a way that meets needs without putting off land managers from using SDNPA funds for partnership working in the landscape. **Action MT and DA progressing.**

Farmer Specific Funding Schemes – Andrew Lee mentioned this at the April Partnership meeting. Can we have an up-date from the NPA on this please? This may have been just a speculative thought but at the least the SCF scheme needs to be marketed and accessible to more land managers for practical projects as originally agreed. **PB and PC will ask AL about this when he returns from sick leave.**

NIA - there will be a new version of this scheme. SDNPA are organising a meeting to discuss the future and funding thereof. They are thinking about improvements now before the existing scheme ends. It needs to seek local farmers and land managers to be included. The first meeting seemed to focus on visitors and not land management. No clear assurances have been obtained that the Framework Contract disaster, where most local people were excluded from rather than encouraged to participate in the funded land management work, will not be repeated. **Action WWo to review papers from new-NIA initial meeting and consider how to influence in right direction.**

Pete Currell thanked the Executive Committee for all their help and input over the past 2 years. The NPA have a much better relationship with farmers and managers than before.

Phil Belden and Pete Currell then left the meeting. They were thanked for coming and for giving the up-date.

### 3. **Partnership Working**

#### (a) SDNPA responses regarding incentive papers, Agricultural Officer, Park Links

A response with some Park Links had been received though this only links to the main pages on the website whereas it is felt there must be Park documents on the website of more specific interest to land managers but these had not yet been identified. The other items will be on the agenda at the forthcoming Liaison meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November.

#### (b) Feedback from Partnership Meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2013

Sebastian Anstruther had clarified in the Partnership/NPAMembers meeting that while SDNPA only has a Duty for its own positive action in relation to the Purposes, this does not mean it has a negative duty to prevent developments that are unrelated to the Purposes; these should be permitted unless there is lasting harm to special qualities. It was agreed the NPA have a duty to support the socio-economy as long as it does not lastingly damage the special qualities; Trevor Beattie suggested 5 years as one relevant point for lasting. PC had subsequently felt the word 'lasting' was excluded by the subsequent Members meeting; NPA Members consulted by MT had not felt this was the case. **Action JAY to check that 'no lasting harm to the SQs' is the policy.**

(c) SDLMG Funding

MT is still waiting for a response from Margaret Paren about their on-going commitment to continue their funding of SDLMG each year towards our administration costs. The current grant is £2,500 per annum. It was felt that as long as the Memorandum of Understanding remains in place, SDNPA should contribute to costs. Owing to the reserves now built up, provided the NPA continue their grant, we could introduce nil subscriptions. We may still receive donations from the membership. This would be an opportunity to open the membership to employees of farmers etc.

(f) South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative

We have received a request from Bruce Fowkes to be part of the Steering Group Partnership to contribute to developing this. The focus will be on ground nesting birds. It will be a way for us to be a named part of this group which will be important, and a way to promote us to the general public and our links with other organisations. MT would recommend we allow ourselves to be cited as partner members of this group. Hampshire and Sussex farming members could also be involved. NC confirmed this would be a good thing and he would like to occasionally attend meetings. MT will confirm that we are happy to be a partner in this group, and we will provide 2 members for it.

**ACTION : MT**

David Taylor gave his apologies that he had to leave the meeting at this point.

(g) Agenda Items for SDLMG\SDNPA Liaison Meeting – 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2013

NC raised the concern that he had noticed from the tone of some e-mails recently sent by MT that he was becoming increasingly exasperated at poor communications by the NPA. They are not liaising with us or considering land management as they should in the course of their work, so that too many correctives from ourselves are needed which all makes for a disappointing amount of extra work. The concept of an agriculture officer to guide and support the SDNPA staff in these respects will also be raised again; it is not felt that SDNPA have understood this. It was agreed that at the next Liaison Meeting NC would raise the concern about communications at an appropriate moment. They need to inter-act with SDLMG and define their working relationship with us.

**ACTION : NC/MT**

5. **Access**

(a) Car Parking

The NPA were minded to not provide additional parking, as they want to encourage less car use, but Members emphasised the need to be practical. The Partnership and Members agreed on more small, well screened car parks where needed, and this could be a revenue source. Car parks should be self-funding.

6. **Planning**

(a) CIL

TB confirmed that the NPA are bringing forward the CIL charging ahead of the Local Plan. This was confirmed in the first Local Plan Newsletter produced by the NPA and circulated by Gwenda on 10<sup>th</sup> October. TB will be challenging this as it will be adopted before the Local Plan. The NPA need a sound plan before they can charge this levy, and it was believed they cannot charge it until the Local Plan has been adopted. Tim Slaney is now back at work and TB will e-mail him directly about this.

**ACTION : TB**

(b) Traveller Sites

NC cited a case in Crossbush whereby the NPA have recently given planning permission for a traveller site. Two other local landowners have in recent years applied for static caravan sites and these have been refused. It was felt this brings into question the competence of the planning team in terms of recognizing local precedent and circumstances and the need for uniformity. MT had passed on advice members should take up the site-specific concerns with the local NPA link officer.

(c) Solar Panels on Barns

This is already a permitted development up to a certain size.

7. **Oil extraction\fracking**

At a recent Partnership meeting attended by MT, there was a presentation by a Government professor. The presentation was convincing providing it is done properly. The NPA have no policy decision on fracking, and will look at each case by case. The presentation was geared to making people think that it would be wrong to ban fracking. Any applications would be classed as a minerals application. Drilling companies can drill 2 miles down and 2 miles across. JC had attended a recent local meeting, which was chaotic and misinformed. The Government would not permit fracking within 600m of an aquifer.

A major concern would be companies changing their ethos, but they have to apply for a licence, which is specific to them and the site. However, if the company is taken over the licence would go to the new company. Some companies may work together in order to minimise risk.

The Government needs to gather all the information on risks etc. Fracking would appear to be a natural bridge in our energy needs as coal pits are closing, nuclear is slow and we have to buy a lot of our gas from Russia. Local energy sources are compelling and National Parks cannot be excluded.

Agreed that SDLMG does not need a view on this subject, but we have a responsibility to our members to seek to ensure unbiased consideration of such issues by NPA, and availability of sound information on which decisions are based.

8. **Autumn Meeting (27<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 at Boxgrove Village Hall)**

[subsequently postponed]

Draft topics are:

- Sebastian Anstruther and Tom Tupper will talk about being members of the NPA.

- Chris Paterson – rural crime issues. He has been speaking to Police personnel. However, this may clash with a CLA meeting on the same subject at about the same time.
- Tree health – potential to have a speaker from Alice Holt
- Incentives – bio-diversity. Invite a speaker on how we can get money for schemes if not already in a scheme such as HLS.
- SCF money
- Potential title “New Ways of Making Money from your Land”
- Update from Chairman – Management Plan process and amendments they have made. Up-date on all matters since AGM and invite questions and comments from the floor.
- Timetable :  
  
6 p.m. tea and coffee on arrival for 6.30 p.m. start

### 9. Any Other Business

#### (a) Cultural Heritage

Please see attached short up-date Paper by Simon Ward circulated at the meeting. Concern was raised as to why the NPA are undertaking this exercise when English Heritage are also doing it. JC will speak to SW.

**ACTION : JC**

#### (b) EC Structure

MT welcomed Stan Abbott to his first EC meeting as our Forestry Lead. He also asked those present to ratify the co-option of Keith Langmead and Tom Tupper to the EC as our Farming Leads. MT will write to them both accordingly.

**ACTION : MT**

Andrew Thomas suggested that Isobel Swift (Strutt & Parker Lewes office) may be interested in coming on board. She would be welcome to attend a future EC meeting.

**ACTION : MT\AT**

Bio-diversity Lead : a post currently held by WWo in conjunction with the farming\environment lead. In order to share workload MT asked whether others would be interested in taking on this role. **ACTION : All**

The NPA will be losing some of their strategy leads in a re-organisation. We may need to change and review our EC Leads structure too. We need to have the right amount of expertise on the EC, and it was felt that each member should have a Lead responsibility. MT would like to be able to pass on to WWo more of the Secretary’s role to alleviate some of this responsibility from MT. He also felt that we need to have a well focussed EC. Changes to the structure of the EC may be proposed at the next AGM.

**ACTION : MT\WWo**

(c) Administrator Position

MT confirmed that GT has regrettably resigned her role as SDLMG Administrator. This will be effective from 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2013. A suitable replacement will need to be sought, preferably living near to MT and having a land agency background.

MT spoke in celebration of the extraordinary good fortune SDLMG officers, EC and members have enjoyed in benefiting from Gwenda's unfailingly reliable support, professional communications, excellent service and good company as Administrator. She would be greatly missed but fortunately she would be remaining with us as a member of SDLMG.

There being no further points for discussion, MT closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.