

SDNPA : SDLMG : SDN Liaison Meeting
South Downs Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst,
GU29 9DH
Thursday 05 September 2019
10:00-11:30



Present: David Ashcroft, Trevor Beattie, David Johnson, Andrew Lee (Chair), Christopher Napier, Alison Tingley, Chris Todd, Mike Tristram, Tony Whitbread, William White and William Wolmer
Chris Fairbrother (item 6) and Jeremy Burgess (item 8). Jackie Nicholls notetaker.

Apologies: Tim Bamford, James Cooper, Vic lent, Margaret Paren, David Taylor and Simon Ward

1. Welcome

Andrew Lee welcomed attendees. The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 04 April 2019, were found to be accurate. **Action:** Jackie to send the National Parks England (NPE) paper on Rural Development to Alison Tingley. AOB items were tabled.

2. Organisational updates

South Downs Land Managers Group – William Wolmer

- We held the SDLMG AGM in June and welcomed new members.
- We are working on increasing engagement with our members.

South Downs Network – Tony Whitbread

- We are holding our AGM after this meeting.
- We are working on ways to re-energise members and appreciate the contact with this group.
- The Network is keen to press hard on issues such as climate change and biodiversity.

South Downs National Park Authority – Andrew Lee and Trevor Beattie

Authority Members

As a result of the recent local elections, the Authority has 13 new members, which equates to half of the members. Political changes have resulted in some of the new members hailing from diverse political backgrounds; we envisage healthy challenge from them, with an increase in debate and interrogation.

As part of the member's induction process, and to make sure they are fully informed, a series of member workshops have been planned.

There has been some change in committee membership. Ian Phillips is Deputy Chair of the National Park Authority, Alun Alesbury is Chair of Planning Committee (Deputy – Heather Baker) and Ken Bodfish remains as Chair of Policy and Resources Committee (Deputies – Sebastian Anstruther and Doug Jones).

Four Secretary of State member's terms expire at the end of March; there is also one vacancy. It is likely that advertisements for these posts will be posted between November and March, with successful applicants in place on 01 April 2020.

Local Plan

The South Downs Local Plan was adopted on 02 July 2019. We are currently rolling-out training for Host Authorities, with the first round completed and second round in late December. Supplementary

guidance is also being prepared. More information can be found on the SDNPA website:
https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/south-downs-local-plan_2019/local-plan/

Environment Bill

This autumn, a new Environmental Bill will be introduced and start the passage through Parliament. The Bill will include details on: creating a new governance framework for the environment; creating a framework for legally binding targets; moving towards a circular resources and waste economy; improving air quality; securing our water services; enhancing our green spaces and updating laws on chemicals.

3. Landscape Review headed by Julian Glover – Trevor Beattie

- In July, an exchange of letters between Julian Glover and Michael Gove were released by Defra. The letters set-out the interim findings of the Review.
- Since Michael Gove has left the role of Secretary of State for Environment, there is a danger that Julian Glover and the recommendations that arise from the Review become isolated.
- What we know:
 - The Review will be published in autumn 2019
 - The general direction of the review includes the following:
 - protected landscapes have become too dominated by the local and have lost the ‘national’ aspect;
 - needs to be a national park single-voice;
 - more outreach to urban areas needed;
 - scale back national park authorities – there could be a governance review;
 - increase the number of rangers;
 - create more of a sense of arrival to protected landscapes;
 - create a national landscape service;
 - possibility of more funds (implied by the exchange of letters);
 - Our main concern is what the National Landscape Service will look like.

4. Partnership Management Plan (PMP) – Andrew Lee

The PMP has come to the end of its review and the revised PMP will be taken to the National Park Authority (NPA) meeting on 01 October 2019, for approval. The revised PMP has 10 Outcomes and 21 Priorities; it is hoped that the launch of the revised PMP will be early next year (2020).

5. NELMS and Rural Development funding update – Andrew Lee

Work continues locally and nationally to position National Parks in the centre of the debate with Government, Farmers and Foresters and rural businesses about **future policy and funding for farming**. Defra is still developing its proposals for the England Land Management Scheme (ELMS), which will replace funding from the Common Agricultural Policy once we leave the EU. The South Downs are about to embark on the second wave (2 and 3 October) of four workshops with farmers to inform development of the new scheme.

Working through National Parks England, we have also been very actively involved in discussions with Defra and other organisations about the other aspect of policy – **rural development**. In a positive meeting with officials we have laid out our proposals for National Park Authorities to play a key role in the design and delivery of the schemes – such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – which will replace EU programmes like LEADER. This really matters in the South Downs because we have over 8000 rural businesses of all types and our farmers and estates are often greatly diversified. Access to broadband, capital investment, skilled labour and affordable housing are all crucial in addition to any scheme to support sustainable land management.

6. Biodiversity gain and zero carbon – Tony Whitbread, Chris Fairbrother and Andrew Lee

Tony Whitbread explained that he sits on the Climate Change Alliance and asked what is happening in the SDNPA to tackle Climate Change.

Andrew Lee explained that the PMP includes the mechanisms to help deliver ambition around climate change and is still included as an outcome in the reviewed PMP. The SDNPA Climate Change Adaptation Plan is also aligned with the PMP.

The SDNPA are running a Climate Change Member Workshop on 21 November 2019. The workshop will discuss the implications of the Climate Emergency for the SDNPA as an organisation and for the level of ambition in the new National Park Partnership Management Plan.

At the workshop, it is planned that Members will hear from a variety of speakers from external organisations; this will be followed by a panel discussion with a Q & A session. After hearing from partner Local Authorities as to what plans their organisations have to address the Climate Emergency, Members will debate the level of ambition in the PMP and consider next steps.

Chris advised that he had attended the National Parks Climate Change and Energy Group yesterday where it was agreed that urgent action is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate further warming, adapt to the changes we are already seeing, and raise awareness amongst decision makers and the wider public of what they can do to address this challenge. England's nine National Park Authorities (NPAs) and the Broads Authority have a central role to play in each of these areas. NPAs are uniquely situated to lead on addressing the climate crisis. They are place-based and landscape focused, with the passion, knowledge, and public support to deliver. A detailed National Parks Climate Change Position Statement is being developed, which will be available once approved.

Discussion ensued about the importance of community engagement around climate change as the public's awareness had heightened and people are looking for guidance about how they can help.

7. Farm cluster programme – South Downs Network and Andrew Lee

The Farm Cluster network within the National Park continues to grow in strength. Two new clusters are emerging around the Meon Valley and south of the Rother Valley – which would bring the number of clusters to eight. A new website, <http://southdownsfarming.com>, has just been launched and during the period of our next Partnership Management Plan farm clusters will be developing work on wildlife restoration, public engagement, soils and water.

The link that farmers have within their communities is increasingly valuable to connect the public with farming, including: the Meet the Farmer initiative (Arun to Adur Farmers Group), farmer's markets, Sompting Community Farm charity, partnering with parish councils to work on projects and many examples of diversification that impact positively on the community. A useful way to demonstrate the success of a project and help others to learn from partners' experiences is to submit any case studies to the SDNPA. Andrew advised that the SDNPA do not just work with farm clusters; further information can be found on the SDNPA website and on the aforementioned South Downs Farming website.

8. Tackling Pollution of aquifers and flood prevention – South Downs Network and Jeremy Burgess

Jeremy advised that the SDNPA collaborates with partners to address pollution of aquifers and flood prevention, including:

- Environment Agency (EA);
- Rivers Trusts;
- ChaMP project with Southern Water and Environment Agency – work around nitrates in aquifer;

- links with Farm Clusters;
- continual work with all three water companies that operate in the NP – catchment management;
- nitrate testing in soils;

Flood risk management: EA's focus tends to be on protecting people's properties. Our approach is an adaptive management one. The mechanism needs to be through the New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS). Focal areas include Arun Valley and Cuckmere Valley. There is also a debate about Nitrate neutrality – and how to address it through the planning process.

9. AOB

- Format of the liaison meetings:
Andrew Lee invited the SDN and SDLMG to send him their thoughts on how the liaison meetings are working, the frequency, location and joint meeting format.
 - Masts – mobile/5G. National Parks England is responding to a national consultation.
 - SDNPA Member Workshops:
In addition to the Climate Change Member Workshop referred to in item 6, there is an Economy Workshop in October and a Biodiversity and Rewilding Workshop in January; Professor John Lawton will be speaking at the Biodiversity and Rewilding Workshop. In response to asking if the SDNPA would create more outward facing workshop on similar topics, Andrew advised that once the workshops had been carried out, consideration would be given to this.
 - Neighbourhood Plans – there is concern by CPRE that these are being overridden in areas outside the National Park.
 - Seven Sisters Country Park – The SDNPA are the preferred bidder; the provisional date for completion and handover is Early April 2020.
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