

SDNPA, SDN and SDLMG Liaison Meeting
Memorial Hall, South Downs Centre, Midhurst, GU29 9DH
Thursday 02 March 2017
14:00-15:30



Attendees:

Mike Tristram	- Chair, SDLMG
Tony Whitbread	- Chief Executive, Sussex Wildlife Trust
Alison Tingley	- Administrator, South Downs Land Managers Group (SDLMG)
Chris Passmore	- Executive Committee Member, SDLMG
Clive Grummett	- Vice-Chair, Sussex Ramblers
John Templeton	- Executive Committee, Chichester Society
Megan Lock	- Rural Advisor, Country Land Business Association (CLS)
Robert Cheesman	- Chair, South Downs Society
Simon Ward	- Cultural Heritage, SDLMG
Steve Ankers	- Policy Officer, South Downs Society
William White	- Regional Director, National Farmers' Union (NFU)
William Wolmer	- Chair of the Selborne Landscape Group SDLMG

SDNPA Attendees:

Margaret Paren	- Chair of SDNPA
Trevor Beattie	- CEO SDNPA
Andrew Lee	- Director of Countryside Policy and Management
Lucy Howard	- Planning Policy Manager
Matt Bates	- Local Plan Lead
Sara Osman	- Support Services Officer SDNPA - Notes
Jackie Nicholls	- Interim Executive Assistant to Andrew Lee SDNPA - shadowing

Apologies:

Andrew Thomas	- Treasurer, SDLMG
Robin Milner-Gulland	- Sussex Archaeologist Society

1. Minutes and action points of previous joint meeting – Margaret Paren

The minutes were recorded as accurate and Mike Tristram had completed the only action and circulated links to NFU & CLA papers.

2. Brexit, National Parks and Farm Clusters – Margaret Paren & Andrew Lee

Farm Clusters – Andrew Lee

The SDNPA is working with Natural England and local partners and there are now six emerging Farm Clusters within the Park. SDNPA officers are also supporting land owners in developing Whole Estate Plans. This ensures that the SDNPA is very well placed to work collaboratively with land managers in the future.

Environment Green Paper – Trevor Beattie

As soon as the consultation opens on the two expected Defra green papers, the SDNPA would like to use its partnership meetings to put together a National Park response. This response will also link to national NPE work, which is looking at what scheme might replace the current Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 subsidies. The SDNPA is planning to be ready with a Members and Partners workshop in April, alongside farm clusters workshops. The dates for these meetings are dependent on when the papers are released, which is unclear at present. The SDNPA plans to put forward a proposal to Defra asking for support to run at least one pilot in the Park to demonstrate how a new scheme could look. Trevor summarised the latest recommendations from the Natural Capital Committee, in which Dieter Helm stresses the importance of National Parks leading the way in delivering Natural Capital. The report recommends that the Treasury's Green Book should take Natural Capital into account, which would be a great opportunity to change the way the economy works.

NPE's Future of Farming Group – Margaret Paren

NPE has set up a Future of Farming group to consider how National Parks in England should respond to both the wider Brexit situation and the two Green Papers when they come out. The group is made up of farmers and landowner members from NPAs in the Yorkshire Dales, Exmoor and the South Downs, alongside officers.

The FoF group has produced a broad outline of its work that will be shared with all National Parks. A formal paper will come out in April, which will form the basis of the NPE response to the Government's green paper on the future of farming. Margaret asked members of the SDLMG and SDN to feedback comments when this information is shared.

The Future of Farming group has proposed that there should be a tailored scheme for each National Park as each Park covers a wide range of different landscapes. It proposes a 2 tier agri-environmental scheme: Tier one will be 'broad and shallow' to enable it to be accessible to all and to deliver some environmental benefits; Tier two would be a higher level scheme delivering much greater environmental benefits and linked to the Special Qualities of each National Park; flexibility would be needed to enable the scheme to link with payments for creating Natural Capital or providing Ecosystem Services in the future. The NPE proposal to Defra will contain case studies of the good work currently undertaken by NPAs in partnership with farmers and landowners.

In response to questions:

- Margaret assured that the needs of the wider rural economy are strongly integrated in the proposals.
- NPE is focusing on what could work inside National Parks, however, there is dialogue with other organisations, especially the AONBs that may be interested in rolling-out any new schemes if they are proven successful. A new scheme within a National Park would have a loose boundary to ensure land owners and estates who own land which is partly in and partly out of a Park are not disadvantaged.

Concern was raised that schemes available in the Parks should not be at the expense of farmers and land owners outside of National Parks.

3. Progress of the Local Plan – Lucy Howard

All policies have now been endorsed by NPA members and incorporated into the composite Local Plan. This will be the final document the SDNPA is planning to submit for consultation before submission to the Inspector. It will be out for a formal, public, pre-submission consultation in September and October this year. It will then be submitted for examination with the aim of the Plan being adopted mid-2018. Once adopted, the new Local Plan for the whole Park should make planning a much simpler process. It is unconventional in that it is a landscape-led plan, which includes ecosystems services.

Lucy explained the allocations for housing, many of which have been identified through Neighbourhood Plans. There are 49 Neighbourhood Plans currently in progress or adopted. In areas where there is no Neighbourhood Plan the SDNPA Planning Policy team have allocated sites directly. More evidence-based research is being commissioned to support this work. There is uncertainty as to whether the new Government White Paper on housing will affect any of the policies or allocations in the Local Plan.

4. Housing White Paper and next steps on Affordable Housing – Matt Bates

Matt summarised key points from the recent Housing White Paper, released on 7 February 2017, highlighting references to rural sites, starter homes and affordable housing. It contains new definitions for affordable housing, promotes rent-to-buy schemes, and states that local plans may need to be reviewed to take into account affordable housing definitions. It reiterates Government thresholds for affordable housing and more specific thresholds for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions. Guidance will be produced on providing housing for older people in need.

There are many positive proposals and some challenges in the report. Margaret praised the strengthened protection for ancient woodland and the heritage coast, which are on an exemption list, whilst Trevor stressed that the report focuses too much on supply and not demand, and is light on rural affordable housing. There will be more ability to increase planning fees, which will enable better resource for LA and NPA planning teams, however, the requirement to update local plans every 5 years could mean a lot of resource spent on continual review.

5. Review of the Partnership Management Plan – Andrew Lee

The SDNPA is working with Partners and its Members to review the Partnership Management Plan, by 2019. It is looking for case studies amongst partners which demonstrate key achievements so far, and the emphasis will be on refreshing the delivery framework and strengthening the commitments of all partners, not rewriting outcomes and policies which are still very sound.

The SDNPA is working particularly closely with other organisations to ensure that their next cycle of business planning links more strongly to the core aims and purposes of the Partnership Management Plan. This includes partnership organisations who are currently updating their own business plans, land owners and estates who are developing Whole Estate Plans and communities developing Neighbourhood Plans. In response to a question about the new, proposed Trust for the SDNP, Andrew clarified that it would be a separate body to the SDNPA. It will create its own, separate business plan, however, this would have to support the priorities of the Partnership Management Plan.

6. AOB

- **A27:** John Templeton asked for an update on the A27. Andrew replied that the SDNPA has a Members Workshop scheduled in April to look at the Arundel bypass. Other workshops have already been held to look at proposals between Lewes and Eastbourne. The SDNPA has set out clear evidence on the impacts of the various options on the special qualities of the National Park. **Potential sales of BHCC and EBC Downland:** Trevor signposted people to his statement on the SDNPA website which sets out the case for keeping this land in public ownership. Trevor expressed concern that the price being sought by EBC suggest a future owner would be making intensive use of the land in ways which might not be compatible with NP Purposes. Other concerns included the threat to the iconic views in the SDNP and that the land was originally acquired to protect land and water supply for the public good. The SDNPA is keen to stress that councils should be looking at what natural capital the land can provide and income that can be generated from sustainable uses.
- **Arrangements for the forthcoming anniversary of the National Park:** John Templeton notified the group of the SDNP 7th Anniversary event on Saturday 15 April 2017. This is being organised by Owen Plunkett-Jones and all are encouraged to attend.
- **Changes to business rates:** A question was raised about the SDNPA's view on how changes to business rates might affect diversification in the rural economy, something that the Authority is keen to endorse and support. Trevor explained that it is not job of National Parks to influence wider public policy. Margaret asked for members to submit any evidence to SDNPA officers to help strengthen any argument.
- **New Trust:** In response to a question, Trevor updated the group on the progress of setting up the new Trust for the Park, which will be an independent Trust separate to Authority. There is a meeting in March to set it up and it is hoped to be in place by April 2017. The aim of the Trust will be to generate new income, which will support project work in the Park.

Close.