

SDNPA – SDLMG Meeting Minutes

Held at: The Depot, Bepton Road, Midhurst

5 November 2013

Present:

Margaret Paren (MP)	Mike Tristram (MT)
Trevor Beattie (TB)	William Woolmer (WW)
Phil Belden (PB)	David Taylor (DT)
Pete Currell (PC)	Tim Broomhead (TBH)
Tim Richings (TR)	Nigel Clutton (NC)
Nicola Winning (NW)	Chris Passmore (CP)
	James Cooper (JC)
	Stan Abbott (SB)

Apologies: Andrew Lee (AL)

1. Welcome

Margaret Paren welcomed all to the meeting

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record. Actions from the previous minutes had been completed or are in progress. The following actions were agreed subsequently:

ACTION (Point 3): Chris Manning provided results of the study – MT to circulate and feed any points back to CM

ACTION (Point 8): Phil Belden investigated whether it is possible to have Land Management substitutes on the Local Access Forum. He confirmed that there is no provision in Defra guidance and that all members must be named. Land managers are well represented at the SDLAF (5), balancing the user group reps (5), as well as other related interests. As the LAF is a public meeting anyone is welcome to be 'in attendance' so a LAF member unable to attend a meeting can send a substitute in this capacity.

3. SDLMG & SDNPA Organisational Updates / Forthcoming Changes

MT confirmed that Stan Abbott who has been in forestry since 1978 is the Forestry lead and will be working with the Authority broadly across the sector. This is a big area to cover and will include the New Forest NP. Gwenda Teear is moving on, so SDLMG will be taking on a new administrator in the near future.

TB explained the new SDNPA restructure, which had been the result of extensive consultation with Members and staff. The plan was to go-live with the new structure at the turn of the year. The net effect would be to strengthen front line services and the links between teams. Each Area team would have a new assistant ranger and each, over time, would take on an apprentice. The Planning Link Officers would also come into the Area teams. There would be a strengthening of planning enforcement and more support on planning policy. All of this would strengthen liaison with farmers and land managers, providing more staff on the ground. SDNPA would recruit over the next 2 years as and when the budget allows. SDLMG asked about the job description of Assistant Ranger and a career structure / progression. PB outlined the jobs of both Ranger and Assistant Ranger, highlighting the work with land owners. There will be a sense

of continuum, SDLMG welcomes this.

ACTION 1: TB will give an update at the next meeting.

4. Memorandum of Understanding and Expansion of SDLMG

MT stated that there is a long standing ambition to engage as broadly as possible across the Land Management sector and others within the NP. The present subscription of £20 is seen as a barrier, whereas the introduction of free or voluntary subscriptions would allow the SDLMG to attract more members and cover more of the National Park. At present the £2,500 grant contribution does cover the administration. SDLMG are possibly in a position to offer subscriptions / newsletters linked to MOU. MP said that the NPA would be prepared to guarantee another 3 years' funding, assuming no significant Defra grant cuts, but this was on condition that the SDLMG worked to increase members across the SDNP and to maximise the scope for financial contributions.

MP asked MT to create a report regarding the existing membership and the scope to extend and broaden it. TB commented that a membership fee gives a feeling of belonging and is not convinced that they should be removed. MP explained that it is important to involve smaller tenant farmers and it was necessary to be certain of buy-in from those members to show they have signed up. MT agreed to consider this. An annual report on membership could be provided and it might help to have an annual reminder.

A discussion about the basis of SDNPA's 3 year funding concluded that it should be reviewed after 2 years with a view to its continuation at that point. This would provide continuity and certainty for the SDLMG coupled with accountability back to the NPA for the expenditure of its resources.

ACTION 2: MP to attach proposition to the minutes to clarify when the years will run from.

ACTION 3: SDLMG to present a paper for discussion

5. South Downs Partnership Management Plan

The Strategy Leads have been working through the changes and the final document will go to the NPA on 19 November. The core of the Management Plan and the Delivery Framework, which will be a live document, will work together. There was a specific workshop with Members to develop the indicators and as a result they have been cut down slightly. The indicators will also be in the document. SDNPA will then move on to the preparation of the Local Plan, beginning with the Options Consultation in late February. SDLMG had made important contributions to each stage of the PMP and their input would be essential in the preparation of the Local Plan. MT said the SDLMG wanted to thank SDNPA for the dialogue and changes made as result of Land Managers' input.

6. SDNP Local Plan & CIL

SDNPA currently determines planning applications based on some 1500 policies across 15 local authorities. TR explained that when adopted in 2017 the National Park Local Plan will supersede all existing plans and policies. The Local Plan team have been working on producing an Options Consultation Document (OCD), and also a Preliminary Draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule, which are due out for consultation for 8 weeks from late February to April 2014. The OCD will focus on highlighting the key planning issues facing the National Park and setting out what potential options there are to ensure that the two purposes and duty are met. SDLMG will be a key partner.

JC asked about the Shoreham cement works and TR confirmed that there was reference to the cement works and an opportunity for comment. TBH raised concerns re lumping economy and

tourism together, he feels the local economy needs to be on its own. TR replied that the two issues were dealt with separately under one chapter for this initial options consultation. TB highlighted that there is unlikely to be a single flat rate CIL across the National Park, it will be more context-based. The CIL Charging Schedule is being brought forward ahead of the Local Plan and in line with the Preferred Options following advice from DCLG and PINS.

MT suggested that planning decisions would be improved by local input. PB said the whole SDNPA team feeds into the planning process. SDNPA currently is determining c.10% of all applications, which includes the four recovered local authority areas (Arun, Brighton & Hove, Wealden and Eastbourne). 'Called-in' applications are 120 this year.

7. South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative

MT explained that SDLMG were fully involved as supporting lead partner and that they are looking forward to working with RSPB. There are 8 species of high conservation 4 of medium and a high number of lower conservation.

8. Nature Improvement Area Future Scheme

WW mentioned that he would prefer to see something like 'work with and through local people' in the brief for a future NIA-type project and they would want to see this as a guiding principle. PB confirmed there had been no info as yet from NE on any Defra plans following the NIA pilots. Other options for aiding conservation and enhancement of the SDNP included planning applications and future Community Infrastructure Levy funding (ie residential development providing funding to deliver NP Purposes). PB asked for a response to the paper that went out on future thinking on the NIA. Though the main core agri-environment funding will come from CAP reform, we all need to look for other funding opportunities.

ACTION 4 PB to resend the paper to MT for circulation

ACTION 5: MT/SDLMG asked to respond to the paper with comments

9. SDLMG Incentives Paper – Response/Progress Report from SDNPA

PB stated there is only so much that SDNPA can do and that the best way to help SDLMG get these grants is to get in touch with local rangers. TB confirmed that SDNPA are not the ones providing huge amounts of cash here and sees it getting tougher and the CAP reform more difficult. SDNPA have shown themselves at being adept at getting additional money such as NIA and LSTF. TBH asked what is SDNPA's view on biodiversity off-setting? PB replied that SDNPA had responded that if developments were permitted outside the NP, there is a good potential opportunity to get money into the National Park, although made it clear that if this approach was to become government policy, then it must not be seen as a free for all (ie some habitats, such as ancient woodland, could not be replicated).

WW commented that the CAP reforms will mean less funding. If we need to maximise from pillar 1 to pillar 2 this could be helpful in focusing funds on the South Downs. TB said we have to do a response by 28 November, any input you want to give, please do let us know. A short email with key comments would be useful. MT asked if PB would come and talk about incentives at their meeting on 27 November. As Nick Heasman and Nina Williams are already down to talk about woodlands, it was agreed to discuss outside of the meeting. MP confirmed that SCF is community focussed. TB expressed that the SCF should be open to farmers / land managers with the same delivery structure, to make sure it is properly spent. MT feels this is a serious issue, although not enough time to discuss here.

TBH asked about relationships with LEPS. The SDNP contains parts of 3 LEPS and TB confirmed that the SDNPA is working actively with LEPS to seek their support and commitment for investment in the SDNP. Both MT and TBH asked to be kept informed about LEP involvement in

the delivery framework.

10. SDLMG Agriculture Officer Paper – Response/Progress report from SDNPA

MT thanked TB for his recent responses on this. It was agreed that there is no need for this post, but MT feels there needs to be a specific Agricultural Officer contact at the NPA. PB felt a better way forward is to use rangers and link officers.

11. MT expressed concern that there was often no follow up to SDLMG proposals and that this had an effect on the relationship. TB said the strength of MT's comment was a matter of great concern and that the SDNPA was very clear that the SDLMG were well placed to support the work of the Authority. TB apologised for any lack of response and said that measures would be put in place to ensure that this does not happen again.

12. DT said that he felt that the relationship was working well. Apart from some valid differences of opinion, SDLMG had been listened to and its proposals had been worth pursuing. TB said that if there were other unanswered issues they should be sent to him to pursue. MT should feel free to contact him by phone about unresolved issues. Everyone agreed that the will existed on both sides and that it was a matter of ensuring seamless communication.

13. AOB

Future Thinking: is this something we need to be working together on? PC suggested that we should have this on agenda for next meeting.

TB & MP met the Hants Police Crime commissioner and are building relationships.

JC asked if anyone would like to attend the West Sussex Estates Group meeting which is due to take place on Wednesday 2 April 2014 – TB agreed to attend.

Dates to be set for 2014

Next Meeting Date: