

SOUTH DOWNS LAND MANAGEMENT GROUP

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 20th June, 2011

at Coombes Barn, Church Farm, Lancing, West Sussex

EC Members

James Cooper (Vice Chairman)
Mike Tristram (Secretary)
William Wolmer
Christopher Passmore
Mark Lee
David Ashcroft
Sabrina Harcourt-Smith
Roger Foxwell
Edward Tupper

EC Members – Apologies

Nigel Clutton (Chairman)
David Taylor
James Youatt
Matthew Morton

Observer Members' Apologies

Rupert Ashby
William White

Apologies were also received from 16 members. 46 members were present for the AGM

Mr James Cooper (Vice Chairman) opened the meeting by thanking our hosts for the day – Trevor and Jenny Passmore. He also conveyed the apologies from our Chairman, Mr Nigel Clutton, who sadly was absent due to a family bereavement.

Mr Cooper introduced Laura Warren from the National Park Authority, which she joined last year. The SDLMG worked with Laura on the production of the new Countryside Code and other educational materials which were on display at the meeting.

1. Chairman's Report

Mr Cooper presented the Chairman's Report on behalf of Mr Clutton, the main points of which were:

- our main aim in the first year of the National Park Authority (NPA) was to establish ourselves as a inclusive body capable of working effectively with the NPA;
- a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the NPA and the SDLMG on 15th February, 2011. This recognises the need to work together in a constructive and professional manner;
- our membership has grown from 80 to over 200 members in the last year;
- no other National Park have an independent organisation to work with their NPA;
- SDLMG Executive Committee members and officers have worked hard with the NPA Establishment Team to ensure that all who derive their income from the National Park have their views understood;
- a team of officers work with the Chairman and Executive Committee to take responsibility as Lead Contacts on a range of topics:

James Cooper	Planning and Rural Economy
David Taylor	Access Management
William Wolmer	Agriculture and Environment
David Ashcroft	Sustainable Communities Fund
Simon Ward	Cultural Heritage

Meetings will be held several times in the year with the equivalent Lead Officers of the NPA;

- Forums and Workshops are being organised by the NPA and our members will have an opportunity to take part in these;
- Some of our members have been appointed to the South Downs Local Access Forum:

David Taylor	East Sussex\Brighton & Hove
Andrew Thomas	West Sussex
David Ashcroft	Hampshire

Tom Tupper has also been appointed in his capacity as an SDNPA member

- Three of our Executive Committee members have been appointed to the South Downs National Park Partnership which will have an overview responsibility as the SDNPA develops the SDNP Management Plan:

Chris Passmore	Applesham Farm, Lancing
David Taylor	Housedean Farm, Brighton
Mike Tristram	Sompting Estate, Sompting

- appointment of a new Administrator, Gwenda Teear, who provides support to the Executive Committee and liaison with all members.
- Mr Cooper expressed the SDLMG's warmest appreciation to Mr Clutton for the dedication he has put into the success of the Group. Mr Clutton had confirmed his wish to stand down as Chairman from today, but will continue to serve on the Executive Committee in his role of Founder President.

The full Chairman's report can be viewed on the website (www.southdownsland.com).

2. **Minutes of AGM 14th June, 2010**

These were approved.

3. **Treasurer's Report**

The Report was presented by Mike Tristram, the main points were:

- we expect to spend approximately £7,000 in the current year;
- most of the cost is for the Administrator, plus printing, venue hire and website support
- we have adopted the calendar year as our financial year;
- we anticipate receiving a similar grant of £2,500 from the NPA towards our expenditure. SDLMG officers have expressed to the NPA that since the cost is only necessitated by the Government's decision to create a National Park, some of our on-going costs should be borne from the taxes we pay;
- we aim to achieve an income from subscriptions of approximately £5,000 (based on 250 members) with further amounts coming from larger contributions or sponsorship subscriptions;
- we aim to build a reserve of £3,500, which should be achievable by the end of 2013 with a steady increase in membership;

The full Treasurer's report can be viewed on the website (www.southdownsland.com).

4. **Election of Executive Committee**

The following members had confirmed their willingness to stand for the Executive Committee:-

Nigel Clutton	James Cooper	Mike Tristram
David Ashcroft	David Taylor	Mark Lee
Chris Passmore	William Wolmer	Sabrina Harcourt-Smith
Edward Tupper	James Youatt	Jonny Morris

Proposer:	Trevor Passmore
Secunder:	Philip White

Approval of Executive Committee was confirmed.

5. **Election of Officers**

Founder President:

Nigel Clutton	Proposer:	Nigel Draffan
	Secunder:	Sir Brian Barttelot

Chairman:

Mike Tristram	Proposer:	Sabrina Harcourt-Smith
	Secunder:	Simon Ward

Vice Chairmen:

James Cooper	Proposer:	Sir Sebastian Anstruther
David Taylor	Secunder:	Jonny Morris

Secretary:

William Wolmer	Proposer:	David Ashcroft
	Secunder:	Carola Godman-Law

Approval of the Officers was confirmed. The vacant Treasurer's role will continue to be shared between Mike Tristram, William Wolmer and Gwenda Teear.

6. **Any Other Business**

(a) Mike Tristram

Trevor Passmore personally thanked Mike Tristram for all his hard work within the Group and that this was greatly appreciated. This was endorsed by James Cooper. Mike Tristram thanked him for his kind words and confirmed the success of the Group was a team effort. He was delighted that all the recent team meetings had proved successful, and thanked the Officers and their Leads for their work.

(b) Sustainability Fund

David Ashcroft highlighted the fact that of the £400,000 funds available, £220,000 has already been allocated. Farmers need to apply quickly if they

wish to be successful. Ideas for funding include local village shops, facilities suitable for a variety of uses (eg wedding\meetings etc). Up to £50,000 has been allocated at a time. The NPA officers will help with applications.

(c) Rights of Way

Concern was raised that the onus is back on farmers, and this situation needs to be monitored. The question was raised whether volunteers could be used to inspect rights of way.

Mr Cooper closed the meeting, and convened a short break before the General Meeting commenced.

GENERAL MEETING

"Making a living while visitors enjoy the countryside in the SDNP"

Mr Cooper welcomed further guests and members of the SDLMG. We were joined by the following members of the National Park Authority:-

Margaret Paren	SDNPA Chair
Sir Sebastian Anstruther	SDNPA Member
Andrew Lee	SDNPA Director of Strategy and Partnerships
Tom Tupper	SDNPA Member
Alison Tingley	SDNPA Strategy Lead for Rural Economy
Laura Warren	SDNPA Engagement Officer

Apologies were received from James Odling-Smee, SDNPA Communications Manager.

Mr Cooper confirmed we would welcome feedback from the membership as to the timing of our meetings.

Mr Cooper confirmed this was our second AGM, and that the Chairman's Report would be available on the website. We have built up a good working relationship with the National Park Authority and there is a mutual respect and understanding. We are a unique body as no other National Park has a group like us, and we look to our membership to encourage their friends and neighbours to join us. He confirmed Mr Clutton's desire that we should be a proper representation for farmers and landowners, and our theme today hopes to prove that we can achieve this.

William Wolmer introduced our first speaker, Jane Cecil from the National Trust.

Jane gave an overview of the National Trust and explained that the National Trust is thought to be the single largest landowner within the National Park. The National Trust has responsibility for:

- over 5000 ha of land which is owned within the National Park
- over 600 ha of their land is open access
- they care for over 60 scheduled ancient monuments
- they have 16 sites of Special Scientific Interest
- they have 20 tenant farmers and over 100 cottages and houses

The National Trust's main sources of income come from rent (approaching £1m), agricultural-environmental schemes (about £100,000) and catering (£100,000). About half of their income is spent on salaries (which includes wardens and administrative

staff), and about a third on building maintenance (most of their properties are flint). Another major cost is vehicles, fuel and maintenance.

The National Trust looks at various ways to increase its income from visitors. These include:-

Potential:

- Partnerships – other people often have the expertise and we can provide part of the package e.g. the land
- Camping and accommodation on the South Downs Way
- Training courses and education
- Acquisitions – looking at places that either have facilities or potential to provide them
- Events
- Retail
- Local produce – marketing our own meat

The Trust also faces many challenges:

- Designations
- Planning permission
- Neighbours and tenants

The National Trust has looked at the potential of many of its sites to improve income. Some examples of what they have been able to achieve are:

Black Down

This property runs at a deficit. The Trust has spent about £250,000 (which they borrowed internally) to fund timber built buildings for three long-term volunteers. They will do work on the Estate and engage with the local community and help to run local events to increase revenue. An example of having to make the investment up front.

Harting Down

The Trust instigated an arts project to create a sculpture from hurdles. This scheme required SSSI approval and planning permission and now events are starting to be run around the sculpture. This is an example of the Trust trying something a bit different but the project has been complicated because of the permissions needed.

Slindon

This is part of the portfolio is ring fenced so any funds raised can only be spent in Slindon. Because of the rental income this property does make a profit but we also have a camping barn and a base camp and are looking at ways to make more income from these.

Devils Dyke

The Trust applied for planning permission and installed parking meters. This is now run on a profit-sharing scheme with the local pub.

Birling Gap and Crowlink

This is making a profit due to catering facilities.

The Trust is continually looking for ways to increase its income and has also looked into open air cinemas. They rely on people supporting this type of event, and realise they must work in partnership with people and keep an open mind.

They have agreed to pilot campsite schemes at Saddlescombe Farm, but must consider neighbours and tenants. The Trust is prepared to try a range of things but recognise that they need to work closely with others, especially neighbours and tenants.

She confirmed that they would expect to get a 6% rate of return and look long term. They are also looking at timber/woodchip boiler projects.

Mike Tristram introduced our second speaker, Andrew Lee from the National Park Authority. Mr Lee is a local man and had worked for the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

Mr Lee opened his talk by asking "Is the National Park an opportunity or a constraint?" He felt it was both as we are very different from any other National Park, as most people live and work within the Park area.

Farming and land management are fundamentally important and the National Park will only succeed if everyone works together, and we all have a duty to foster the well-being of the Park.

He explained that the Park will have to operate under a National Mandate under the leverage of the Government. There is new public money available, and the NPA now has responsibility for planning.

The NPA will be looking for new ways to add value to existing markets e.g. local brands. They will also be looking at creating new markets e.g. water and carbon. There will also be social/environmental benefits e.g. the High Level Stewardship scheme. The NPA will be working with land managers to bring this about.

There is huge potential for development within the National Park for example wind\food networks/commercial shops. These are all things they wish to see thriving.

Over the next 2½ years, the NPA wish to:

- produce a report on the state of the Park e.g. economy/housing;
- produce a Management Plan which will be the overall strategy and a guiding way for the future;
- planning – produce a local development framework.

There are urgent needs to be addressed:-

- urban fringe hotspots – keep visitors well informed. The NPA have agreed to start looking into this;
- Rights-of-Way – the Local Authorities have kept control, which is being passed to the landowners/tenants. It is vital to the future of the National Park that they work with the Local Access Forum regarding rights-of-way management;
- local branding – this has real value to the local economy e.g. South Downs lamb, local venison, wood and charcoal. There is a need to get local people and supermarkets interested in local produce;
- HLS – the NPA are working with Natural England;

The NPA is also mapping local businesses, abattoirs etc. It aims to identify poor practice and work together to improve this. It also aims to find out more about the 39m visitors a year to the NP so as to improve the management and quality of visitor experience.

Planning

The NPA is now responsible for all planning decisions. However, they will delegate the vast majority of the "day-to-day" applications to the 15 Local Authorities. The NPA will directly determine park-wide decisions e.g. re-development of redundant farm buildings.

NPA/SDLMG

The NPA are very grateful for the existence of the SDLMG. It is well supported and has a strong voice. There are strong channels of communication.

Mr Cooper thanked Mr Lee for his presentation and his kind words about the SDLMG.

Open Forum

Margaret Paren, Alison Tingley, William Wolmer and David Ashcroft joined the discussion panel.

Mrs Paren confirmed that the first year of setting up had been successful running up to the National Park going live on 1st April, 2011. The NPA will make sure they deliver on their purposes and duties.

The Management Plan is a crucial framework for the whole of the National Park. It will be overseen by a group of people to be known as the SDNP Partnership which will have its first meeting later this month. This will consist of 20 people (including Mike Tristram David Taylor and Christopher Passmore as SDLMG nominees, and Jane Cecil NT) and people from the business sector and education. Mrs Paren will be chairing this. The farming and land-owning community will also be represented.

The following questions emerged in the open discussion:-

(i) Planning

Concern was raised regarding planning now that it falls under the remit of the NPA. A legal agreement between the NPA and the Local Authorities has to be signed, including a Section 101 Agreement, the first of which was signed recently, and the rest will be completed by the end of July.

District Councils will continue to approve applications under their current remit. Mrs Paren confirmed they NPA had called in 29 applications.

Some members were apprehensive about the new planning policy and were concerned that it would be used as an excuse for refusing applications. Applicants need to know the reasons for an application refusal. Decisions must be fair and consistent.

(ii) Rights of Way

The responsibility now lies with the Local Authorities who in turn have passed it to the landowner. They will have to replace stiles etc. at their own expense. What will the role of the Rangers be? Who will assist farmers with stiles and hunt gates? There needs to be a hands-on approach as soon as possible. It had been

suggested that there would be one Ranger for every 20 square miles, which is less than before. Volunteers will be working alongside the Rangers.

Four Local Authorities had agreed to take back responsibility for rights-of-way, and Wardens will be seeing farmers regularly. Agreed that all rights-of-way need to be well managed and maintained.

David Ashcroft (Local Access Forum for Hampshire) confirmed there is a pot of money available for maintaining rights-of-way. Urged people to apply for the funds and spread the word to neighbours.

The Local Authorities need to be lobbied to get the job done.

(iii) "What do the NPA want to change?"

- farming areas – chalk/river/Western Weald – scale up and join together;
- use the HLS scheme;
- money to share tools and use Heritage Lottery Fund;
- Arun, Rother & River Trust – work together and support it.

£300,000 is available for large-scale projects. £30,000 has been allocated for a heathland project.

(iv) "What don't the NPA like?"

- Lack of ELS/HLS compliance – where land managers receive stewardship payments without fully complying with the terms of their agreement.

(v) "How will NPA ward off temptation to focus on 'cottage industries'?"

Sections of the community would want to keep development low, and not allow this to develop into larger scale businesses.

Mrs Paren explained that other National Parks do not include such large properties and we can take more development. This has started in Petersfield – different types of development in market towns have potential benefits for the future. Local communities need to work in conjunction with the NPA.

It was pointed out that the rural road network is not just for recreational purposes, and road traffic is likely to increase with developing businesses.

Mr Cooper concluded that it was good to have an open forum for discussion. There was a long way to go, but we would all work together.

Any member of the SDLMG can help off the Committee should they so wish – please contact a member of the Executive Committee if you feel you would like to become more involved.

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday 15th November, 2011 in Hampshire. Further details will follow nearer the time.

Mr Cooper closed the meeting by thanking Trevor and Jenny Passmore for their kind hospitality.