

South Downs Network newsletter Feb 2023



South Downs Network focus is changing

Over the last few years, the South Downs Network focus has changed from being almost wholly towards the National Park to a multiple of threats and challenges affecting the South Downs and its environs. These threats come from bodies such as National Highways (e.g., the proposed Arundel bypass) and from the UK Government itself (e.g., the confusing multiple changes in policy relation to farming and nature protection). However, we still have an eye on some of the major planning applications being dealt with by the Park. The massive Boomtown Festival in the west of the Park and the controversial Exceat Bridge in the east of the Park are two significant examples.

We have also tried to alert members and the public to some of the major consultations whether they be from the South Downs National Park, Government departments or local authorities where they affect national parks, nature and climate change.

We continue to support member events and news by posting information about them on our website and on social media. We also continue to try and provide useful and interesting news items (see below for some examples)

In this newsletter we review the current challenges at beginning of 2023 and looking back at the issues we have covered in 2022 and 2021

Attack on Nature

The threat to wildlife, nature and the environment from the Government

In October last year The Wildlife Trusts and other organisation such as the RSPB launched a defence of nature in the face of the Governments plans to approve the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill. The [RSPB](#) said "The laws that protect nature across the UK are under threat. The RSPB is worried that this represents an Attack on Nature."

Over the last couple of years the biggest concerned we have had is the challenges being presented to the environment, wildlife and nature by the UK Government with their

apparent changes in policy and funding for national parks, rural communities and the countryside generally. They seem not to value farming and the beauty of our countryside. Back in October 2022 the [Environment Secretary declared DEFRA as an "economic growth department."](#) This puts wildlife and nature organisations on high alert. It seems we can't let up on defence of the countryside for one minute!

The biggest challenge we have faced in the last few months of 2022 to now in 2023 is the [Retained EU Law \(Revocation and Reform\) Bill](#). This Bill potentially unpicks a huge amount of legislation relating to key areas including health and safety, environmental and consumer protection; its potential impact on the UK regulatory framework is therefore extremely significant. In environmental terms some 570 environmental laws could be revoked!

This Bill got through the 'report stage reading' on 18th January in Parliament. It will now go to the House of Lords but there is little chance that the UK Gov will accept amendments. A sad day for wildlife, nature and the environment let alone all the other pieces of legislation that the Bill seeks to effectively revoke. It is very depressing that, after all the reasoned campaigning by nature & wildlife organisations the UK Gov have pushed through this Bill.

We ask everyone to write to their MP to oppose this Bill.

Here is our January update: [#Attack on nature: take action!](#) Also this information from our October posts are still relevant

- [Destruction of UK's nature in the name of 'growth'](#)
- [Attack on Nature!](#)
- [Destruction of UK's nature in the name of 'growth'](#)

Update on National Park Planning

It appears that the National Park has stopped publishing 'pre-application' notices on their website which is most unhelpful. It now becomes much more difficult to see what's bubbling away in the background before a formal application is lodged.

There has been some good news and bad news over the past few months on planning matters:

Exceat Bridge

in December the National Park succumbed to the pressure from East Sussex County Council and allow the application for a new to Weybridge in the National Park near the Seven Sisters Centre at Cuckmere Haven. this was opposed by many organisations who were concerned with the lack of provision for sustainable transport and the protection of the landscape. the South Downs network spoke at the National Park planning meeting in December but unable to convince the members that allowing this application would increase the traffic through the national park and the potential for accidents to name just two matters. The Park Planning Dept seem to be unconcerned about the lack of

provision for cycling and walking or the light pollution From the additional roadway lighting. Here is our original post from our website:

[Exceat Bridge – NO improvement for cycling, walking and horse riders](#)

Boomtown Planning application withdrawn

In the west of the National Park we're pleased to report what that the planning application to expand the festival site was withdrawn in December at the last moment. After some 2 years of toing and froing And a considerable number of documents needing inspection on the National Park website hopefully we can say this was due to the planning case officer recommending refusal to the committee and to the objections raised by SDN members and directly from the SDN.

Back in April 2022 we warned the public of the planning application which now has now been withdrawn:

[Boomtown Festival – permanent permission applied for in the South Downs!](#)

Motocross Planning Application

Unfortunately, though this part of the South Downs is still under threat with an application to further expand this most intrusive activity which cuts across a number of National Park policies, none the least of these Strategic Policy SD7: Relative Tranquillity. Here is our recent post:

[New Motocross planning application in the South Downs near Winchester](#)

Funding News!

The South Downs National Park Authority has opened the call for projects for the 2023 round of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. The window for submission of Expressions of Interest will be open until 3rd March 2023. Read more here:

[Call for projects for the 2023 round of Community Infrastructure Levy funding – closes on 3rd March](#)

Major projects which have received funding

Here are two major examples of funding in 2022:

Ouse Valley Climate Action (OVCA)

In October 2022 Ouse Valley Climate Action (OVCA) in East Sussex was awarded £2m from the National Lottery Community Fund – the largest funder of community activity in the UK – aiming to make the region a national pioneer in tackling the climate change emergency. The East Sussex partnership covers 10 organisations, including the South Downs National Park Trust and Authority and Lewes District Council, and has an ambitious goal of empowering local people to

help create one of the first communities in England to fully embrace climate action. The project area follows the River Ouse downstream from the village of Barcombe – which is aiming to be the UK’s first net-zero village – through to Lewes, the National Park’s largest town, and further south to the coastal towns of Seaford, Peacehaven, and Newhaven. The river valley is a fragile landscape that has already felt the effects of climate change this millennium, including flooding, storm damage, coastal erosion and biodiversity loss. Read more here: [Ouse Valley Climate Action](#)

CIL Funds Allocated

As 2022 closed, the South Downs National Park announced funding of over £2m to help local communities across the region. Read more here:

[More than £2m of new funding to help local communities](#)

Sustainable Access in the National Park

By walking, cycling, horse riding and mobility scooters

Here is the update on SDN projects:

Safer Roads

We propose a maximum 40 mph speed limit on all rural non-A roads in the National Park matched with a 20 mph through most villages. This not so revolutionary - the Ashdown Forest and the New Forest already has many rural roads designated with 40 mph. Many towns now have 20 mph speed limit so why not villages? Hastings Borough Council is calling for a 20mph speed limit. Brighton already has a 20mph operating on many of its roads. Now [West Sussex County Council given the go ahead for speed limit policy changes](#). Changes include:

- An option for lower speed limits on rural roads, or those used as walking and cycling routes in quieter traffic (known as ‘quiet ways’)
- Making it easier for 20mph limits to be introduced outside schools, where appropriate, and provides new guidance
- Greater flexibility in deciding an appropriate speed limit and opportunity to discuss and debate where it isn’t clear what speed limit is appropriate

The SDN report on maximum 40 mph speed limit on all rural non-A roads in the National Park can be seen by clicking [HERE](#) This is a follow up to our [Call for lower speed limits in the countryside](#) published in May 2021.

See also our report entitled [‘Quiet Lanes - Safer walking, horse riding & cycling in the South Downs’](#) released in Feb 2021.

The Missing Link

Thanks to our volunteer transport specialist, Malcolm Smith We have made good progress since Covid restrictions have been lifted. He is working closely with the SDNPA Access Dept. For more information see:

<https://southdownsnetwork.org.uk/getting-around/missing-link/>

See also Malcom's report on Byways Open to All Traffic [BOATs] in Hampshire. Click [HERE](#)

YHA hostels and the South Downs Way

In the South Downs and specifically on the South Downs Way there are three great youth hostels, but sadly they are all at the eastern end of the Park. In fact, the number of youth hostels in or near the Park has reduced over the last few years. Can the lack of hostel accommodation on the 65 mile between Winchester and Truleigh Hill be resolved? Could you volunteer to help us put together a project to improve this situation? If so, please get in touch! [Just click HERE](#) and drop us a note and we will be in touch. Click [HERE](#) for background notes.

Funding the work of the South Downs Network (membership and donations)

Subscription rates for SDN members have not changed for over 10 year. Last autumn the SDN Executive considered rising cost affecting its, albeit very small, budget of less than £5000 per year. They found that membership fees were not covering even 50% of costs. Therefore they have taken the difficult decision to increase membership fees from 1st January 2023 as follows:

- Organisations with an income less than £10K pa: £25 pa (less than £2 per mth)
- Organisations with an income less than £50K pa: £50 pa (just over £4 per mth)
- Organisations with an income less than £100K pa: £100 pa (under £7 per mth)
- Organisations with an income above 100K pa: £250 pa (just over £20 per mth)

In parallel with this the SDN executive have recognised the widening interest in our activities, so they have decided to invite 'supporters' to regularly support our work with a regular donation of £5 (or more) per month.

Membership and supporters can set up a standing order using our bank details:

Please pay: South Downs Network

Bank: Lloyds Bank

Sort Code: 30-90-09

Account Number: 60503360

Please use reference 'Membership' or 'Supporter' Please also send an email to our Treasurer to advise of the contact address for payment:
treasurer@southdownsnetwork.org.uk

Further details can be found here: <https://southdownsnetwork.org.uk/join/>

We are also hoping that 2023 will bring in more donations via our secure and easy to use 'donations' app via our website: <https://southdownsnetwork.org.uk/donate/>

Funding Appeal – help us make a difference!

Over the recent years the need for the South Downs Network (SDN) to both speak out on important issues and campaign on environmental issues has increased ranging from planning and protecting the landscape to climate change and nature. This has put pressure on our volunteers and member organisations. In addition to these challenges, we have a number of projects which we would like to pursue. These projects require resources and to make them a success we will have to raise money to pay for the skills and services needed. Please support the South Downs Network (SDN) with a donation or become a sponsor. Just [CLICK HERE](#) for more information. Thank you!

Volunteering with the South Downs Network

[Join us as a volunteer](#) – whether you have just a few hours or a few days per month. Just let us know you are interested via our [CONTACT US](#) page and we will get back to you to discuss how to get involved. We're passionate about making the South Downs National Park and the surrounding countryside a better place for everyone to enjoy. Volunteering with us is a fantastic way to help us champion environmental issues. Every volunteer makes a difference to our environment, communities and countryside that we're so passionate about, and we value their contribution enormously. With your support, we can achieve even more. Here are some examples of volunteer roles: Fund Raiser, Web Administrator, Field Researchers, Desk Researchers

Previous Reports and Publications:

Click on these links to read more:

- [Don't demolish existing buildings – refit and renovate – it's better for the environment!](#)
- [Lewes Bus station may be demolished!](#)
- [ESCC Public Consultation on Transport in East Sussex](#)
- [Transport – Strategic Investment Plan for the South East](#)
- [Arundel bypass public consultation closed – many organisations have submitted objections](#)
- [South Downs Network: Response to National Highways consultation](#)
- [Watch the Sustainable Development and Living Webinar](#)
- [FREE Webinar: Meeting the Challenge for Nature: Thurs 25th Nov 6pm](#)
- [Transport webinar](#)
- [Webinar – Emissions & Pollution From Transport: Wed 27th Oct 2021 6PM](#)
- [October/November 2021 Webinars on Climate Change](#)

- [Petition to end pesticide use in gardens](#)
 - [The Air that we Breathe](#)
 - [Gatwick Second Runway – Question Time](#)
 - [SCATE Autumn Gathering information](#)
 - [Appeal to planners and developers: build zero carbon homes!](#)
 - [Defra Publishes 'Underwhelming' Nature Green Paper](#)
 - [BBC Countryfile majors on rural cycling and walking](#)
 - [West Sussex Bus Forum – now launched!](#)
 - [Getting the best out of National Highways!](#)
 - [Consultation on the Government's Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan](#)
 - [Consultation on environmental targets](#)
 - [UK Government Consultation – Climate and Nature Action](#)
 - [Landscapes review \(National Parks and AONBs\)](#)
 - [Shoreham Cement Works – public consultation](#)
 - [Better, cleaner cheaper buses?](#)
 - [Ending the War on Nature](#)
 - [Draft West Sussex Transport Plan \(2022-2036\) Consultation](#)
 - [Environment Bill \(now passed by Parliament\)](#)
 - [Public Consultation: National Park Design Planning Document \(SPD\)](#)
 - [Major new housing developments on the edge of the South Downs National Park](#)
 - [Message to the Government – make rural transport a priority!](#)
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