

## **Executive Meeting – 1 February 2022**

**Attendees:** Vic lent (VI) David Johnson (DJ), David Burnet (DB), Phil Belden (PB), Tony Whitbread (TW)

- VI: This is now focusing on the SDN and its upcoming AGM which should be in March. We will need to produce a budget and lots of other things for that meeting. This is not meant to be a full executive; we will try and have one in February in advance of the AGM on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March. We will address the membership side of things first before we get into the budget.
- DB: Claire has been working on the membership lists and has contacted all of the associations and organisations to check if we have the right contact names, and emails and so forth. This has just been completed (list shared on the screen). We have 42 members / organisations which we now have all of the correct emails for membership and subscriptions
- VI: We now need to move to, having Claire's having tidied, up who the contact is for membership, because he's not necessarily the contact for general publicity. We now need to move on to trying to get new members to increase this above the 42. We can talk to Claire about doing that now that she's done this bit.
- DB: The other thing that we might have to do is do we continue with the current small, medium, large membership & costing but which fall into which category? A useful exercise so that there is consistency depending on what our criteria is: small, medium, Large re. organisational size. At the moment, it is a little bit subjective. I am the treasurer of the Wiggonholt Association, this is quite a small organisation, typically less than 100 members so £10 per year. If we are going to stick with this, what criteria constitutes a medium sized organisation? Or do we want to have some additional banding? Or just do we want to just keep it nice and simple, small, medium, large, or do want to make it more complex with turnover?
- TW: I think that gets quite complicated and it has served us fairly well to do organisation. membership numbers, I think, it would be good to look at where the criteria lies
- DB: Small is £10, medium is £25 and a big jump to large, which is £100.
- VI: We did try and get the money up. I know there is a lot of people querying. Why do you need the money?
- TW: That's why we agreed to a budget on that basis. I think we were very close; we just need to think where those boundaries were and then show in the budget. I don't think anybody was antagonistic, it is a fair question; it is a small amount of money, let's see what it is being spent on.
- VI: VI will not be available as much as previously, so we need to find someone else to do my job and the admin volunteer has left the organisation. I feel because of the vagaries of people volunteering, we are going to have to pay the person to do the core part of what I do. I'm going to share my screen again. So, leading off from where DB was talking, we are

membership subscriptions, only give u. 1000 a year, if we increase them moderately, that might give us another £400. Currently, we are not plugging the idea of people donating extra money, we now have a working donation page where you can put your credit card in, or your debit card, and can donate that provide some donations. We are not applying for any grants. And we are not going for any sponsorship. So that leaves us with a potential income for the current year we are in of £1500 or so. I will run through these figures and then David and Tony can lead on any other discussions. If we get somebody to do my role, that person will hopefully start in April and the cost for the ensuing year I estimate to be about £9000. What I have tried to do is use a mid-range, local authority, Officer salary and fractionalize that because obviously it is a part time position. And that's quite normal people often advertised positions as a point to five of salary grade x y Zed, and you end up with a figure. It may be that we have to use somebody, an agency, to recruit the person, because my time is limited. I have found there is an environmental Jobs website, which a lot of organisations use and that will cost us some money to advertise on that website. Then we have this series of other costs down here, which I have worked through with David, using my knowledge of what we spent in the past. Down the bottom I summarise that total expenditure, then we have taken off what the expenditure would be in the ensuing year, which is £12,000. This is only a draft, but David gave me a figure I think of £2000, which we started off in January this year. That means that the net amount of money we would need is £10,000. This is the style of budget we will want to put forward to our AGM in March

- DB: We started the year at £2162 approximately and now £1642 after some early subscriptions received and other payments going out for various things.
- TW: The the issue here is a large expenditure against very little income. Even if we are successful, we are unlikely to meet that expenditure. As a body, the Southdowns Network is not a legally prosecuted entity, so we can't employ anyone. I am a bit worried about CPR. We Can't make budgets which are essentially going to fall on the host body unless we have the income to match it as well. I think we have quite a quite a problem here. It is really good see what our aspiration is, I would like to look again at the role, one thing it does show to me is that the volume of work that is put into this must be a challenge to put that under threat. The reality is that we can make a budget but if it does not come out to zero, then actually it falls upon CPRE and that won't be fair.
- VI: No, I do not I don't think it falls on CPRE because we have agreed a support structure with CPRE in so far to allowing us to use their office address, and also that the membership assistance is provided by a paid person on a rechargeable basis. There is no legal obligation by producing this budget that it falls on CPRE It is for you to consider that if you want to do anything in the future, post when I run down, and I think I can pretty well say that my last meeting, which I'm going to commit to is the AGM meeting in March. I am quite happy to do blogs if I have the time. We need to get on a race and money and that is what this is aimed at saying that if you want to do these things, you have got to raise money.

There is not anything stopping the SDN employing somebody, the question is we don't have the PAYE mechanisms, which people like. CPRE have, you know, the system of deductions and payments. I have spoken to Chris Todd, informally about things because they employ people in transport Action Network and they have the mechanism for handling PAYE which could then be a rechargeable thing. The real question is, is it the intention of the Southdowns network to raise money to pay for my replacement or to do any work in the ensuing year of any substance? Because if it is not, then everything falls down?

- TW: It is really useful to have this there because it shows the kind of quantum of work that you are doing and that we need to kind of raise money against. We need to raise money against something, it is unlikely we are going to be able to hit that sort of income figure to support a day a week, but we can try.
- VI: It depends how determined you are if you went for a certain degree of sponsorship or donation of a significant kind. Just to remind you that when SCATE wanted to produce their comprehensive report, which is still valid and we should refer to in relation to the Arundel bypass. Their report was done by a professional international transport consultancy, along with the West of England University, and it is a really good report. What happened there was that an application was made to a cosmetic company called Lush, who gave a sizable donation. We have not attempted to get the money, which is where we need to go, down the road of significant donations and significant sponsorship. This sort of thing could be of interest to companies wanting to meet zero carbon targets. We need to contact the relevant people and have a go.
- DJ: I wanted to come back on our sort of starting point, what is the network about and what do we want it to do? It was about having a work programme because we were recognising that the network role was less than clear, and what he wanted to achieve, from increasing membership and has been increasing membership. That I think is well, well noted, there was a sense that there is not a separate role from a Southdowns network from the Southdown society and that was possible. We began moving in that direction, very much thanks to the work that you and Tony have put in. In terms of going forward, we need to review and build on that so, we need to get the acclaim from our members, that this is a society that has been going through a change process and has as a positive future. I think with that positive future, there are a number of options. I am just reminded, it is not immediately relevant, but it has a power of this, I am involved with, with Shoreham Wordfest and we now have about 30 volunteers that we need as stewards and other things. Increasingly we are having people contact us and saying that they are recently retired and have a specialism in communications or something else and I would like to see if I can do something or I organised events, and we would like to find a way of contributing, so we are trying to find how we can best use their skills. There is a parallel for us in the network. Being explicit about what we want and what we want to achieve might get us some voluntary support, especially because we can designate as Vic has been very clear about what the job is.

Secondly, I agree that there are possibilities, potentially of funding that. But there is a process we need to go through first. I think we will probably get to where Vic is, but there is some spadework that needs to go in first and testing the water, about voluntary

support and that means looking at the 42 organisations we have got and the brokerage there about this being a role and could be a job shared role. We have got take a step back and show how it is going to go forward, what it contributes to, the thinking about the Southdowns relating to the breadth of it into Hampshire and elsewhere.

PB: My obvious question is, how are we going to do this - I don't have any big company contacts. Even if we doubled our membership, we are still going to be way off target. Putting a lot of effort into getting more members is, if not counterproductive, a little bit disproportionate. If we could raise £1000 from somebody else, then that is effectively the same as doubling the membership. Sponsorship or donations is an easier route to go down. To give a little history from my perspective: when the National Park came along, and the campaign group dissolved itself (rightly so, it had done its job) what was very disappointing was that I and a lot of other people felt that the South Downs Society would become the challenger and supporter of the new National Park Authority set up to look after the South Downs, as and they do really challenging because, if not, they can become complacent. They do a great job and excellent PR saying what a great job they're doing; but they do make mistakes as well. I think the SDN has two simple roles: 1 is to challenge to the authorities (not just the SDNPA), as an independent alliance or coalition, either through the network directly or through individual members; 2 is the network's strength due to its individual membership, the SDN Executive can put a letter to the Highways England to say, we don't like the Arundel bypass, then then the other individuals, either directly as members of the network or associated with it, can then do their bit as well. Without disrespecting the South Downs Society, SDN has a crucial role there. Secondly, it is empowering our individual organisations. We don't need to spend too much time going over what the role of the network is. The difficulty we have had over the last few years is it has lost its way, not punching to its weight, let alone above it. Thanks to Tony and Vic coming on the scene to crank it up, we are now in a much better position, with the membership paying it subs, a good sign - they are seeing the Network doing a good job, we are in a good place. We would not want us to slip from that momentum which has been built up.

In summary, I think we should raise £10,000 a year, every year, making sure we have enough income to meet our expenditure. We will have to cut our cloth to suit, so we would only run one campaign rather than two if we don't get enough money. If we can cover the core costs, that's great. But back to my original point, how, because I don't have those contacts. My one suggestion would be that our large organisations employ fundraising expertise, I don't see why we shouldn't go to those organisations and ask them for some help in getting this thing into a more financially self-sustaining position. Also, individuals in SDN may well have those Lush-type contacts into which we can then tap.

VI: I have put a little thought to this who could help us with donations or sponsorship because, it was an issue which you might question. To give you some assurance, this is not scientific, but I started thinking who would give us a donation and I thought of organisations which have some sort of link with the wider area of the countryside, in Sussex, east and west and Hampshire and I thought, locally, it worth having a go at Harvey's brewery, Drusillas, Middle Farm would definitely benefit by being in the National Park. Schools that are in or on the edge of the National Park, people like Lancing college. Hotels which are situated in or

next to the National Park, like these ones here, and organisation which are aligned with our own sustainable transport objectives. I mention a couple here, there must be loads more. The businesses like lush cosmetics and there are organisations out that have a very big Eco portfolio. Without too much thought there are a number of organisations out there. It comes down to a bit of administration and hard work. I would send a letter to the chairman of all of these organisations, or whoever the principal is, to ask them if they would sponsor us or make a donation for us to carry on our work. You could say in a letter enough to convince them that we are a truly environmental organisation. It is something you could hand to somebody who is good at scribing things and then we just post the letter and see what happens, this is not a massively difficult task it just requires brainpower for people to come up with who might be the companies and it requires somebody to send some letters out for which we could pay somebody to, to, you know, print the letters out and send them out. And the letter needs crafting, which I would expect all SDN members to try and have a go at along with making suggestions. Who is going to be the person who is going to print the letters out is another thing? But I think you guys along with the rest of the executive and members of the organisation, I think if we put out a skeletal letter, so we are going to try and get some sponsorship money in donations in, here's a draft letter, could you try and improve it? And everybody contribute? That is what the SDN could do as part of his job. You can actually say in such a communication, why it is important our organisation exists. Look at all the challenges the government have decommitted on the environment act. The government's own statistics tell us there is 27% of global emissions coming from transport yet grant chaps is not doing anything about it. We have got to work with our national friends and others to deal with that. We want people to plant more trees, we want people to restore the hedge rows, even the RSPB are now saying to residents do not have all these food tables out there that is destroying the natural ecological system. We want to help insect and bug life we want to talk to farmers about reducing their pesticides and fertiliser. We can't do that without people assisting us by organising meetings or doing admin.

- TW: That sounds like a plan, doesn't it? Offering a letter first using the history of the Southdown society, Southdowns Network, and the Southdowns campaign to say where we are now. I like your idea of putting it around the members and then we need some sort of mechanism of getting it to people we need to send it to. I also like your idea of a scattergun just people who may be interested.
- DB: that is great. I am assuming we don't need to be a charity or company. I just think if I were a company and received the letter, would we need some legal wrapper and do we need to tidy up our terms of reference?
- VI: No, I don't think so because we are not asking them to donate to a charity. I think we should say to them that any donations or sponsorship proceeds this year, will be to help pay for the administration and organisation of our efforts to improve the environment.
- TW: I think we could turn a weakness into a strength because the completeness is being a network, we are not one charity, we are a network of loads of charities.

PB: We can put a PS or NB saying that I am assuming they are happy with this SDN request, and that the CPRE effectively acts as our "charitable coordinator" to provide the credibility. Drafting a simple skeleton letter is a great start, it doesn't need to be perfect, because we get good responses, which may be simply "yes, great, thank you", or suggestions for improvement. When we write out, we should attach an iterative list of potential donors / sponsors, asking people to add to it and to let us know of any specific people we, or they, could approach? When we send the letter to the chairman, president, whoever of those bodies, with a note saying, "if you'd like more information, we'd be happy to have a chat with you".

VI: All agreed to pilot this.

I don't think I have any taxing points to make to you. Other than I am very grateful of your support in this part of the conversation.

**Actions:**

- Recording of this meeting will be transcribed and tidied up and then circulated to you guys. Then we will try and make some notes out of it and then we will move forward.
- VI to draft the skeleton letter
- Tidy list of potentials

All: Can we thank you. Can we thank you, Vic, as well as wishing you well on Friday and thereafter. The reason we are in this situation is because all the work you put in.

VI: I wrote on behalf of Arundel to both West Sussex County Council offices, and to Highways England emphasising on behalf of the members of the SDN, the importance of the environment and the future for our children and all of these sorts of things. The Highways England came back with a very nice reply. I got quite a good reply from the chief officers of West Sussex County Council. They were using sloping shoulders, the fact that we had written to them as obviously made something trigger in their mind but it was necessary to reply. If you go back to other things that we've done when we wrote in support of more safety for cyclists and walkers in the highway code, I'm not saying what we said made any difference whatsoever, but I remember getting a reply from the Department of Transport, thanking us for our detailed comments on why it's important to change the highway code to make it safer for walkers and cyclists. There have been other consultations, which we have written about, where we are not trying to make an individual point, but we have made a point of principle which has hit home with the reader of it.

DJ: If you are interested in in Adur because I have an officer who is contacting community organisations, about how they are going to misuse the term re-wild the river Adur, land that they have got to turn back to marsh. In other words, we represent 42 organisations. Which is a good way of getting a connection with those. I don't think the Ouse and Adur River Trust are members, and I would like to be a bit closer to them because of their key roles. There is, a little bit of a strategic recruitment exercise we need to think about.

VI: Thank you very much for that.

**AOB**

PB: Glover review - we should prepare a brief synopsis with some suggested responses for members to make, to encourage them to respond. **Action:** PB to draft for the next meeting.

VI: Add Glover Review to AGM Agenda

Date of Next Exec meeting: Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2022