



SDN AGM. Zoom Meeting Notes 25th January 2023

Present: Tony Whitbread (Chair), Phil Belden, Christopher Napier, Chris Todd, Dan Osbourne, David Burnett

	Topic	Points discussed	Action
1.	Apologies	Vic lent, David Coldwell, Jayne Chapman, Mike Tristram, Grahame Joseph	
2.	Issues raised in Vic's report	<p>The threat to wildlife from the Retained EU Law Bill This is in the last stages of its passage through parliament and there is probably no action for the SDN at present. It represents a considerable threat to the environment but in the process has galvanised significant partnership working in NGOs.</p>	
		<p>Update on National Park Planning There are concerns over the quality of NPA planning papers for transport issues, particularly in relation to Exceat bridge but it may be a general problem. The NPA could perhaps buy-in expertise, for instance on transport, and act as a stronger challenge to highways departments in County Councils and central government.</p> <p>In Hampshire the Acquind interconnector development was turned down by Secretary of State (SoS) after previously being approved by a planning inspector. A Judicial Review has now found against the SoS so the decision is being</p>	

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	revisited.	
	<p>Funding News NPs generally have received a flat funding agreement, in effect being a real terms funding cut. SDNPA have planned in advance for this so in effect have a little more head room in their budget. This gives them a little more flexibility in their spending than would otherwise be the case.</p> <p>The South Downs Trust seems to be doing a good job, gaining funds for the Park without relying on government grant. Concerns about the Trust competing with other charities in the area do not seem to have come about.</p>	<p>Our meeting with SDNPA in March is due to discuss funding and priorities in the Park. This could be broadened to discuss support for parks in the light of possible political changes after a general election. We could see how we might work with the SDNPA to improve the profile of NPs, and so NP support from any future government.</p>
	<p>Sustainable Access in the National Park The SDN missing link project is going well and all are grateful to Vic / Malcolm Smith for the progress being made. One good example related to this is in Brighton and Hove where links between the city and the South Downs way are being developed. There was a suggestion that methods of developing links could look laterally at how things could be achieved. In some places calming existing roads may achieve more with lower impact than by developing, for instance, widened cycle routes.</p>	

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		Options, however, will be very site specific. NPs in general (and SDNPA in particular) should contact “Active Travel England” to look at options for a far greater uptake of active travel. NPs should act as pilots for good practice in active travel.	
		<p>YHA hostels and the South Downs Way</p> <p>Lack of accommodation along the SD Way is an ongoing issue. The SDNPA are being active in this area but options for improvement are limited. CPRE has been in touch with the YHA in the past and it may be possible to reinvigorate this link.</p>	
3.	<p>Finance Report David Burnet</p>	<p>Membership and finance report</p> <p>Our current balance is £506, and expenditure exceeds income.</p> <p>SDNPA have been approached for funding support but, unsurprisingly, they are not able to fund us.</p> <p>We now have 40 SDN members.</p>	<p>We have agreed membership fee increases and DB is about to invoice the next round of yearly subscriptions. This should help in two ways – by increasing income and invoices may encourage payment (without having to chase as has been the case in the past).</p>

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4.	Current Issues Feedback from Members Issues for discussion with the SDNPA	<p>CPRE Hampshire</p> <p>There is much development pressure on the setting of the NP – i.e., along its boundary. The current version of the NPPF helps with protection of the setting but leads to a discussion about what constitutes the setting.</p>	
		<p>CPRE Sussex</p> <p>Similar concerns about the NP setting with particular issues about Mid Sussex and a large volume of housing being accepted by the LA. There are concerns that the next revision of the NPPF may be less helpful.</p> <p>CPRE Sussex are holding a “countryside day” in Knepp in August.</p>	
		<p>Brighton and Hove</p> <p>BHC approved their Whole Estate Plan last December, to be endorsed by the SDNPA in February. This covers about 13,000 acres of public land around the city.</p> <p>It has resulted in the establishment of a cross party Downland Advisory Panel, including officers from different departments, input from NGOs and will include and agricultural advisor.</p>	

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		It is proposed that this advisor will have a good background in regenerative agriculture.	
		<p>Eastbourne Eastbourne has already approved its Downland plan and has resulted in the reconvening of the Eastbourne Downland forum.</p> <p>Together with the Brighton Plan, these indicate that the Las have moved on from the aim of selling off downland to a positive attitude of retention and management for public benefit.</p>	
5.	Dates of next meetings	Wednesday 29 th March 2023, 10am to 12am. The Ditchling Room, SDNPA Office, Midhurst	