

South Downs Network Executive meeting 23rd January 2024

Meeting notes

Present: Tony Whitbread (chair), Margaret Parren, Martin Small, Jill Sutcliffe, Phil Belden, David Burnet, Christopher Napier, Malcolm Smith, Grahame Joseph, Chris Todd, John Templeton, Graham Elvey, Nigel Brown, Stephen Poole.

	Topic	Points discussed	Action
1	Apologies	Mike Tristram, Emma Tristram, David Johnson, Dan Osbourne.	
2	Minutes and Matters arising	The minutes of the last meeting were noted, any matters arising covered in the agenda.	
3	SDN Administration and networking	<p>The administration of the SDN is in the process of transferring over to CPRE Sussex. This may take a few months as staffing arrangements within CPRE settle in. It was confirmed that SDN does have the funding to pay CPRE for the time taken.</p> <p>SDN generally circulates news updates from the National Park. At present this is “filtered” through the chair, but this causes delay and may mean that some updates get missed. Executive agreed that (GDPR permitting) it would make more sense for the National Park to circulate directly to members. TW to follow up.</p>	<p>TW (in process)</p> <p>TW</p>
4	Robin Crane’s book on the SD campaign	Robin Crane has published a book on the history of the South Downs Campaign. This is now with the publishers and will be launched in March. SDNPA have pre-ordered 500 copies which has largely paid for the publication (there is a shortfall of £585 – I’m sure Robin will be very glad of any donations!). It will be appreciated if SDN members did reviews and perhaps recommend the book to their members.	All
5	Transport issues	<p>The missing link project.</p> <p>This is an excellent piece of work but has been held in obedience probably because of staffing changes within the NP. It is recommended that we bring up the subject in an introductory meeting with the new members of staff at the NP (see below)</p> <p>Missing public transport links was also brought up as a key issue. Some towns with railway stations do not have good links with bus services, or are even losing the bus stations they once had.</p> <p>40mph speed limit</p> <p>SDN members are proposing that 40mph speed limits should be considered for NP roads (other than A roads). This could be part of a conversation on quiet access within the park in our discussions with the NP.</p>	

		Local transport Plan for E. Sussex This is in consultation and Eastbourne Eco Action are running an event on it on 12 th February.	
6	Personnel changes in the SDNPA	Trevor Beattie (CEO) has retired and is replaced by Tim Slaney (previous head of planning) as an interim CEO. Andrew Lee has also retired to be replaced by Anita Kerwin-Nye. It was agreed that a small delegation should ask to meet with Anita and Tim Slaney to introduce her to SDN in general and address a few key issues. Budget cuts have resulted in lack of capacity in other areas, and this is probably what is affecting discussions regarding transport issues. This will be one of the issues we will aim to bring up.	TW, PB, MP, CN
7	National election / National Park manifesto	SDN manifesto This has been prepared as a briefing note to go to SDN members rather than as a paper to go out more widely to the public. It is hoped that SDN members could themselves use it when considering their own asks of a prospective parliamentary candidates. If there is sufficient consensus, it may be that SDN could prepare a simplified public version in due course. Election The manifesto could be part of the subject matter that SDN members use in election work. Ideally SDN material could go to all prospective parliamentary candidates, but this would require a large amount of work that we would be unlikely to be able to deliver. However, it might be possible for SDN to work through CPRE who might be contacting PPCs anyway. Key MPs (at present) are Andrew Griffiths, Peter Kyle, and Hillary Benn.	
8	Report back from the CNP meeting	A note of the meeting has been previously circulated. These meetings are very positive and it is considered valuable for SDN to attend. Friends of the South Downs are also members of CNP, and this year are acting as hosts for the CNP annual conference. This is likely to be in September, in the University of Brighton.	
9	Membership and finance	Finance is fairly healthy with a current balance of about £800, helped by the increase in subscription rates last year. Invoices for next year's subscriptions are being sent out. It was asked that members look out for these invoices and endeavour to process them. SDN does spend significant time chasing subscriptions and it would be helpful if this was reduced. It may well be that we are sending to incorrect addresses within member organisations. Membership currently stands at 44, although 22 paid up last year.	All
10	Planning issues	Local Plans	

		<p>Several Local Plans are to be reviewed this year and one issue CPRE are concerned about is large solar farms in the setting of the National Park. The principle of solar farms may not be the issue, but design and location may impact on landscape. Hence there needs to be good policies in Local Plans, especially for valued landscapes. (This could be an issue to bring up with the NP in our meeting with them). CPRE Hampshire will be meeting the NP regarding its Local Plan. CPRE has also looked at the Hants Minerals and Waste Plan and found that its environmental policies are quite good, indeed they could even be a model for wider application.</p> <p>Large planning applications A major development on the North Street Industrial Estate in Lewes is generally supported by FSD.</p> <p>Development of Black Robin Farm on Eastbourne Downland is supported in principle by FSD and the Eastbourne Downland group but there is concern about how access can be provided in a positive way (active travel and public transport) rather than by increasing private car use. There was also a view that the interpretation, whilst being good, could have been cast in a wider context to include farms and landscapes more generally. There was also a concern that while the development itself may be quite good, it was not keyed into environmental enhancement in the wider landscape perhaps even leading to further agricultural intensification rather than biodiversity gain.</p> <p>Medmery Holiday Park is outside the NP but within the wider area. An application to intensify its use is a concern.</p> <p>UK Oil and Gas has put in its 5th extension of time for an application at Broadford Bridge, apparently for a geothermal plant. However, the evidence is that oil wells are not good locations for geothermal plants.</p> <p>There is an application for multi-story buildings (12 stories) on the site of the old Brighton Black Rock gas works. This will have an impact on the setting of the NP. P/A: BH2021/04167 deadline 18 FEBRUARY 2024 (see pictures below)</p>	
11	Member reports	<p>FSD The society wishes to raise the profile of Hampshire in its operation; hence it is increasing the number of its projects in the county. This will include work with schools; “No Child Left Behind”, with the YHA, and with South Downs for All looking at the heritage of the South Downs, including farming. In addition, FSD are working with the HIOWWT on a partnership project.</p> <p>Amberley Society</p>	

		<p>GJ reported that a large section of fortified manor wall at Amberley Castle, which is a scheduled ancient monument, collapsed in 2021. After engaging with SDNPA and Historic England they had been very helpful in persuading the owners to undertake maintenance, inspection, repairs, and restoration. Work has now started throughout the site.</p> <p>Brighton and Hove FoE The group, unfortunately, is disbanding which is a shame in itself and will mean that SDN will lose a member. Many thanks for the input of B&H FoE over the years.</p>	
<p>Dates of next meetings</p>		<p>Tuesday 26th March (AGM) to be held at SDNPA offices if possible. Tuesday 25th June Tuesday 17th September All to be held at 10am unless otherwise stated.</p>	

Brighton Black Rock gas works

