

South Downs Network Executive meeting 25th June 2024

Meeting notes

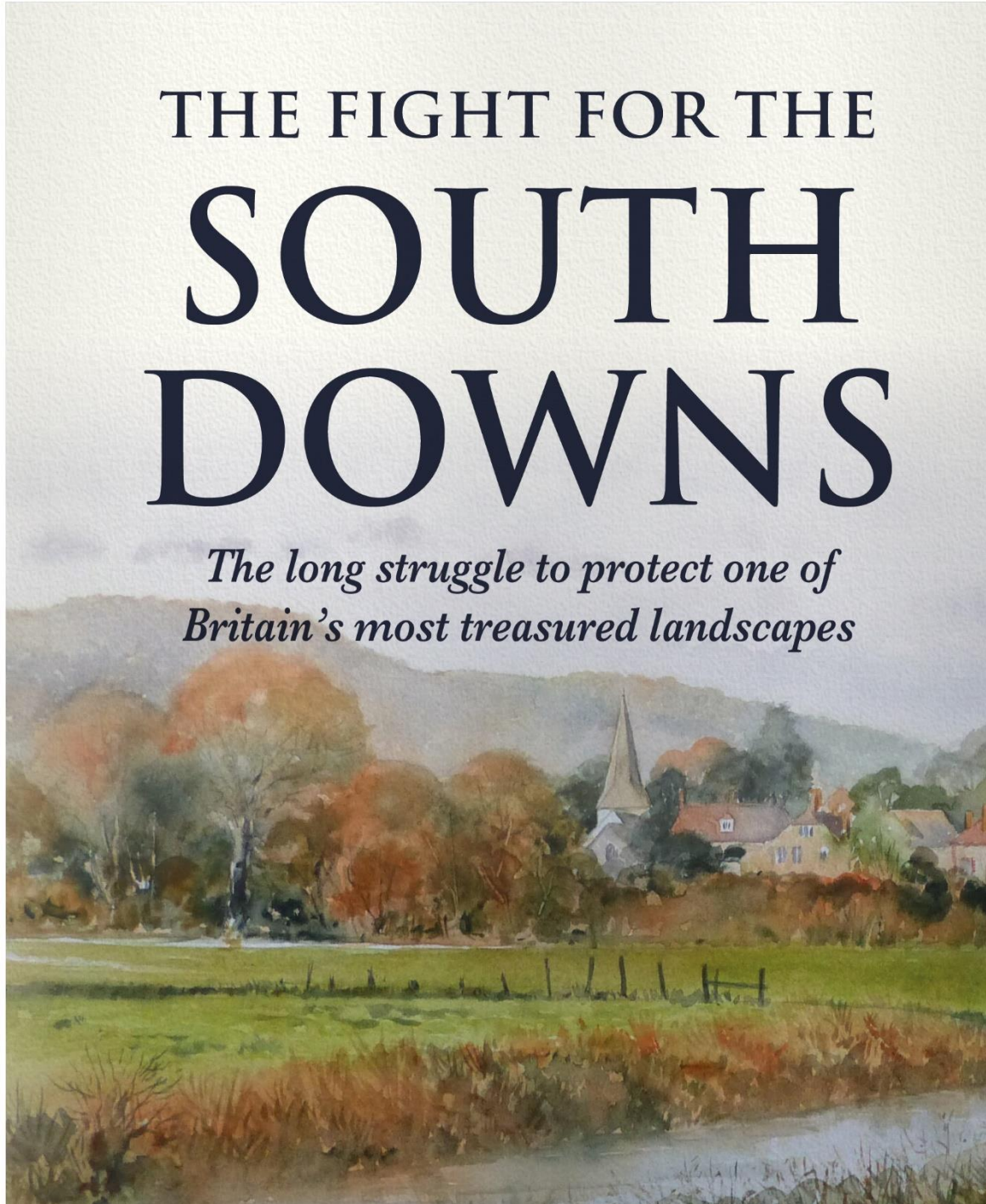
Present: Tony Whitbread (chair), Christopher Napier, Chris Todd, John Templeton, Nigel Brown, Martin Small.

	Topic	Points discussed	Action
1	Apologies	Malcolm Smith, Cllr David Paine, Sarah Abercromby, Phil Belden, Jill Sutcliffe, Phillip Box	
2	Minutes and Matters arising	Following up on planning issues, it was noted that both CPRE Hampshire and FSD are involved in the Boomtown case, and it looks like there is no further action at present. FSD reported that they are involved in a valuable partnership project with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust at Noar Hill. This is an example of how they are wishing to engage more in biodiversity issues.	
3	SDN administration	Administration has now moved to CPRE Sussex and our main contact there is Debbie Hazeltine. We wish to ensure that the SDN is an asset to CPRE so we will meet to discuss ideas to take the partnership forward. It was agreed that we can be a little more flexible in the use of our googlegroup. At present it is mostly used to send information out to members. It is recommended that members be encouraged to send information out themselves rather than it being co-ordinated centrally (ie through the Chair). This can include events and newsletter that are relevant to the National Park.	
4	Membership / finance	The current bank balance is £1,970. We have 43 members on the SDN database yet just 18 have paid subscriptions this year, down from 22 last year. This is despite quite a bit of chasing. This gives a worrying message regarding how members value to SDN. We do not want to waste admin time on chasing funds from non-paying members but that we don't want to delete them from the Network. Also, we do not wish to pass a Network on to CPRE which is a burden in terms of raising subscription. Nevertheless, the meeting considered that we should keep the SDN even if members are slow to pay up. There is value in just the major organisations co-ordinating their engagement with the Park.	
5	15-year Park anniversary	2025 is the 15-year anniversary of the formation of the National Park. CT is drafting some ideas on how this might be recognised.	CT
6	Robin Crane's book.	The launch of the book went well, and sales are growing. Below is the press release about the launch of the book which also gives the link to where it can be purchased (www.browndogbooks.uk).	

7	Update from the NPA	<p>Tim Slaney, interim CEO, joined for a discussion about the NPA.</p> <p>The NPA is currently involved in 2 major consultations – the Partnership Management Plan (PNP) and the Local Plan. The review of the PNP is being done according to government guidance which now promotes more alignment of the way plans are done across all protected areas. There is now a single body overseeing all protected landscapes – the Protected Landscapes Partnership. Under the recent guidance all plans should now consider how they deliver 10 outcomes under 3 main headings: Nature recovery, climate change and culture / access. The SDNPA are considering their design of outcomes in relation to this national guidance.</p> <p>There was a discussion about how the SDN could be helpful in this process. The SDNPA would be interested in the views of our members regarding their outcomes, how we could help them to reach out to community groups and how action might be disseminated to local groups. The idea came forward that perhaps we could design a simple questionnaire to go out to our members asking their views on the SDNPA outcomes. This may have the secondary benefit of galvanising our membership and perhaps giving them a bit more value from SDN membership. TW will talk to the Park about how such a questionnaire might be developed.</p> <p>Regarding staffing at the SDNPA – there are currently adverts out for a CEO and for an interim Director (they have decided to go for an interim Director so they can fill the post as quickly as possible, at least for the short term). It was agreed that it will be good to meet the NPA again in about 6 months, when the staff issues should have settled down and when our input into the PNP review might be helpful.</p>	TW
	Dates of next meetings	<p>Tuesday 17th September Tuesday 10th December Tuesday 11th March 2025 Tuesday 24th June</p> <p>All to be held by zoom (links to follow) at 10am unless otherwise stated.</p>	
	AOB	FSD. David Sawyer is stepping down as Chair of FSD, to be replaced by David Green. Martin Small is moving up to become Chair of their Planning and Conservation Committee.	
		The meeting was cut short because of a health issue so there was not sufficient time to cover all the items we wished to discuss with Tim Slaney.	

THE FIGHT FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS

*The long struggle to protect one of
Britain's most treasured landscapes*



PUBLISHED AT LAST!!

Members of the South Downs Network, especially those organisations that were members of the South Downs Campaign, will be delighted to find that the Campaign's almost unbelievable story will be published on 18 April.

Indeed, all those who have a special affection for the glorious South Downs and enjoy and appreciate the area's national park status today will be totally absorbed by this extraordinary history which began with a meeting between seven individuals in 1990 whose aim was to achieve the greatest protection for the area – a national park.

From this modest beginning The South Downs Campaign grew to a body representing 159 national, regional and local community groups by the time the National Park was established in 2010.

The initial chapter describes the special qualities of the South Downs and the Western Weald today and the evolution of its landscapes and communities over the centuries. The next two chapters describe earlier attempts to conserve the area, which began in the 1920's when even Beachy Head was threatened by developers.

The main thrust of the book is the story of the South Downs Campaign. Powerful forces opposed. Dogged lobbying persuaded the newly elected Labour Government in 1997 to take a fresh look and the designation process began. But a Public Inquiry, a change in legislation, an Appeal Court decision and a re-opened Inquiry that overturned the original findings, were all necessary before the National Park was confirmed in 2010.

Note:

Author Robin Crane chaired the South Downs Campaign from its founding until the National Park was finally designated. From the outset the campaign was run by a team of both volunteers and professionals. The Campaign for National Parks, The Ramblers Association, Sussex Wildlife Trust and Sussex and Hampshire CPREs were the lead organisations. Margaret Paren, who took a prominent role in the last half of the Campaign has edited this book. She chaired the South Downs National Park Authority for its first ten years.

SALES DETAILS

“The Fight for the South Downs” priced £14.99 should be available to order from your local bookshop after 18 April and can be ordered postage free from www.browndogbooks.uk . We hope to arrange a formal launch at the SDNPA in Midhurst towards the end of this month.

