

South Downs Network AGM and Executive meeting 26th March 2024

Meeting notes

Present: Tony Whitbread (chair), Margaret Parren, Jill Sutcliffe, Phil Belden, David Burnet, Christopher Napier, Grahame Joseph, Chris Todd, John Templeton, Graham Elvey, Nigel Brown, Jayne Chapman, Mike Tristram, Paul Steedman, Lesley Wilson.

	Topic	Points discussed	Action
1	Apologies	Malcolm Smith, Cllr David Paine, Sarah Abercromby, Martin Small	
2	Minutes and Matters arising	Looking back to the 2023 AGM minutes, we said then that SDN would aim to be a largely self-organising networking body. This has largely been successful. Although we have no volunteer officer time, the SDN is still able to network useful information to its members.	
4	Election / re-election of key post holders	Chair – Tony Whitbread Vice chairs – Phil Belden, Christopher Napier President – Dan Osbourne	Elected
5	Election/Re-election of Executive members	Chris Todd Mike Tristram Martin Small David Johnson Jayne Chapman John Templeton Retiring – Grahame Joseph – Many thanks to Grahame for his input to the Network over the years – still very welcome to attend and input into Exec meetings as a SDN member.	Elected
7	Accounts / finance report	Accounts presented. Income and expenditure both down a little from 2022. Balance at end of 2023 was £755. Invoices have now gone out for 2024. Accounts for 2022 / 23 accepted and approved by Executive.	
8	SDN administration	SDN administration is due to pass to CPRE Sussex shortly who are recruiting a new member of staff to cover this (along with other CPRE duties. The new admin officer is due to start in mid-April, good timing for the transfer of responsibilities from Smart PA.	

9	Robin Crane's book on the SD campaign	The book is being published around 8/9 th April. 500 copies have been pre-ordered by the SDNPA who are looking at a launch at the end of April. Robin will produce a blog which SDN members are encouraged to use in communications with their members. This is a valuable book about an important campaign and hopefully there will be quite some interest. A limited number of books can be available for review, and we should aim to get copies to key places. National Park members and officers will have access to the book and will be writing press releases. Hopefully an electronic version will become available which might be valuable as a research document.	All
10	Communication with SDNPA	SDN aims to meet with the NPA in Midhurst at its meeting on 25 th June. Exec will aim to meet in the Fitzcane's Tea Room, opposite, at about 9.30am, to start our Exec meeting at 10am and then meet the NPA at 11am. A smaller group will also aim to have a pre-meeting before then (to consist of Phil Belden, Christopher Napier, Margaret Parren, John Templeton, and Tony Whitbread)	
11	National election / National Park manifesto	It is now likely that a national election will be held later in the year giving us more time to consider our National Park Manifesto. The context of our manifesto so far is that it is drafted as a note to SDN members for their use, rather than as a public document. We will decide later whether we will produce something external from SDN overall. The current draft aims to summarise key information and present broad asks. MT expressed concerns, however, that the biodiversity / farming references had been simplified too far and some key concepts were missing. PB will look again at the draft.	PB
12	Member reports	<p>Amberley. Threats of a reduce rail service have been averted, the campaign actually achieving an increase in service.</p> <p>Ramblers A pre-election survey of its members is being carried out by the Ramblers which could provide a valuable insight into current access and attitudes to access. It is suggested that access in the National Park could be a valuable discussion in our meeting with the NPA.</p> <p>Jill Sutcliffe Highlighted the publication of book, "The Return of the Grey Partridge", Restoring Nature on the South Downs, Roger Moran-Grenvills and Edward Norfolk pub Profile Books. Expressed concern about what constitutes the "setting" of the SDNP. MP outlined that the setting will vary depending on the impact of a development; high impact developments will affect the setting from further away than low impact ones. So, visibility and impact are key considerations rather than distance. MT added later that the setting should be expanded to cover the setting in relation to biodiversity, for instance the movement of plants and animals through the area.</p>	

WSSC planning committee REFUSED 5th application by UKOG to extend time on the oil well site at Broadford Bridge near Billingshurst
Application by Cala Homes for 400 houses on land to the east of Westergate which has interesting wildlife records and a chalk stream along one boundary.

CPRE Hampshire

Hants Local Plans are under discussion. Some, for instance, have good policies on the setting of the Park.
CPRE have met the SDNPA planning staff and among items discussed were:

District/Borough Local Plans in the area

Impact of large solar farms on the Park setting.

Large housing estates in the Park setting.

Significant hotel accommodation applications in the Park, sometimes affecting prime landscape areas in the Park.

Concern about “Boom Town” which is high impact and is constantly aiming to expand.

Concern about camp site development, especially caravan sites.

Light pollution.

Margaret Parren

A hedgerow / wildlife corridor is being developed between the South Downs and New Forest National Parks.
This is being supported by both Park authorities.

Chris Todd

There is concern that bus services are being cut back for instance at Devils Dyke. The West Coast service, however, seems to be increasing.

Chichester Society

The Chichester DC Local Plan is about to be submitted to the inspectorate, having passed the final public consultation stage (Reg 19) and includes a series of wildlife corridors linking Chichester Harbour to the SDNP.
The Arun Draft Local Plan is currently out for public consultation (Reg 18) and the deadline for comments is 6th May. Objections could be made to major housing sites close to the SDNP likely to have an impact on the setting of the SDNP. JS is concerned as these do not include corridors through the Manhood area, arguably in the setting of the Park and perhaps most in need of wildlife corridors.

Mike Tristram

		Expressed concern about the lack of consideration of flint walled farm boundaries in cultural heritage. There seem to be few financial incentives to cover this and FIPL (Farming in Protected Landscape) grants are over-subscribed. It may be that the SD Trust could be an option for this sort of funding. Indeed PB suggested that the SDN should link up with the SD Trust to discuss the wider implications of this as a future funding stream for environmental delivery.	
13	Dates of next meetings	Tuesday 25 th June - to be held at SDNPA offices. Starting at 9.30am at Fitzcane's. Tuesday 17 th September All to be held at 10am unless otherwise stated.	
14	AOB	PB suggested that we prepare a short annual newsletter summarising some of the things we have discussed over the last year. This may be of interest to members, especially to those who support but are unable to come to all the Exec meetings. This may be helpful at a time when we are sending out membership invoices, so giving an outline of the value of the SDN. AW and PB to draft something for input from others.	AW / PB