

South Downs Network

Exec meeting. 28th Sept 2022

Notes

Present

AW (chair), Grahame Joseph, Christopher Napier, Chris Todd, Mike Tristram, David Burnett.

Apologies

Vic lent, David Coldwell, Phil Belden, David Johnson, Jayne Chapman

Review of meeting of 22nd June

The objective of this meeting was to prepare an agenda for our meeting with SDNPA. This was cancelled due to COVID but a subsequent meeting with Andrew Lee is reported below.

Membership and finance review

Expenditure is greater than income and at this rate the SDN will run out of funds before December. Several members have not paid their subscriptions, and these are being chased. We do, however need more funds. A letter has now been compiled to be sent to potential funders. If we do attract sponsors, it was suggested that we visibly acknowledge their support on our web site. We may need to produce guidelines on the nature of sponsorship and the basis on which they provide support.

Action – Members to recommend recipients of funding request letters.

In the past the SDNPA has supported SDN, they have not done so for many years so may now be amenable to an approach.

Action – AW to write to SDNPA to see if they are willing to support SDN.

Support officers report

Vic's role has changed in that he is supporting with background work but is less able to provide the general support function. In past meetings we have agreed the principle of seeking funding for a paid support officer. Hence the need for a fundraising letter mentioned above. Employment of a new staff member is dependant on the success of fundraising.

If SDN becomes a charity, then it may open other potential sources of funding. Members liked the principle of becoming a charity but there will be increased work both in setting up and running a charity. We will need to look at the pros and cons and make sure we are clear about potential benefits. Members noted that charities are often having trouble attracting trustees. One suggestion was that instead of becoming a separate charity SDN might be able to work more within an existing charity, such as CPRE Sussex, who currently facilitate SDN.

Subscription rates were discussed, and it was considered that even the increases agreed at the last meeting were too low and probably not realistic in supporting a body like SDN. The following was therefore agreed as recommended rates:

Small organisations (income less than £10K pa) £25 pa

Medium organisations	(income 10 – 50Kpa)	£50 pa
Large organisations	(income 50 – 100K PA)	£100 pa
Very large organisations	(income above 100K PA)	£250 pa

Letters to member bodies asking for increased subscriptions should be accompanied by a note articulating the work (past and ongoing) that SDN is doing. Graham Joseph also offered to do a short personal note from Amberley Society saying the value of membership to a small organisation.

Current issues

Communications with SDNPA

Meeting SDNPA once a year with a huge agenda is not an efficient way to communicate. It is therefore agreed that communications should be much more frequent with ad hoc informal meetings and more specific meetings on items. We should invite SDNPA staff to SDN Exec meetings when a particular issue need discussion. Furthermore, some of these specific meetings could be opened to the wider membership if they are matters of wider interest. This would be particularly easy to organise as a zoom meeting

SDNPA cuts and our response

It was thought that cuts to the National Parks were in part due to a lack of influence by DEFRA on the Treasury who are not championing Parks effectively. Whereas we could use this as a campaign issue it is unlikely that we would have much impact at this stage. It was suggested that we should have a meeting with NPA first to understand the nature of the threat posed by the cuts and, if possible, what SDN members could do to support the NP.

SDNPA priorities and how we feed in.

National Park priorities are:

- Nature Recovery
- Climate Action
- National Park for All

Linking with the item above, it was suggested that it might be helpful to have a discussion with the National Park about its priorities in the light of the cuts. This could be a meeting between SDNPA and SDN Exec, or we could open it up for a wider membership presentation.

Action – AW to organise a meeting with SDNPA about priorities and funding restrictions.

Governments recent pronouncements - Fracking and relaxation of planning

It is too early to tell how the proposed investment zones might impact on the National Park although it seems that some of the zones could be vast and have a wide effect.

Fracking, however, could be a major concern perhaps inside the Park and also on its boundaries. Whereas some consider that some of the pollution issues might be minimised, the legitimacy of developing any new fossil fuel resource in the light of climate change is severely in question. It was suggested that SDN could articulate the scale of the climate emergency to members using reputable sources such as the IPCC and the Climate Change Committee. It will be helpful to know the SDNPA's policy of fossil fuel development, what issues they consider when addressing proposals and how they inform the decisions made by Local Authorities.

Missing link project

The paper from Malcolm Smith was welcomed, it is good to see the project progressing again.

AOB

The Arun Countryside Trust is fully occupied with consultations and proposals for the Arundel bypass.

It was reported that an interconnector project in Hampshire (a major substation for electricity transfer from France) which had been passed by the Planning Inspectorate has subsequently been turned down by the Secretary of State on the basis of damage to the Park. A Judicial Review is now going to take place.

The Transport for the SE Strategic Investment plan consultation is now closed, and it will now be finalised in November. It is based on a climate denial road-building agenda supported by rather biased attempts at greenwashing.