

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK**

### **Note for East Hampshire Association of Parish & Town Councils Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014**

This is the latest of my regular notes for EHAPTC Meetings about some of the activities of the National Park Authority (NPA) which may be of interest to Parish Councils.

The most important items of current NPA business were reported at the recent meeting for representatives from all Hampshire parishes in the National Park on 12 November.

Topics included:

- an overall planning context for the National Park's first ever Local Plan
- an update on the new consultation and notifications process for Parish Councils re planning applications
- the NPA's Dark Night Skies project
- the timetable for the production of the Local Plan and importance of robust evidence
- the confidential consultation on SHLAA sites (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment)
- consultation on verification of data used in Settlement Hierarchy part of Local Plan.

The presentations associated with these items are accessible via the NPA's "communities" webpage: <http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/communities/resources>

Many Parish Councils have responded to the NPA's request for 'letters of support' for the potential application for International Dark Skies Reserve status – and individuals can also register their support by visiting this web-page: [www.southdowns.gov.uk/darkskiespledge](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/darkskiespledge). Parish Councils may wish to promote this initiative. The next few months will see more activity on the project with the aim of submitting an application this time next year.

Other information from recent weeks is included in the NPA's monthly 'highlights' document circulated to Parish Clerks: not an exhaustive list of achievements but selecting some of the projects the Authority and its partners are working on across the National Park.

I would also draw attention to the following matters:

- The NPA conducted a series of 25 parish and town council workshops on the latest stages of its first ever Local Plan. This has enabled all parishes to make a direct contribution to the plan's evidence base and should ensure that the process of Local Plan preparation is well understood
- The NPA has written to Communities Secretary of State, Eric Pickles MP, asking for changes to the Government's proposals for reforming Section 106 agreements, concerned that the proposals could threaten the provision of affordable housing in rural areas. A press release explained that: "Reforming Section 106 agreements might sound like a technical boring bit of planning, but in fact these changes go to the heart of how authorities can respond to the need for affordable housing in rural communities"
- In September the NPA's Planning Committee refused planning permission for an application, near Fernhurst, for the installation of infrastructure for drilling for the exploration, testing and appraisal of hydrocarbons by Celtique Energie. Margaret Paren, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "The decision was unanimous

and very firm. The message has gone out that robust evidence is vital to jump the very high hurdles set out in national planning policy”

- The NPA continues to win a number of important Planning Appeal decisions in East Hampshire and elsewhere across the National Park. Success in relation to an appeal against the Authority’s decision to refuse planning permission for 26 dwellings at Sussex Road in Petersfield is one of the more recent decisions
- The NPA’s partnership with City & Country Ltd won the Royal Town Planning Institute’s South East Planning Award for ‘Best Planning for Natural and Built Heritage’ for the redevelopment of King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst – further recognition of the benefits of the authority’s approach to planning
- The NPA is still looking for local infrastructure projects for its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The IDP lists all the infrastructure needed to support any development that occurs. Submitted projects will be listed in the IDP and will be considered for funding by the CIL and other sources. If parishes have potential projects or infrastructure needs, the following information will be needed: parish or area where the project is required; exact location for the project; details of the project (what it is, who its for, as much detail about the project as possible); evidence of need; detailed costing (an important part of the submission); and timing (eg. urgent or long term requirement). More information on the IDP and CIL can be found here: <http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/community-infrastructure-levy> and any parishes with any queries can contact Gareth Giles via [gareth.giles@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:gareth.giles@southdowns.gov.uk) or 01730 819261.
- Natalie Fellows has now resumed her role as the Planning Link Officer for Hampshire parishes after a period of maternity leave. She can be contacted via: 07872 410442 and [natalie.fellows@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:natalie.fellows@southdowns.gov.uk)
- The Authority’s Western Downs team, based at the Queen Elizabeth Country Park, continues to act as a 'first stop shop' for communities and land managers, providing advice and support towards achieving the national park’s purposes. The team also acts as the 'eyes and ears' on the ground, assisting with a wide range of activities. Contact the team to find out how the NPA may be able to help your community and please encourage anyone interested in volunteering to contact Nick Heasman, our Area Manager, on [nick.heasman@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:nick.heasman@southdowns.gov.uk) or 02392 571381

*Although my role is to act in the best interests of the whole of the National Park, I want to continue to maintain close contact with Parish Councils in East Hampshire to make sure that all important issues, concerns and ideas are taken into account by the National Park Authority.*

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