

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Note for East Hampshire Association of Parish & Town Councils Meeting 5th December 2018

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.

Parish Clerks and others now receive copies of the SDNPA e-Newsletters (*South Downs News*) and so these notes are shorter than they were initially. Anyone can sign up here to have the [newsletter delivered to their inbox](#) every month. Past issues of the e-newsletter can be read as pdf documents via this link: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-publications/south-downs-news-the-newsletter-for-the-national-park/>.

To complement these other sources I will provide information about the following:

- Partnership Management Plan
- The Government's "Glover Review" of Protected Landscapes
- Update on the South Downs Local Plan
- Funding for local projects
- Conservation and Heritage
- Achievements of National Park Rangers and Volunteers
- Other work with farmers
- The South Downs National Park Trust
- Local contacts.

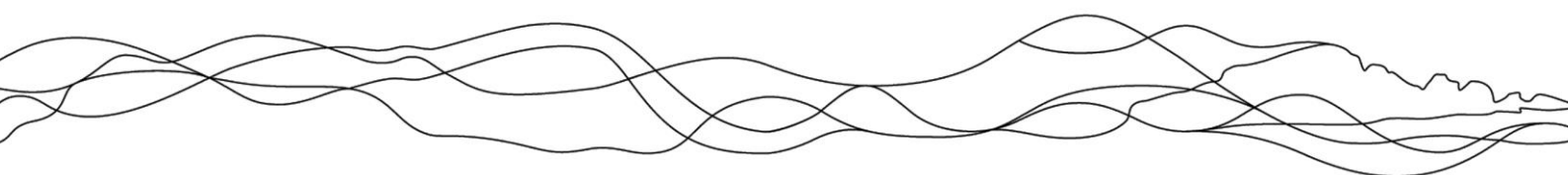
Partnership Management Plan

A significant portion of the recent SDNPA/EHAPTC meeting for Parish Councils (19 November) was devoted to the current review of the Partnership Management Plan for the National Park. All National Parks have to produce these Management Plans and all are required to get a wide range of partner organisations contributing towards the delivery of objectives and outcomes identified in the plan.

All Parish Councils are being encouraged to consider, at appropriate Parish Council meetings, whether there are some local projects which will not only enhance the local community but will also contribute towards the delivery of the Partnership Management Plan. Projects need not be delivered by Parish Councils, but could be undertaken by others in (or connected with) the community.

Examples of past, present and future projects are being sought which contribute to any (or all) of the 11 main outcomes of the plan. The outcomes are as follows:

- The landscape character of the South Downs, its special qualities and local distinctiveness have been conserved and enhanced by effectively managing the land and mitigating the negative impacts of development and cumulative change
- Communities in the National Park are more sustainable with an appropriate provision of housing to meet local living and working needs and improved access to essential services and facilities
- A diverse sustainable, dynamic economy has developed that provides a wide variety of business and employment opportunities, many of which are positively linked to the special qualities of the National Park and local people have access to skilled employment and training opportunities
- The South Downs National Park is a well-used and well recognised asset for improving mental and physical health and well-being.
- The condition and status of cultural heritage assets and their settings is enhanced, many more have been discovered and they contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place



- Outstanding visitor experiences are underpinned by a high-quality access and sustainable transport network supporting improved health and well-being
- More responsibility and action is taken by visitors, residents and businesses to conserve and enhance the special qualities and use resources more wisely
- There is increased resilience within the landscape for its natural resources, habitats and species to adapt to the impacts of climate change and other pressures
- A well-managed and better connected network of habitats and increased population and distribution of priority species now exist in the National Park
- The range and diversity of traditional culture and skills has been protected and there is an increase in contemporary arts and crafts that are inspired by the special qualities of the National Park
- There is widespread understanding of the special qualities of the Park and the benefits it provides.

Quite a number of Parish Councils provided examples of projects during the workshop on 19 November and all are encouraged to think of ways in which they can (or already are) contributing. More details of the review are available via this link: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/partnership-management-plan/partnership-management-plan-review/> and ideas can be sent to Chris Paterson via chris.paterson@southdowns.gov.uk

The Government's "Glover Review" of Protected Landscapes

It may be valuable for Parish Councils to respond to the current consultation being conducted by the Government (The Glover Review) as it may be a way of seeking changes that have been sought by parishes for some time. The Review covers a wide range of matters including: access (Rights of Way, BOATs etc) and whether National Parks and AONBs have sufficient powers; highways, public transport and housing issues; working with farmers and land managers; nature conservation and biodiversity; landscape and cultural heritage; and the Governance of National Parks (eg. whether or not there should be any Parish Council representatives on National Park Authorities).

The deadline for responses is 18 December. It is not necessary for anyone to try to cover all the issues being encompassed by the Review and it is explained that the questions in the consultation are just a guide. People are free to just comment on issues of particular interest. Details are available here: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/landscapes-review-call-for-evidence/> and comments can be made on-line or via landscapes.review@defra.gsi.gov.uk At its most recent meeting Buriton Parish Council agreed to submit seven particular points to the Review Team and I attach these as an Appendix in case they are of interest to others.

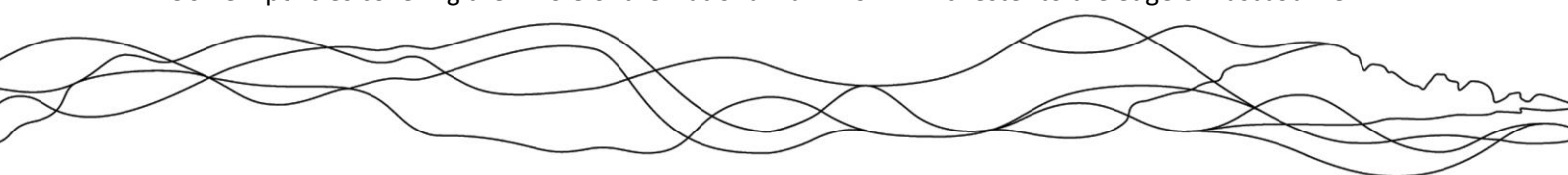
Update on the South Downs Local Plan

As reported in my previous notes, the Plan is now in the 'examination' stage of its process with information and updates being published on the SDNPA's website on the [Examination page](#)

A number of Parish Councils have been attending the Hearings either to take part or to listen to the discussions and deliberations. The first week of the Hearings (w/c 12 November) covered Strategic Matters whilst the second and third weeks (w/c 3 December and 10 December) are addressing Development Management and Site issues.

As well as the Local Plan itself, the NPA's submissions to Government for the Examination included all the evidence used in the preparation of the Plan and more than 2,500 comments received in the final pre-submission consultation held in autumn 2017. All this information is available to view at www.southdowns.gov.uk/localplan.

Once adopted the plan will replace more than 1,000 policies from 12 different local authorities with just 96 new policies covering the whole of the National Park from Winchester to the edge of Eastbourne.



Funding for local projects

If your parish has a project that could bring social, environmental, economic or cultural benefits to a community within the National Park and if the project may need some grant funding, you should consider applying for a Sustainable Communities Grant or CIL funding.

As well as continuing to be a member of the NPA's Planning Committee and Local Access Forum, I am the Chairman of the NPA's Sustainable Communities Panel, working alongside some experienced panel members from a range of partner organisations. Any partnership or other not-for-profit organisations which include social enterprise, community interest companies, voluntary organisations and 'for profit' organisations (these projects cannot be for financial gain to the business) can apply for funding. Grants are available for up to 50% of the project cost from £250 to a maximum of £10,000. More information is available via: <http://southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/supporting-communities-business/sustainable-communities-fund/>

The NPA is currently deciding how to allocate CIL receipts received during 2017/18. CIL is now charged on residential developments (where new dwellings are created and / or where there is a net additional floorspace of over 100sqm) and on new large format retail floorspace. CIL, which is only payable when development commences, has to be used to support the growth identified within Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. During 2017/18 £197,480 was collected some of which has been distributed to the Parish/Town Councils where development had commenced (including East Meon, Greatham, Liss, Petersfield and Sheet). Of the remainder, 60% is to be spent on strategic infrastructure projects identified by County Councils and 40% will be spent on smaller projects which have emerged as high priority schemes in the NPA's Infrastructure Business Plan (IBP). This IBP is a living document, updated annually, into which Parish and Town Councils can submit projects for consideration at any time.

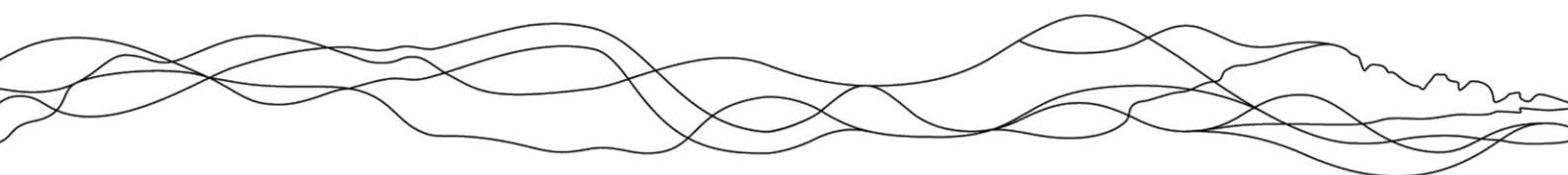
Conservation and Heritage

The National Park's partnership with East Hampshire continues to work well, drawing upon officer expertise in both organisations and there is now an improved 'Historic Environment' section on the SDNPA website. In the near future this will include click-on maps of all 166 Conservation Area boundaries in the National Park.

At least one more Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) is underway in East Hampshire (for Selborne) and the next phase of the park-wide Local Heritage List project is likely to commence in the new year. This will be very dependent on a good responses from Parish Councils and local amenity groups to achieve an appropriate coverage.

The National Park Authority is also endeavoring to address 'Heritage at Risk' matters as / where possible. There are well over 5,000 statutorily listed structures within the National Park, the vast majority of which are maintained in good condition by their owners. A little over seventy have, however, fallen into disrepair: many of them being smaller buildings or structures that are of little or no economic use. These will always present challenges as their owners have little or no incentive to maintain them. In a handful of cases, however, dwellings with a significant capital as well as cultural value (which could easily return to viable use) decline due to neglect. Whilst there are some potential statutory remedies, these can be clumsy to use and can be portrayed as draconian by aggrieved owners or in the media. For these reasons, they are not often used by Planning Authorities but the SDNPA has recently initiated such action on a Grade II listed house in West Ashling. If this action proves successful a proactive approach may be extended to other neglected buildings, tailored to the individual circumstances of each case.

For any queries on any of these matters, please contact the National Park's Historic Buildings officers via HistoricBuildings@southdowns.gov.uk



Achievements of National Park Rangers and Volunteers

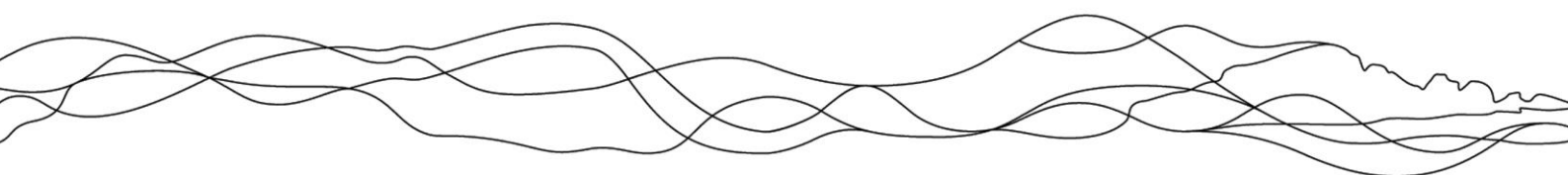
From meeting with farmers, offering training and support to local communities, leading walks, organising and training volunteers, controlling invasive species and supporting key species, South Downs National Park Rangers are out in the National Park every weekday and many weekends over the year. Don't forget to say hello if you spot them out working. Here's a taste of what they have achieved over the last couple of months:

- work has been undertaken with a number of the farms in the Selborne Landscape Partnership Farm Cluster, including at Norton Farm and Hartley Park Farm. Work involved coppicing hazel to collect material for hedgelaying and the volunteers will shortly finish laying a hedge on the border between the two farms. This location is next to a right of way and has a wide field margin on either side of it where evidence has been found of Harvest Mice (one of the farm cluster's target species)
- volunteer groups have worked at Binswood, in conjunction with the Woodland Trust, to manage an area of rare wood pasture, opening up rides and scalloping the edges
- joint tasks, with the Alice Holt Arboretum volunteers, have also taken place to give meadows a seasonal cut
- work has been undertaken with Queen Elizabeth Country Park volunteers at Oxenborne Down
- work on the landscape-scale river restoration and water vole reintroduction project on the River Meon continues to go well and is a good example of community engagement. Water vole latrine surveys have been completed on the river for this year's breeding season and show that water voles are now breeding and established at over 30 sites along the river from sea to source. The volunteer survey team has also completed a number of river habitat surveys which will be fed back to landowners with ideas to improve some sections of the river
- other management work near the River Meon has included some scrub management to open up some blackthorn thickets to allow bankside vegetation to establish for riverine wildlife and volunteers completed some maintenance work in a section of river that has recently been naturalised, including removing newly-arrived invasive plants. Water voles swam past as the work was being undertaken!
- a meeting of the Winchester Downs Farm Cluster Group included discussions with the Hampshire rural police team to discuss issues related to rural crime (and how farmers can access support) and there was also a talk by the Hampshire Ornithological Society who are keen to increase the number of farmland bird surveys that they carry out in the area
- the Western Downs officers have worked with community representatives in Buriton and obtained designation for a new Dark Sky Discovery Site in the village
- one of the National Park's new apprentices, Jane, has joined the Western Downs Ranger team and will be assisting with the winter habitat management programme and studying at Sparsholt College.

Other work with farmers

The National Park Authority continues to work with its popular 'Farm Clusters' across the Park. A new website is being developed to allow each cluster group to add and update their own content and promote the work that they are doing. At present there is information available via this link: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/farm-clusters/>

A series of 'Meet the Farmer' plaques have been attached to posts along the South Downs Way to allow people to learn more about the land around them and who farms it. Users are able to tap their mobile phones on the plaques so that a video automatically opens up on You Tube. The videos allow farmers to introduce themselves and provide details of how they manage the surrounding farmland. At present the listening posts are all located between the rivers Arun and Adur but it is hoped that the project will be expanded along other stretches of the trail.



The South Downs National Park Trust

The South Downs National Park Trust, the independent charity established in 2017 with the aim to work with private benefactors and national and community based partners to enhance and protect the South Downs National Park for future generations, is making some good progress. The Trust is raising funds to support work in five key areas: conserving the landscape and its heritage, engaging people in outdoor learning with a special emphasis on the young, working with communities, access for all and protecting plants and species.

The first dedicated Trust appeal 'Mend our Way' is well on the way to raising £120,000 to improve the South Downs Way, used by thousands of walkers year in, year out. Stretches at Old Winchester Hill and Hyden Lane, near Butser Hill, should benefit from better surfacing and drainage, thanks to the generosity of donors.

Local contacts

The Planning Link Officer role for East Hampshire is still being covered by both Nat Belderson and Hannah Chapman. In the first instance, queries can be sent to Hannah, who will refer to Nat where necessary. Hannah.Chapman@southdowns.gov.uk and 01730 819270; Nat.Belderson@southdowns.gov.uk and 01730 819307.

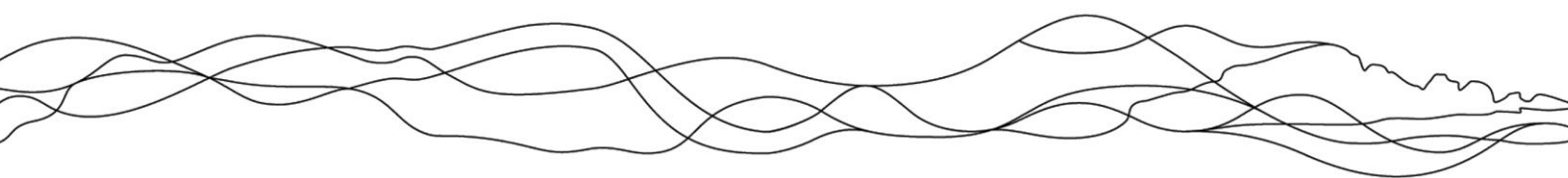
The Authority's Western Downs team, recently moved to Wallops Wood near Droxford, acts as a 'first stop shop' for communities and land managers, providing advice and support towards achieving the National Park's purposes. The team also acts as the 'eyes and ears' on the ground, assisting with a wide 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 the Countryside & Policy Manager, Nigel James (nigel.james@southdowns.gov.uk) or Lead Ranger Elaina Whittaker-Slark (elaina.whittaker-slark@southdowns.gov.uk).

Although my role is to act in the best interests of the whole of the National Park, I always aim 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.

Doug Jones, Member of the South Downs National Park Authority and Buriton Parish Council

doug.jones@southdowns.gov.uk

30th November 2018



Appendix:

Points made by Buriton Parish Council in its response to the Government's 'Glover Review' of Protected Landscapes

We suspect that you may find that there are different issues and pressures affecting the 'lowland' National Parks (as distinct from the upland Parks elsewhere in the country) and we think that some of these issues could be very pertinent to your deliberations, particularly if you are contemplating any recommendations for any new National Parks in lowland parts of southern / central England.

Our comments cover the following broad areas of relevance to your review:

- Access and recreation
- Governance
- Engagement of people from all parts of society – including to help improve health and well-being
- Issues for farmers and land managers.

Our comments are as follows:

- The review is asking about access (Rights of Way etc) in National Parks and this Parish Council has long-standing problems with motorised use of Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) which ruins the condition of paths onto and along the Downs and discourages use by more vulnerable users such as walkers and horse-riders. At present, National Park Authorities have few (if any) powers on this matter and the Review may wish to consider enhancing (and simplifying) the opportunities for National Park Authorities to take action
- If the Review were to conclude that National Parks should be responsible for all Rights of Way in their areas (instead of the powers / responsibilities sitting with local Highway Authorities as at present) then it would be vital for all the necessary funding to be transferred to NPAs
- At present, the large-scale cuts in local authority budgets are affecting the quality of the Rights of Way service which County Councils can provide: reducing the attractiveness, accessibility and appreciation of the countryside. This works against the aim in the Review to make National Parks more available to deprived communities and to increase the potential of National Parks to contribute to improving the health and well-being of the nation. This is a very serious matter
- The retention (and enhancement) of public transport services to villages like Buriton in National Parks is also a very serious matter – not only for the residents of the local communities but also to provide sustainable access for visitors (including those from deprived communities outside the National Park) and to help with local social and economic conditions (helping to retain village shops, pubs etc). The Review should consider this as a major issue
- The Review may also be considering the governance of national parks and it will be important to retain the local connections via Parish Council representatives in addition to District / County Councillors. Any disconnections with the scores of Parish Councils inside National Parks is likely to bring problems in the future and the local, grass roots representation should be retained
- There are problems with the management of Highways in National Parks which the Review should consider, including (1) pressures from traffic from new housing (and other) developments just outside the National Park which cuts through the National Park to travel beyond (without any financial contribution via CIL being applicable inside the Park) and (2) budget reductions in County Highway Authorities is leading to a focus solely on safety issues whilst the appearance and quality of rural lanes suffers: projects to de-clutter the highway scene and to introduce minor traffic calming measures are no longer possible in this area
- The development of major housing sites around the edges of National Parks is also bringing problems for farmers and landowners with increasing amounts of attacks by dogs on sheep etc. All public bodies need to consider all the wider effects of their actions and help to pursue the aims in National Park Management Plans.

