

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK**

### **Note for EHAPTC Meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

Here is the latest of my regular notes for EHAPTC Meetings about current activities of the National Park Authority and forthcoming events which may be of interest to Parish Councils.

#### Area Operations

The Hampshire part of the National Park is overseen by the Western Area team based at Queen Elizabeth Country Park (QECF). The team consist of an area manager and three rangers all with their own specific areas of work and expertise. Interestingly, over a third of the National Park is within Hampshire and the team cover a broad remit as the 'first stop shop' to communities and land managers through advice and support to achieve the national park's purposes.

As well as the 'eyes and ears' on the ground the team assist with projects and activities and the team has had a busy quarter making preparations for chalk grassland restoration work, coordinating work with farmers and Natural England. They have taken delivery of a seed harvester which will provide the opportunity to collect wild flower seed from the local area to re-sow and enhance areas of grassland particularly on the chalk. Support has been given to a number of projects including enhancing the habitat of the River Meon with lots of activity planned for the forthcoming autumn and winter months.

In partnership with the Forestry Commission (FC) a new Woodland and Forestry Officer has been appointed to work with the SDNPA and the FC to encourage management of woodland and identify target areas for biodiversity. The team have attended a number of events over the summer period talking to members of the public, worked closely with the Shipwrights Way Officer on developing the long distance cycle route from Alice Holt to Portsmouth Harbour as well as improving access to open access areas of land in the district.

Nick Heasman is the Area Manager and the rangers for the East Hampshire District areas within the South Downs are Dan Oakley and Rob Nicholls. Please contact Nick on 02392 571381 or [nick.heasman@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:nick.heasman@southdowns.gov.uk) for further information on how the South Downs National Park Authority can help your community

#### Grants available from the National Park Authority

Many communities are now taking advantage of the grants available from the National Park Authority for a wide range of projects. Details about grants available through the National Park's 'Sustainable Communities Fund' can be found in the 'Funding' section of the Park's website (<http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/communities/funding>) and ideas can be discussed with Mark Rose, External Funding Coordinator, on 01730 811755 or [Mark.Rose@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.Rose@southdowns.gov.uk)

#### Producing a Management Plan

All National Parks have to produce Management Plans to guide the delivery of their statutory purposes and duties. Being a new National Park, the South Downs is starting from scratch but has already almost finalised a 'State of the Park' report which is due to be published in October.

This report will provide a 'baseline' position about current conditions in the National Park – to enable the NPA and partners to measure the impact of its Management Plan in the years ahead.

Work is also well underway to identify important issues for inclusion in the Management Plan and the National Park Authority is aiming to draw on inputs and ideas from as wide a range of people and partner organisations as possible. It is recognised that, in due course, many organisations will need to make contributions towards the delivery of the Management Plan.

It is intended that a special workshop will be held with Parish Councils in East Hampshire and Winchester districts later in the year (probably late November or early December) to give everyone the chance to verify key issues in the National Park.

Issues that are likely to be discussed include: Sustainable farming, Sustainable Tourism, Access and Development & Housing. This meeting will be a follow-up event to the successful meeting arranged in conjunction with HALC, EHAPTC and the Winchester Association on 30<sup>th</sup> May.

This will be an important opportunity to engage with senior representatives from the National Park Authority and to help shape future policies for the area.

#### Planning and Community Planning

The meeting with Parish Councils in May identified some important planning policy and process issues. As a result of the meeting, and to continue to build good rapport between parishes and the new Park Authority, representatives from a number of parishes subsequently met with NPA officers to illustrate issues being faced. Letters have subsequently been sent to all Parish Clerks on 22<sup>nd</sup> June and 20<sup>th</sup> July to provide important updates. Further comments are still welcomed, addressed to the Director of Planning, Tim Slaney, [tim.slaney@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:tim.slaney@southdowns.gov.uk)

Although the vast majority of planning applications are delegated to East Hampshire DC and handled much as they have been prior to the creation of the National Park, the NPA 'calls in' a relatively small proportion for the attention of its own Planning Committee. These are generally potentially sensitive and important cases. Any Parish Councils with any queries about planning matters inside the National Park (or just outside the boundary) should contact the special 'Link Officer' for this area: Nat Belderson ([nat.belderson@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:nat.belderson@southdowns.gov.uk) or 07917 602373).

The National Park Authority is preparing some guidance (specifically for parishes and local communities) about the range of Community Planning tools, techniques and plans that are currently available. This should help communities decide whether to undertake work on a new Neighbourhood Plan or whether to focus on Parish Plans, Village Design Statements, Local Landscape Character Assessments or other plans.

If any parishes are thinking about commencing any of these sorts of projects over the next few months and would like any advice on the matter, please contact the lead officer (Strategy Lead for Communities), Chris Paterson on 01730 811766 or [chris.paterson@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:chris.paterson@southdowns.gov.uk)

#### Other news and achievements

Although the National Park Authority has only been in existence for about 18 months it has already been successful in attracting valuable extra resources to the area through a large-scale 'Nature Improvement Area' project, through successful bids for tourism and sustainable transport funds, and for woodland archaeology projects. Significant amounts of 'match funding' have also been attracted for projects awarded grants from the Sustainable Communities Fund.

The NPA has set up mechanisms for close working with water companies to consider water quality (and quantity) issues and it is also providing a number of improved opportunities for education and learning.

Information and updates about all this work can be found on the National Park website [www.southdowns.gov.uk](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk) and via the 'Forum' pages <http://southdownsforum.ning.com/main>

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.

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