

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK**

### **Note for East Hampshire Association of Parish & Town Councils Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

It is less than two months since my last report but here a few notes for the EHAPTC Meeting about some of the recent activities of the National Park Authority which may be of interest to Parish Councils.

Parish Clerks and others now receive copies of the SDNPA e-Newsletters (*South Downs News*) and anyone can sign up 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:

- The South Downs Local Plan – and supplementary material
- Partnership Management Plan
- Design Awards
- Roads in the South Downs
- Achievements of National Park Rangers and Volunteers
- Funding for local projects
- Local contacts.

#### **South Downs Local Plan – and supplementary material**

Since the formal adoption of the South Downs Local Plan in July, Parish Councils with land inside the National Park will gradually be gaining familiarity with the new Policies. And the workshops for Parish Councils held in October were largely devoted to this topic.

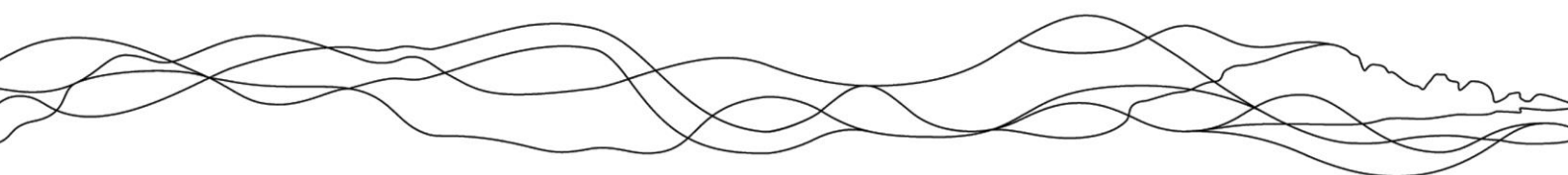
About 140 people attended these workshops and, after a number of short presentations, they were able to put questions to National Park officers in Q&A and ‘surgery’ sessions.

There was also an informative session on the Community Infrastructure Levy (including changes in CIL Legislation and new responsibilities for Town and Parish Councils) and information about a number of new Technical Advice Notes.

There are links to the workshop presentations (and to other documents referred to) here:

- [South Downs Local Plan Presentation](#)
- [Community Infrastructure Levy Presentation](#)
- [Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document](#)
- Ecosystem Services: two Technical Advice Notes which support Policy SD2 by explaining what ecosystem services are and how they apply to development proposals: [Ecosystem Services and Householder Planning Applications TAN](#) and [Ecosystem Services TAN \(non-householder\)](#)
- Dark Skies: [This technical advice note](#) supports Local Plan Policy SD8
- Extensions and Replacement Dwellings: [Technical Advice Note](#) to assist in the interpretation of Policies SD30 and Policy SD31
- Sustainable Construction: [This technical advice note](#) supports Local Plan Policy SD48 relating to Climate Change and Sustainable Use of Resources.

Recent Appeal decisions have continued to support the new Local Plan with the Inspector in one, in the Petersfield area, concluding that “I am of the view that the appellant has not sufficiently embraced a landscape-led approach to the development of the site as advocated by Policy SD5 ... The appellant’s argument that 11,000 new plant specimens means the proposal would be landscape-led misses the



point of the landscape-led approach which is particular to the National Park and involves elements of design other than planting ... Every part of the National Park, even urban areas, have National Park designation and a duty to conserve and enhance natural beauty.”

### **Partnership Management Plan**

Following inputs from many Parish Councils, and other organisations, the South Downs Partnership Management Plan is set to be finalised over the next couple of months. It will describe a number of outcomes to be sought in the period 2020-25 with a number of priority areas for action. It is likely that Parish Councils will be able to contribute to many (if not all) of the outcome areas, including those which are intended to help communities in the National Park become more sustainable. One specific action area is likely to be work to support community-led initiatives which enhance the towns, villages and landscapes of the National Park. The next round of parish workshops (spring 2020) will devote time to this topic but, in the meantime, Chris Paterson is happy to talk with any Parish Councils with ideas to contribute and he can be contacted via [chris.paterson@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:chris.paterson@southdowns.gov.uk)

### **Design Awards**

The winners have recently been announced for the National Park’s first Design Awards. Dozens of nominations had been received from across the Park following the launch of the competition earlier in the year and sixteen innovative and inspirational projects were shortlisted for the inaugural Awards including the Gilbert White Museum in Selborne, Buckmore Studios in Petersfield and the Alice Holt Visitor Centre. The awards recognise projects that have made a standout contribution to the landscape, heritage, built environment and local communities of the National Park in Residential, Non-Residential and Conservation Categories, as well as a People’s Choice Award. Parish Councils had been instrumental in nominating a number of the contenders. After praise from the President of the Royal Town Planning Institute, Ian Tant, who attended the ceremony, Margaret Paren, Chair of the National Park Authority, explained that “We believe that it is a privilege to build in a National Park and high-quality design matters, both to Park Authority and to the local communities within it.”

### **Roads in the South Downs**

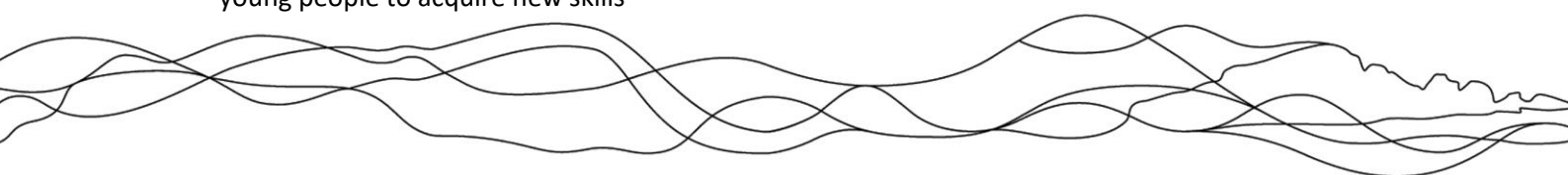
A number of parishes have contacted me to ask for a link to the National Park’s guide to best practice for rural road design and management which was agreed with Hampshire County Council some years ago. The document is intended to help highway authorities, to influence decision making and to encourage the involvement of local communities in finding solutions to reconcile traffic movement with the special qualities of the National Park: [Roads in the South Downs Report 2015](#)

### **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 and volunteers are out in the National Park almost every day of the week.

Over recent months the Ranger teams have been adjusting priorities to widen volunteer appeal and engagement with all age ranges, socio-economic groups, ethnic diversity and geographical reach beyond the Park boundaries. As recent reports to Government have suggested, National Parks need to constantly extend their relevance to more people. Whilst maintaining popular opportunities for traditional volunteer working in Hampshire on Tuesdays, Thursdays and at weekends, a slight reduction in the commitment to these sessions has enabled the local team to arrange and implement a number of new initiatives (with plans for more during 2020):

- Youth volunteering opportunities for 16-24 year olds, offering small tasks and opportunities for young people to acquire new skills



- Delivering a series of National Citizen Service placements for 15-17 year old school leavers as part of a commitment to Defra's eight-point plan
- Providing work experience student placements to provide deeper involvement for 14-15 year olds, usually lasting for a period of five days and encompassing a wide range of activities
- Working with SDNPA's Youth Ambassadors, including via social media, to support more young people undertaking micro-volunteering tasks (giving time to causes in which they are interested, on their own terms and as part of their day-to-day lives, without having to register with an organisation)
- Working with the charity *Artscape* to connect people who would not ordinarily access the National Park to the landscapes and boost mental health by using the creative power of art. Participants from Petersfield, Horndean, Waterlooville and Havant made a series of visits to the top of Butser Hill to undertake projects which raised self-esteem and confidence as well as reducing isolation
- Holding 'discover National Parks' events well beyond the Park's boundaries, including at Bordon and Southsea
- Providing opportunities for young mothers and others to take part in regular volunteering tasks on a flexible 'any day, any time' basis
- Supporting the South Downs Volunteering Network to help other organisations attract volunteers and train people in work relevant to the National Park's purposes.

### **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. I continue to Chair 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/>

### **Local contacts**

The Planning Link Officer role for East Hampshire is being covered by both Nat Belderson and Hannah Chapman. In the first instance, queries can be sent to Hannah: [Hannah.Chapman@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.Chapman@southdowns.gov.uk) and 01730 819270; [Nat.Belderson@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:Nat.Belderson@southdowns.gov.uk) and 01730 819307.

The Authority's Western Downs team acts as a 'first stop shop' for communities and land managers, providing advice and support towards achieving National Park 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](mailto:nigel.james@southdowns.gov.uk)) or Lead Ranger Elaina Whittaker-Slark ([elaina.whittaker-slark@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:doug.jones@southdowns.gov.uk)

15 November 2019

