

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Note for East Hampshire Parish & Town Councils June 2022

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 receive copies of the SDNPA e-Newsletters (*South Downs News*) and anyone can sign up to have the [newsletter delivered to their inbox](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/publications/south-downs-news-the-newsletter-for-the-national-park/) 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-work/publications/south-downs-news-the-newsletter-for-the-national-park/>

Parishes should also be receiving copies of the NPA's Planning Newsletter (the most recent edition [Spring 2022] is available [here](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-newsletter/)) and others can subscribe to receive these newsletters via this link: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-newsletter/>

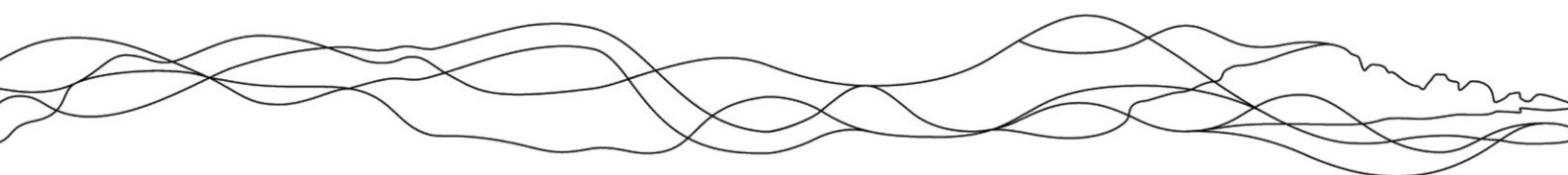
The twice-yearly magazine, 'South Downs View', is also likely to be of interest to all communities and the most recent edition [Spring/Summer 2022] can be found [here](#).

To complement the other sources of information referred to above I will highlight the following:

- Some national context
- Next steps on the Glover Landscape Review
- BOATs (Byways Open to All Traffic)
- Review of the South Downs Local Plan
- New initiative for businesses in the South Downs
- Climate Change Networking Survey for Parishes and Communities
- Parish Council workshops and webinars during 2022
- The SDNPA Nature Recovery work programme
- Farming in Protected Landscapes update
- Funding for local projects
- Local contacts.

Some national context

The National Park Authority finally received confirmation from Defra of its grant settlement for 2022/23 on 1 April, confirming another 'flat cash' award (the third year in succession) with an indicative flat cash allocation for 2023/24 and 2024/25 as well. With inflation gathering pace this is making the financial position of National Parks much more difficult. The SDNPA's Corporate Plan aims to respond to this severe real terms cut by increased efficiencies, income generation and tightening the focus of work on three priorities (Nature Recovery, Climate Action and A National Park for All). Amongst efficiencies being introduced will be a reduction in the number of meetings of the Authority and of each of its committees and there will be staff cut backs of more than 5% by the autumn. To do this staff are being invited to take early retirement and voluntary redundancy, but if necessary there will be compulsory redundancies. The resources made available to parishes are likely to be further restricted and it is quite likely that that Chris Paterson will be assigned to other duties in the planning team, giving him much less time to help communities. I feel that this overall situation is a very unfortunate and unsatisfactory, completely at odds with the recommendations made in the Government's independent review of protected landscapes (Julian Glover's Landscape Review). His proposal (27) stressed that more funding was required for National Park Authorities (and AONBs), with security across five-year periods. The report said that "this is justified to redress historical under-funding, to enable the authorities to deliver new responsibilities we have set out and to secure new landscapes for the nation." It looks likely that National Park Authorities will not be able to do anything new without significant reductions in some of their existing activities ...



Next steps following the Glover Landscape Review

The Defra consultation on next steps from the Glover Review closed in April and apparently over 15,000 responses were received with, perhaps, strong representations from some lobby groups. A copy of the SDNPA response to the Questionnaire questions can be found [here](#) and a copy of an additional covering letter submission [here](#). After a lengthy discussion at the Full Authority NPA Meeting in March, and a specific vote on the issue, Members agreed to change the recommended response to Question 14 (relating to BOATs) and submit an answer of 'Yes' to the question asking "Should the Government give National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority and local highway authorities additional powers to restrict recreational motor vehicle use on unsealed routes?" This change to the recommended response is in line with the wishes of parish councils in East Hampshire. Defra now has a large task to analyse all the responses to all the questions and also make a case inside Government for the legislative time that it would need to implement many of the key proposals.

BOATs (Byways Open to All Traffic)

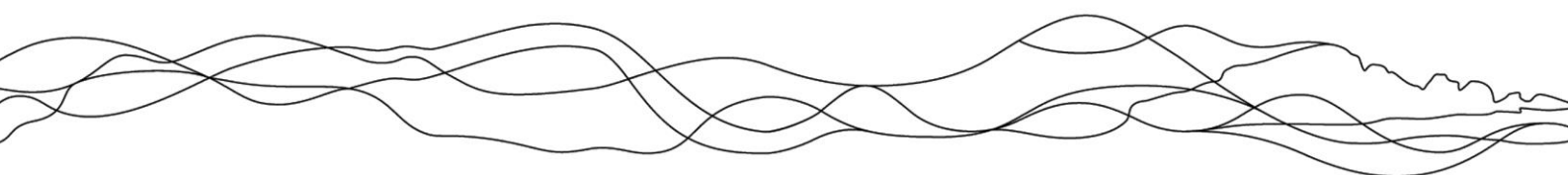
Problems encountered on BOATs in the East Hampshire part of the National Park have always been one of the main topics raised in the discussion periods of recent Parish Council Workshop meetings for Hampshire parishes. As noted above, a vote by SDNPA Members resulted in a change to the Authority's proposed answer to specific questions in the Defra consultation about the Glover Landscape Review. It had been planned that the SDNPA would consider the issue of BOATs in detail at the Full Authority meeting on 19 May, but this date clashed with a meeting of Hampshire County Council which meant that local HCC members were unable to attend the NPA Meeting. The discussion about this matter was, therefore, deferred until 20th October. It is anticipated that a report to that meeting will explain the legislative framework for BOATs and the current management arrangements in Hampshire before considering whether SDNPA should support continuation of the current arrangements or adopt a different approach. There should be opportunities for public speakers to address the meeting and Jim MacDonald (EHAPTC Chair) had been specifically invited to speak at the meeting in May.

Review of the South Downs Local Plan

The original Local Plan was adopted in July 2019 following a long and detailed preparatory period. Government policy requires regular reviews of all Local Plans (at least every five years) and so the SDNPA is now starting to review the current plan. Without an up-to-date adopted Local Plan, planning authorities can fall foul of paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with its suggestions that permission for most planning applications should generally be approved. The SDNPA exercise will, as expected, be a review and not a completely new plan and a letter (dated 13 June) has been sent to all Parish Clerks summarising the process. The Authority would like to work collaboratively with parish and town councils throughout the review and there will be opportunities to provide inputs in three forthcoming evidence-collecting exercises: a call for sites (for new homes, employment and renewable energy); a Settlement Facilities Study (recording services provided in each settlement); and a request to submit any further areas of land that might merit designation as Local Green Spaces (a large number, submitted by Parish Councils, are already designated in the existing Local Plan). There is to be an on-line workshop for parish councils in the winter to discuss housing provision figures and other matters. The intention is to consult on a draft Plan in autumn 2023, present a pre-submission version to the Park Authority in July 2024 (followed by more public consultation and the formal examination) so that the revised Local Plan would be adopted by the end of 2025. The SDNPA will only be able to offer limited assistance to communities producing Neighbourhood Development Plans and so parishes are being encouraged, instead, to work collaboratively with the Park Authority on the Local Plan Review. A detailed report about the Local Plan Review process was prepared for the SDNPA Meeting on May 19th (Item 12) and can be found [here](#).

New initiative for businesses in the South Downs

"Our South Downs" has recently been established, to provide a supportive network for businesses who are interested in sustainability, helping nature thrive etc. The network enables member organisations to connect with other businesses in and around the SDNP, to find relevant business events and to join a network of sustainably minded local businesses. Full details are available via the 'Our South Downs' website (<https://oursouthdowns.co.uk/>), [here](#).



Climate Change Networking Survey for Parishes and Communities

Parish Council Members on the Park Authority are keen to help as many communities as possible address climate change challenges. To help with this aim we want to improve ways in which communities can share ideas, actions and help each other with next steps. In some places Parish Councils may be initiating and steering climate change activities but elsewhere it may be a separate community group of volunteers. I was instrumental in devising the short message that was sent to all Parish Councils on 14th June. It is hoped that this message can be passed on to all relevant groups in each community with responses being sought by 10th July (directly to: doug.jones@southdowns.gov.uk). The aim is to collate replies to the three simple questions, so that a list of interested parties can be produced and re-circulated so as to enable direct contacts to be made between communities. SDNPA officers felt that the Authority did not have the capacity to undertake this piece of work or collate responses and so the Parish Council Members are doing this alone as we feel that it could be an important contribution on an important issue. It is hoped that the initiative will enable common interests to be explored and good practices to be shared – helping communities within the national park to help each other. Parishes and communities outside the national park may also wish to collect and share similar information. Responses are being sought to three basic questions: (1) is your community interested in undertaking local initiatives to help address climate change? (2) are you already doing things (if so, what)? and (3) please provide relevant contact details.

Parish Council workshops and webinars during 2022

Following the on-line event for all parish councils held on 16th March, proposals for the rest of the year are currently as follows:

- July 13th (6.30-8.00pm): a virtual webinar about Climate Change (on Zoom) – including good examples of community climate action from across the National Park
- November 1st (tbc): an in-person meeting for Hampshire parishes – contents / topics / issues yet to be finalised.

Previous webinars (including Dark Night Skies and Nature Recovery) can be viewed via this link:

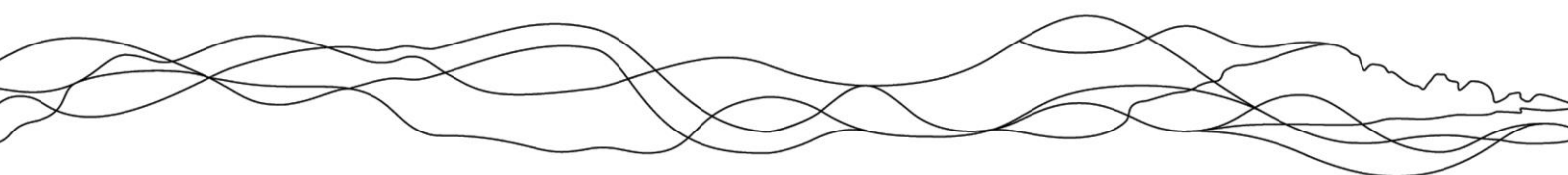
<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-communities/parish-webinars/>

The SDNPA Nature Recovery work programme

This relatively new initiative continues to be developed and implemented. The Call for Nature Sites exceeded expectations with 77 expressions of interest from landowners, land managers and communities ranging from large estates to single parishes. Applications which have immediate potential will be allocated a lead member of staff to act as facilitator/guides. Some projects will only require advice whilst others will be matched to the most appropriate funding mechanisms, including the South Downs Trust, the Farming in Protected Landscapes initiative (FiPL) and the SDNPA's own project investment. The 'Trees for the Downs' programme, for example, has already seen 21,000 trees planted since 2020, with the Trust purchasing the stock, the SDNPA providing advice and the recipient taking responsibility for planting and care. In addition, 48 schools have each been supported with a grant of up to £150 to carry out ReNature-themed projects alongside an eco-art competition supported by The Boltini Trust. Other parts of the work programme are taken forward in Whole Estate Plans (WEPs), Farm Cluster Networks, work by the National Park's Ranger & Volunteer Teams and planning applications where Net Gains in biodiversity are required.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) update

This three-year programme was launched in July 2021 to help farmers and land managers adapt and prepare for the new UK Agriculture Policy through projects that deliver one or more of the FiPL objectives: Nature, Climate, People and Place. By the end of the financial year the SDNPA had supported 68 projects covering 41,415 ha of land and allocating £588,000 of government funding. In addition, a further £40,670 was secured which enabled support for a further four projects. 50 projects are providing benefits for nature, 50 for climate, 35 for people and 52 for place. This includes 2,350 ha of positive management on SSSIs, 4,350 ha of land being managed with regenerative farming techniques and 29 projects that will provide opportunities for people to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape. FiPL has swiftly become a true partnership with the local farming community: working



with 179 farmers and four farm clusters. The Local Assessment Panel (including seven farmer reps as well as representatives from Natural England and the SDNPA) scrutinises all applications to ensure value for money, project outcomes and sustainability. There are already over 110 expressions of interest for future projects.

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 still 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 [here](#).

Local contacts

The Planning Link Officer for East Hampshire is Jean Chambers with contact details 01730 819371 and Jean.Chambers@southdowns.gov.uk. The NPA's Western Downs team acts as a 'first stop shop' for land managers and communities, 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) 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
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June 2022

