

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Note for East Hampshire Parish & Town Councils November 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 [Summer 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/>

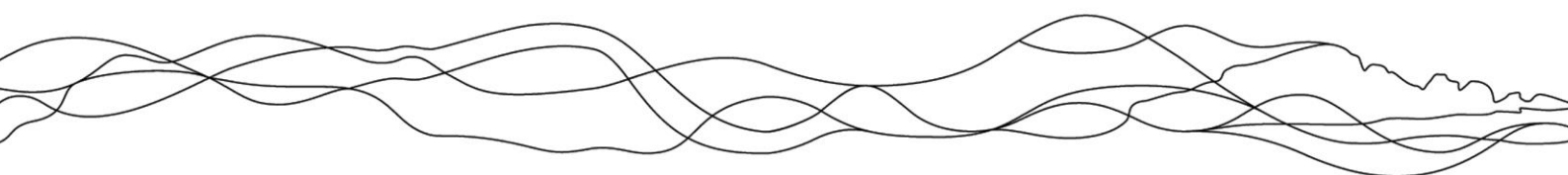
The twice-yearly magazine, 'South Downs View', is also likely to be of interest to all communities and the most recent edition [Autumn/Winter 2022] can be found [here](#).

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

- Review of the South Downs Local Plan
- Consultation on Minerals & Waste Plan
- BOATs (Byways Open to All Traffic)
- SDNPA's budgetary situation
- Design Guide SPD
- Farming in Protected Landscapes update
- New woodlands to remember the Queen
- Parish Council workshops and webinars during 2023
- Funding for local projects
- Local contacts.

Review of the South Downs Local Plan

The original Local Plan was adopted in July 2019 and Government policy requires regular reviews of all Local Plans (at least every five years). The SDNPA has therefore started to review the current plan and a letter was sent to all Parish Clerks summarising the process on 13 June. As explained at the recent Workshop for Parish Councils on 1 November, the Authority is aiming to work collaboratively with Parish and Town councils throughout the review, providing opportunities for inputs on a range of issues. Over recent months these opportunities have included a 'Call for Sites' for a number of land uses (including homes, jobs and renewable energy) which yielded 259 submissions and a 'Call for Local Green Spaces' which attracted 29 submissions. Work is also taking place on other evidence such as a development need study and a water study. Once all the site submissions have been assessed, Parish Councils will be asked for feedback on them. Parish Councils will also soon be asked about details of facilities and services in each parish (including internet, EV charging points etc) and also about open spaces. For parishes that are wholly in the National Park or whose main settlement is inside the boundary there will also be Parish Priority Statements: opportunities to set out the principal needs and prevailing views of communities. It needs to be recognised, however, that there is considerable uncertainty about plan making at the moment. The radical changes proposed in the Planning for the Future White Paper in 2020 have not been forthcoming but the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (published in May) would make significant changes to plan making if/when enacted. Amongst other things, there would be National Development Management Policies which might mean that most of the policies in the South Downs Local Plan would be superseded by national policies.



Consultation on Minerals & Waste Plan

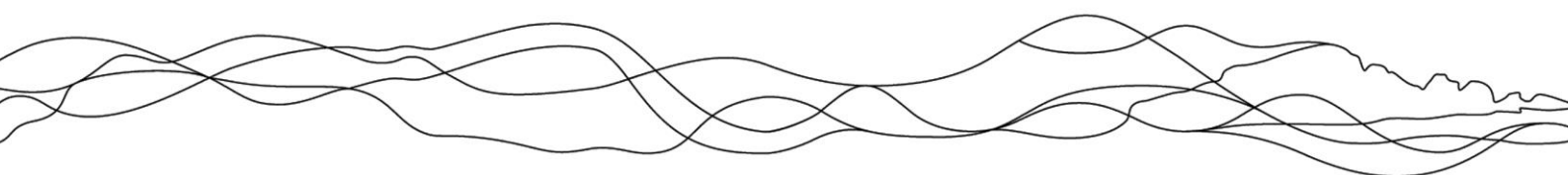
The SDNPA worked in partnership with Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils and the New Forest NPA to prepare the adopted Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan 2013. Policies in such plans have to be reviewed at least once every five years and updated as necessary. The most recent review (2020) concluded that parts of the plan needed to be updated to address, amongst other things: new planning policy that requires biodiversity net gain from all developments; a greater focus on planning for climate change; a stronger application of the waste hierarchy and application of the circular economy; and enabling a steady and adequate supply of aggregates. A new draft plan has therefore been prepared to help guide decision-making up until 2040 and is currently out for consultation from 8 November to 31 January 2023. The key documents include: [Draft Plan Consultation Paper](#); [Draft Plan Consultation FAQs](#); and [Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan – Partial Update - Draft Plan Document](#). The online consultation survey can be found here: [Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan Partial Update – Draft Plan Consultation Survey](#) or there is also a response form [Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan Partial Update – Draft Plan Consultation Response Form](#) which can be submitted via email to hmwp.consult@hants.gov.uk or by post to Minerals & Waste Planning Policy, Ell Court West, 1st Floor, The Castle, Winchester, SO23 8UD. The adopted [Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan \(2013\)](#) and the accompanying [Policies Map](#) can also be downloaded online.

BOATs (Byways Open to All Traffic)

As anticipated in my last report, this topic was included on the Agenda at the most recent meeting of the full National Park Authority. Disappointingly from my perspective the outcome of the discussion was that the SDNPA will maintain its current approach regarding BOATs, feeling that Hampshire County Council is best placed to manage BOATs as part of the wider rights of way network. The SDNPA decided, by 11 votes to 7 (I think), that it would not develop an enhanced partnership with the County Council, nor pursue other proactive options. The Chair of the SDNPA, Vanessa Rowlands, has subsequently explained the outcome: “Members spent over 2 hours discussing the issue of BOATs at our meeting on 20th October. I was really pleased that members of the public attended and gave statements. This is a subject that the members have been discussing for over a year, with a workshop held in January to go through the issue thoroughly and after a delay due to member attendance issue, presented at a full NPA committee meeting last month. It was clear from the meeting that the South Downs NPA, after finding 10% worth of savings this year, including redundancies, was not in a position to take on a new work stream that members felt the Rights of Way authority, Hants CC, was already doing a good job with and that there was no proof that the SDNPA would be able to do any better from a standing start with no funds. I know it wasn’t the decision that the residents in those East Hampshire parishes wanted to hear. The Authority committed to making sure the accord between Hants CC and South Downs NPA on this issue is working correctly and that South Downs NPA would support educational messaging to users of BOATs. The Authorities are exploring ways to see if CIL monies, collected by SDNPA, could be used to help here.”

SDNPA’s budgetary situation

Following the Authority’s ‘flat cash’ grant settlement from Government, the SDNPA has had to make £1.1m of savings, including substantial staff cuts, closure of a depot, merging ranger teams, less funding for projects and other efficiency savings. SDNPA funding has now fallen by 40% in real terms over the past decade. The Authority has received £10.486m in every year since 2019 and this amount is due to remain the same until 2025: the same cash funding over a period of six years at a time of rapidly rising costs. Inflation continues to erode this amount, meaning the NPA continues to have to make cuts in delivery on the ground, as well as seeking alternative funding. This is before any further cuts that might arise as a result of this month’s Chancellor’s budget. The South Downs National Park is the third biggest in England, has the largest population and is among the top 20 planning authorities in the UK (by both geography and volume of applications). Officers and Members are very aware that expectations on the Authority continue to rise as the budget reduces in real terms. It is felt that National Parks are the ‘green lungs’ of the nation, providing a vital public service to help people access the countryside and protect and enhance our cherished landscapes. National Parks are also a linchpin of nature recovery and climate change targets and they all feel that resources need to match ambitions.



Design Guide SPD

This new Supplementary Planning Document provides the Authority's interpretation of design policies in the local plan and national policies. It sets out the Authority's expectations for design quality in new development and is a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications. Parishes should also find it helpful when helping applicants design their developments before submitting a planning application. The Design Guide explains that applicants, developers and individual home builders need to be aware of other important local guidance, including Village Design Statements. The Guide also explains that "If a VDS is an adopted Supplementary Planning Document it would sit alongside the Design Guide and it should not be assumed that the general guidance in the Design Guide would automatically override the local guidance in a VDS. Applicants should check if parishes have produced local landscape character assessments to make use of local knowledge."

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) update

This three-year programme was launched in July 2021, providing farmers and land managers in the National Park with opportunities to obtain funding that could significantly improve business resilience and help the environment, nature recovery, climate action, heritage or access. So far about 70 projects have taken a share of £950,000. The National Park's farming team is still keen to receive applications. A Local Assessment Panel, predominantly made up of farmers, decides which projects should be supported, using guidance from Defra and relevance to the National Park's Partnership Management Plan. The FiPL scheme has a rolling application window with new projects being assessed up to December 2023. Applications will need to be developed with the National Park's farming team before being submitted and application forms can be requested by emailing farming@southdowns.gov.uk For more information visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/FarmingInProtectedLandscapes

New woodlands to remember the Queen

More than 28,000 trees will be planted across the South Downs in memory of Her Majesty The Queen. As a lasting tribute for her dedication to the nation and its environment, trees will be planted to create new habitats for nature. Over 12,000 trees were planted last winter and a further 16,000 are being put into the ground at various sites this coming winter as part of the Trees for the Downs and Queen's Canopy initiative. Sonia Lorenzo-Martin, who oversees woodlands in the National Park, explains: "These life-giving trees are a fitting tribute to the memory of her late Majesty and all her years of public service to the country. Trees provide clean air for us to breathe, enrich our soils and provide a vital habitat for so many birds, mammals and invertebrates. Planting more trees is a key component of the National Park's 'ReNature' drive to create more space for wildlife to flourish."

Parish Council workshops and webinars in 2023

After the recent meeting in Meonstoke, outline plans for future evening events are currently as follows:

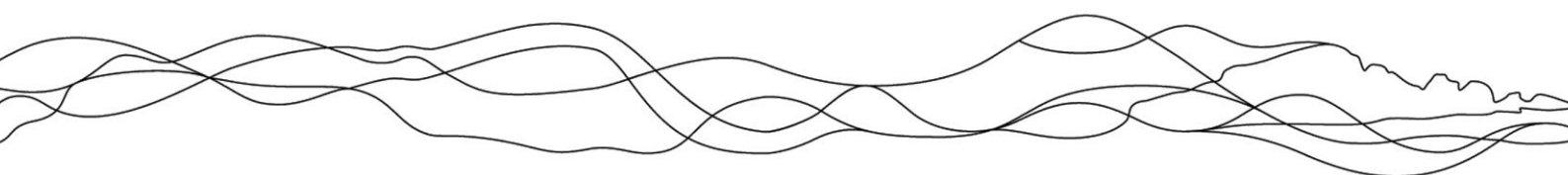
- March 21st: an in-person meeting for Hampshire parishes – contents yet to be finalised
- Summer webinar: provisionally on the topic of "National Park for All"
- Autumn parish workshop: online.

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

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

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 now Nat Belderson with contact details 01730 819307, 07917 602373 and Nat.Belderson@southdowns.gov.uk. This may change during 2023 but, in the meantime, Nat is a very useful first point of contact although he will not be able to provide as much in-depth coverage as in the past. 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.

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November 2022

