

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Note for East Hampshire Association of Parish & Town Councils Meeting 4th June 2014

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.

South Downs National Park Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy

Following the well-attended workshop meeting for Parish Council representatives in East Meon in March, the consultation exercise on options for the National Park's first ever Local Plan ran until the end of April.

This was the first stage in developing a Local Plan and it asked for views on the approach that the plan should take on various planning issues. Over 50 key issues were identified – along with a number of options for how the Local Plan could deal with them. Issues addressed included: landscape, cultural heritage, settlement strategy, housing, design, gypsy & travellers, community facilities, transport, and economy & tourism.

Over 40 Parish Councils responded to this exercise which will now help to shape the policies and development allocations for the new Local Plan. Views on a 'Preferred Option' stage are likely to be sought early next year. When adopted, this Plan will replace the East Hampshire Joint Core Strategy for those parts of East Hampshire which lie within the National Park.

There were fewer responses to the consultation about the Preliminary Charging Schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) with only ten Parish Councils across the Park submitting specific comments.

This schedule suggested levels of contributions that developers should pay in the form of CIL to meet needs for new infrastructure caused by their developments.

Many of the comments received focused on the infrastructure which the CIL will pay towards (which should be included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan) whilst the focus of other comments was on the rates set. The spread of opinion was very mixed with the development industry often suggesting that the rates were too high and the public and parishes generally suggesting that the rates were too low.

This was not, however, universal and all comments are now being examined in detail so as to ensure that the best possible evidence is available for the next stages. The next step will be the publication of the 'Draft CIL Charging Schedule' and 'Infrastructure Delivery Plan' for consultation in early 2015. This final draft will then be submitted to Government for examination in Spring/Summer 2015.

Some Parish Councils which have had detailed issues to raise have already met with the National Park's CIL Project Manager, Gareth Giles, but he would be very happy to meet any parishes with further comments over the coming months, ahead of the next stage. Gareth can be contacted via gareth.giles@southdowns.gov.uk and 01730 819261.

Other planning issues

The Park Authority's success in **planning appeals** continues with some important cases being dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate in West Sussex and in Winchester District following earlier successes for the NPA in East Hampshire (Selborne) and Lewes.

In May, the Park **Authority objected to plans to change the flight paths of planes** flying in and out of Farnborough Airport as it was felt that the proposals would ultimately result in more aircraft flying at lower altitudes over sensitive areas, impacting on special qualities including tranquillity and amenity.

The Inspector's report on the East Hampshire **Joint Core Strategy** has now been finalised, setting out the spatial vision, objectives, development strategy and policies for the period 2011-2028. The plan covers the administrative area of East Hampshire District Council including the area of the South Downs National Park Authority that lies within the District. EHDC has recently formally adopted this Plan and the National Park Authority is due to consider the matter at its Planning Committee on 12th June and at its Full Authority meeting on 26th June. All documents can be viewed via this link:

<http://www.easthants.gov.uk/ehdc/planningpolicy.nsf/webpages/Adoption+of+Joint+Core+Strategy>

The National Park Authority is working with EHDC to make sure that Parish Councils are aware of any remaining **Section 106 developers contributions** already collected for development inside the National Park. Parishes should receive letters shortly summarising what funds are available and the types of projects that would be eligible. Parishes can also find out full details by contacting Alisdair Tweddle on alisdair.tweddle@easthants.gov.uk.

Before submitting proposals, parishes inside the Park should refer to the South Downs National Park Management Plan (<http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/management-plan>) and the Special Qualities identified for the Park (<http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/special-qualities>). Both of these documents will assist applicants in making applications which will contribute to the protection and enhancement of the special qualities, and support the delivery of objectives in the Partnership Management Plan.

The **Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan** team recently hosted a very successful 'Big Plan' consultation weekend with over 1,000 members of the public taking part. Other communities considering doing any form of community-led plan may wish to visit the website (<http://www.petersfieldsplan.co.uk/>) to see more about the event.

David Townsend, the National Park's '**Link Officer**' for any planning application matters in East Hampshire, is keen to encourage any Parish Councils to raise any issues about any planning applications with him, even if the decision is due to be taken by East Hampshire DC as part of the Park's delegated arrangements. David can be contacted on 01730 234130 and via david.townsend@southdowns.gov.uk.

Grants and other news

- More and more communities are taking advantage of grants available from the NPA's '**Sustainable Communities Fund**' (SCF). Parish Councils, voluntary groups, partnerships and others can apply for funding for non-profit making projects that bring environmental, social, economic or cultural benefits to communities within the Park
- Recent awards include funding to help improve the Gilbert White Field Study Centre at Selborne; a grant to help increase accommodation available at the Privett Centre (offering low cost, comfortable short-stay accommodation for school, youth, family and adult groups); and, following an award to Liss Parish Council, a similar award has been made to identify ten walks in and around West Meon of differing length and difficulty including some suitable for people with young children and limited mobility

- Petersfield Museum has received £100,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for an exciting project to understand and conserve the prehistoric barrow cemetery on the Heath. The project, which is also supported by the NPA's Sustainable Communities Fund, will see a team of professional archaeologists working with local volunteers to research this unique cultural heritage site, create new educational resources and opportunities for schools and colleges, and provide new information for the general public
- **SCF grants** are available for up to 60 per cent of project costs from £250 to a maximum of £20,000. Enquiries can be made via Mark Rose (grants@southdowns.gov.uk or 01730-811755) and more information about the fund is available online at www.southdowns.gov.uk/communities/funding/sustainable-communities-fund
- The National Park's special **Travel Grant Scheme** is now closed after a remarkable uptake. Over 3,000 students have benefitted from this grant and it is hoped to be able to run it again in the next year financial year. Details will be available by looking at: <http://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/help/travel-grant-scheme>
- The National Park Authority, working in conjunction with Hampshire County Council and others, has been able to support the **introduction of a number of new bus services** on Sundays and Bank Holidays. To encourage increased passenger numbers on buses much of the marketing is aimed at new audiences who do not usually travel by bus. As well as on-line videos there will be a new 'Discovery Ticket' due to be accepted by all local operators – including services bringing visitors in from outside the National Park
- **New schools writing competition:** children from across the National Park and the surrounding area are being invited to describe their 'best day in the South Downs' in 500 words. Written in the style of a travel review, entries can focus on just one place or a whole area; a much-loved walk, the best place to spot butterflies or have a picnic or a favourite attraction. Entries will be judged in two categories: ages 7-10 and ages 11-14. Prizes, to be awarded on 27th July, include family tickets to top attractions across the South Downs, book tokens and a visit from a National Park Ranger. Details are available from hannah.norton@southdowns.gov.uk
- And finally, the South Downs National Park Authority warmly invites you to celebrate the **opening of the new South Downs Centre** in Midhurst at a free family Open Day on Sunday 27 July 2014, 11 - 4pm. This event will provide an opportunity to see the work put into converting two listed buildings into a sustainable and inspiring hub for both the South Downs National Park and a range of local services, including a Citizens Advice Bureau and Tourist Information Point for the Midhurst area, public meeting rooms and conference facilities. Visitors will be able to see the new interpretation area, take part in hands on activities for children and explore exhibitions of local projects. Throughout the day there will also be tours of the parts of the building not normally open to the public giving people a chance to see top-of-the-range environmental features. More details are available here: <http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoying/events/south-downs-centre-open-day>

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
doug.jones@southdowns.gov.uk *30th May 2014*