

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Note for East Hampshire Association of Parish & Town Councils Meeting 27th March 2019

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 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:

- Update on the South Downs Local Plan
- Results of Planning Appeal Decisions
- The South Downs Partnership Management Plan
- News from the National Park's Education Team
- National Parks fortnight in April
- New Design Awards
- Dark Night Skies Festival
- Accessibility in the National Park
- Reducing dog attacks on farm animals
- Achievements of National Park Rangers and Volunteers
- Funding for local projects
- Local contacts.

South Downs Local Plan

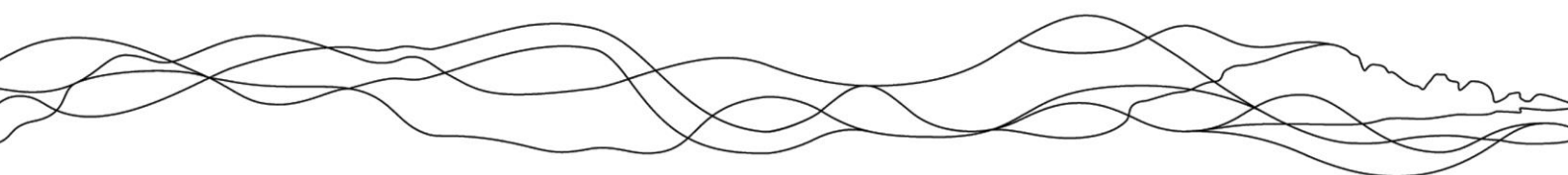
The Examination of the South Downs Local Plan was completed in December and the SDNPA learnt from the Inspector in January that he was generally very happy with all the contents and that he was intending to make only a small number of relatively modest modifications.

The National Park Authority has subsequently been consulting on the modifications and alerted Parish Councils and others on 31 January. The consultation runs for eight weeks and closes on 28 March. Responses will then be forwarded to the Inspector and his final report is expected shortly afterwards. It is then hoped that the Local Plan will be adopted at either the full SDNPA Meeting on 17 May or 2 July.

Given the very advanced stage of the Plan, the policies contained within it can now be afforded significant weight in the consideration of planning applications. Once adopted, all the policies in the East Hampshire District Local Plan (2006) and in the Joint Core Strategy (2013) which have applied to those parts of the district inside the National Park over recent years will be superseded by the new Local Plan.

The NPA will also be aiming to ensure that any currently adopted Village Design Statements will be 're-adopted', en bloc, as soon as practically possible after the new Local Plan is adopted so as to ensure no gap in their relevance or weight in any planning applications etc.

The Authority will be running a programme of Local Plan training events for planning officers and Councillors at EHDC (and SDNPA/elsewhere) with training for town and parish councils scheduled for the autumn.



At present, as a result of changes made by HCC and others, there is a lack of parking standards in the Hampshire part of the National Park but the NPA is planning to address this by producing a special Supplementary Planning Document. EHAPTC may wish to offer to assist with this work so as to contribute local knowledge, including knowledge of existing standards nearby (eg West Sussex, East Hampshire). At the most basic level the SPD could just be a set of numbers (standards) but there could also be an opportunity to say something about design and examples of good practice could be helpful.

Results of Planning Appeal Decisions

The Authority's appeal performance in the period 2018/19 remains good with 69% of appeals being dismissed. In the last three months the results of 29 appeals were received – covering appeals dealt with by the host authorities (including EHDC) as well as by SDNPA directly: 18 were dismissed and 11 were allowed; one application was made by an appellant for award of costs but this was refused.

Partnership Management Plan

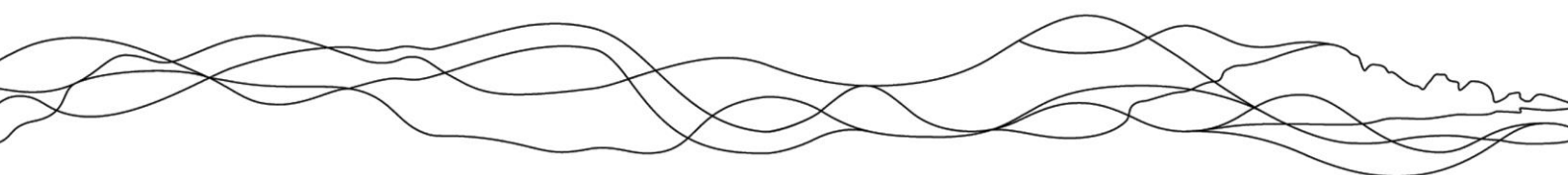
Following the SDNPA/EHAPTC meeting for Parish Councils in November, which was largely devoted to the current review of the Partnership Management Plan (PMP) for the National Park, a number of Parish Councils have offered to contribute projects for the revised plan. Over 100 parish councillors attended the workshop meetings and about 40 projects have been suggested for inclusion in the Partnership Management Plan or for other delivery programmes. There will still be opportunities for Parish Councils to contribute to each of the main priority areas before the Plan is approved and published later in the year – and, thereafter, it will remain a 'live', rolling process with opportunities to add ideas and projects. Projects need not be delivered by Parish Councils, but could be undertaken by others in (or connected with) the community. One of the main changes for the next five years is a new priority to ensure that the Plan has a focus on making the National Park a well-used and recognised asset for sustaining mental and physical health and wellbeing. More details of the PMP review are available via this link: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/partnership-management-plan/partnership-management-plan-review/> and ideas can be sent to Chris Paterson via chris.paterson@southdowns.gov.uk

News from the National Park's Education Team

The on-line 'Learning Zone' (<https://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/>) now contains yet more resources and ideas for schools, teachers and children everywhere. Recent resources include Chalk Grassland Colouring Sheets (produced in conjunction with Southern Water) which are **free to download** and which are packed with fun facts about this special habitat. A Teachers' Newsletter now goes to over 800 teachers across the National Park and the surrounding area with tips, stories and opportunities for all. Parish Councils may be able to help ensure that their local schools benefit from these resources. Thanks to additional funding raised by the South Downs National Park Trust, this year's Travel Grants helped provide subsidised transport for over 3,000 pupils for trips to education providers. And Binsted Primary School has recently been awarded a grant from the National Park's 'Sustainable Communities Fund' for its 'Grounds for Growth' outdoor learning area which will see the creation of a natural wooden amphitheatre with planting reflecting South Downs habitats.

National Parks fortnight: 6-21 April

"Discover National Parks" fortnight will champion all that is unique and special about National Parks and is being timed to coincide not only with the emerging spring but also the Easter school holidays across the country. Opportunities to get outside and discover the UK's 15 National Parks will be promoted with Rangers from the South Downs National Park taking a 'wildlife roadshow' to town centres around the fringes of the Park with fun activities for family participation and details of how easy it is to get outside and discover the National Park.



New Design Awards

A new awards scheme is being launched to promote outstanding design in the National Park. The awards will recognise and promote high standards of design and will celebrate projects that make special contributions to the landscape, heritage, built environment and local communities. Nominations are now open in the following categories: Residential (individual building, housing development small or large); Non-residential (commercial, industrial, or infrastructure); and Conservation (landscape, buildings, gardens or craftsmanship). There will also be a People's Choice award – voted for by the general public as their favourite across these three categories.

Entries can be submitted by anyone who considers a scheme suitable for an award, including Parish Councils, amenity societies, members of the public, the owners, architects, designers or developers. Projects of all sizes are welcomed in any of the categories but the consent of the owner must be obtained prior to making a nomination. The deadline for submissions is 5pm on June 28 and entry forms should be e-mailed to design@southdowns.gov.uk. More details (and nomination forms) are available via www.southdowns.gov.uk/designaward

Dark Night Skies Festival

The South Downs is one of only two International Dark Skies Reserves in the country at a time when there appears to be increasing levels of interest in the topic. This year's South Downs Dark Night Skies Festival was hugely successful with over 30 events (involving over 20 partner organisations) attracting thousands of people. An event in Petersfield attracted 350 people whilst over 700 attended an equivalent event in Lewes. More information about Dark Skies can be found on the NPA website: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/dark-night-skies/>

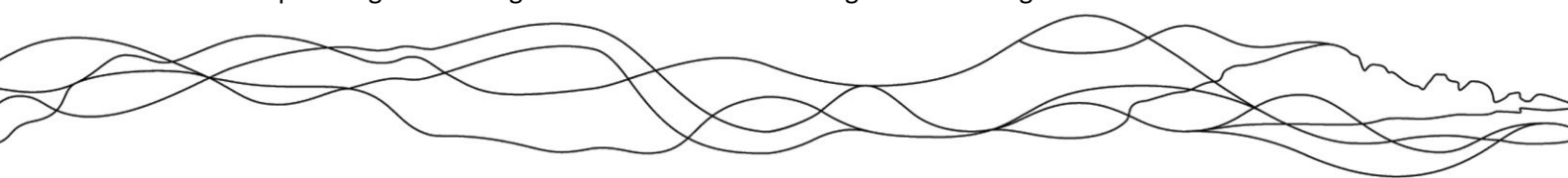
Accessibility in the National Park

The South Downs aims to be the UK's most accessible National Park with work underway to create routes that offer easy access for people with limited mobility. The Park Authority has recently promoted a number of places that are really accessible – with trails and destinations that are suitable for people with restricted mobility, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs. Parish Councils may wish to draw these opportunities to residents and visitors:

- Alice Holt Forest: as well as being steeped in history, this former Royal forest is now a beautiful example of English woodland, with a wonderful Easy Access Trail: [Learn more](#)
- Bramber, West Sussex: the historic village of Bramber with its medieval castle is the starting point for a route alongside the River Adur, set against the backdrop of the Downs: [Learn more](#)
- Mill Hill Access Trail, West Sussex: nature lovers will appreciate this chalk grassland site with an abundance of rare species: plants, butterflies and birds. A circular access trail also includes wheelchair-friendly picnic opportunities: [Learn more](#)
- Seaford Head, East Sussex: with breathtaking views over Cuckmere Haven and the Seven Sisters, there are two routes here with well-designed hardstanding surfaced paths: [Learn more](#)

Reducing dog attacks on farm animals

The National Park Authority has been adding some new activities to its 'Take the Lead' initiative again to try to reduce the incidence of dog attacks on farm animals which can result in sheep being killed or horribly mutilated by out-of-control pet dogs. Recent activities have included:

- a series of events with local farmers and the NFU
 - helping to establish the #takethelead
 - working in conjunction with other National Parks (through National Parks UK)
 - spreading the message to local MPs and attending the Crufts dog show.
- 

National Parks across the country have also partnered with 'Dicky Bag' who provide attractive portable, airtight 'bins' which are machine washable, lightweight, odour-proof and are designed to help dog walkers dispose of their little knotted bags: www.dickybag.com

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.

A series of Farmer Breakfast Meetings were held in February with over 200 people attending. Amongst other things, presentations provided information on planning matters for farm businesses and woodland creation opportunities – but there was also plenty of time for networking and for farmers to raise issues with SDNPA staff and partners.

In the last few months over 7,120 hours work has been provided by volunteers in the Volunteer Ranger Service, contributing towards National Park purposes with the most common tasks being scrub clearance, coppicing and hedgelaying.

Rangers have also met with local head-teachers to give advice on school grounds and ideas on how children can be more involved in the outdoors and the South Downs. In the summer there is to be further engagement with under-represented groups within the South Downs.

Funding for local projects

Further to the information contained in my last bulletin, December 2018, Gil Welsman (SDNPA Planning Project Manager) will be attending the EHAPTC meeting to explain the processes relating to S106 monies and CIL funding.

Parish Councils will also already be aware of the opportunities offered by the National Park's Sustainable Communities Fund and I refer elsewhere in this note to a recent successful bid from Binsted Primary School. 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 and 01730 819270; 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) 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
doug.jones@southdowns.gov.uk

22 March 2019

