

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK**

### **Note for East Hampshire Association of Parish & Town Councils Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

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.

#### **Opportunities to influence the Management Plan for the South Downs**

- Many Parish Councils have taken part in the extensive period of pre-consultation on the first ever Management Plan for the South Downs National Park – but there is one more chance to help shape the policies that will influence the character of the area over the years ahead
- As reported in my note circulated in June, the opportunity to submit comments on the plan **closes at midday on Monday 16 September**. Full details were sent to all Parish Clerks and Parish Councils are strongly encouraged to respond to the survey. It is also hoped that Parish Councils will help to draw the attention of other 'stakeholders', organisations and local residents to the opportunity to 'have their say' on the issues and policies identified
- Extra copies of the draft plan and access to the survey can be obtained from the National Park's webpage: [www.southdowns.gov.uk/managementplan](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/managementplan). The online survey is available at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PMPpublicconsultation>
- Amongst issues raised by Parish Councils in East Hampshire has been the issue of **BOATs** (Byways Open to All Traffic) which do not generally exist in the Sussex parts of the National Park. Some parishes in East Hampshire feel that there are now added pressures from motorised vehicles using these BOATs which can damage the rights of way, disturb the tranquillity of the area and discourage other users (particularly walkers and horse-riders) from using these routes out into the countryside. The current consultation on the Management Plan gives respondents the opportunity to see whether this issue appears to have been addressed adequately and to make any further representations.

#### **The Joint Core Strategy for East Hampshire: Consultation**

- As all Parish Councils will know, planning policies and housing numbers for East Hampshire (up to the year 2028) are being determined by the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) being developed by the National Park Authority (the Planning Authority for all land inside the boundaries of the National Park) and by East Hampshire District Council
- Following a preliminary report from the inspector conducting the public examination of the JCS, the examination was suspended to allow further work to be carried out to explore levels of housing need across the district, sustainability appraisals and environmental assessments
- With this extra work completed, a series of changes to the strategy document have been published for public consultation and the views of all Parish Councils (and others) are welcomed **until 5pm on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September**
- All submissions will be taken into account by the independent inspector when the public examination reconvenes and, following stipulations in national legislation, he will be focusing on whether the Strategy complies with legal requirements and is 'sound' (ie. whether the contents are justified, effective and consistent with national policy)
- If Parish Councils are generally content with these 'Further Proposed Modifications' they may wish to consider registering their support through the consultation exercise. In previous phases of work on this strategy, relatively few Parish Councils have made submissions – whilst objectors, including developers wishing to see increases in the numbers of housing being allocated by the document, have made detailed representations...

- Comments can be sent by email to [ldf@easthants.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@easthants.gov.uk) (or by post to: Planning Policy Team, Penns Place, Petersfield, GU31 4EX) and a copy of the Representation Form is available at [http://www.easthants.gov.uk/ehdc/formsfordownload.nsf/0/7BDBB6E160726A4A80257BC200262053/\\$File/FPM+EHDC+and+SDNPA+Joint+Rep+Form.pdf](http://www.easthants.gov.uk/ehdc/formsfordownload.nsf/0/7BDBB6E160726A4A80257BC200262053/$File/FPM+EHDC+and+SDNPA+Joint+Rep+Form.pdf). The proposed modifications can be seen at: <http://www.easthants.gov.uk/ehdc/planningpolicy.nsf/webpages/Further+Proposed+Modifications+-+August+2013>
- EHAPTC hosted a very useful consultation meeting specifically for Parish Councils on August 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 and more details about this important Joint Core Strategy are available via: [www.easthants.gov.uk/ehdc/planningpolicy.nsf/webpages/Joint+Core+Strategy](http://www.easthants.gov.uk/ehdc/planningpolicy.nsf/webpages/Joint+Core+Strategy)

### **Other Planning and Community Planning news**

- The NPA is continuing with early phases of work on its own Local Plan which will cover the period up to 2035. Government's new NPPF requires planning authorities to produce a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to identify potential land for housing across the whole National Park. The SHLAA will not decide where housing should be located or decide what specific housing sites should be allocated. This will be done through the Local Plan process. The SHLAA will identify sites which have the potential for housing, because they are felt to be suitable and available for development, and this is felt to be achievable. The fact that a site may be in a SHLAA does not mean that it will be allocated in the Local Plan or that it will be granted planning permission. The NPA has now developed a draft way of conducting its SHLAA and is asking for comments before it is finalised. More information on the SHLAA and how to comment is available on the website [www.southdowns.gov.uk/shlaa](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/shlaa). The deadline for comments on the draft methodology is 1<sup>st</sup> November 2013.
- As reported in my note in June, Chris Paterson has been working with the NPA's planners to consider how it may be possible to adopt community led plans as Supplementary Planning Documents. Proposals are due to be considered at the NPA's Planning Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> September and, thereafter, at a meeting of the full Park Authority. I would be very happy to receive any comments to feed into these meetings. The proposals can be found at: [http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/374786/Agenda-Item-12.pdf](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/374786/Agenda-Item-12.pdf)
- Following the series of special workshops for Parish Councils on the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), held in April, a number of communities submitted potential projects for inclusion in the NPA's Infrastructure Delivery Plan. More details of next steps etc will be available in the months ahead. Information about CIL is available on the NPA website at <http://southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/community-infrastructure-levy> and the National Park's Project Manager for all CIL work is Gareth Giles who is very happy to be contacted to discuss any matters: [01730 811135](tel:01730811135) or email [CIL@Southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:CIL@Southdowns.gov.uk)
- The NPA's Community Planning Toolkit, designed to help local communities understand the range of Community Planning tools, techniques and plans that are currently available, continues to be popular and parishes with any queries about any of these projects can contact Chris Paterson on 01730 811766 or [chris.paterson@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:chris.paterson@southdowns.gov.uk)
- The National Park's 'Link Officer' for planning matters in East Hampshire, Natalie Fellows has recently commenced a period of maternity leave and, for the time-being, Nat Belderson (who has a lot of familiarity with the area) will be covering her position. Nat can be contacted via [nat.belderson@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:nat.belderson@southdowns.gov.uk) or 07917 602373

### **Grants available and other news**

- More and more communities are taking advantage of grants available from the NPA's 'Sustainable Communities Fund'. 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: support to promote small museums and visitor attractions in Chawton, Selborne and Petersfield; the development of a Biodiversity Action Plan for Horndean Parish Council;

assistance with the start-up of a community garden in Petersfield; and a contribution towards a feasibility study for a multi-user, all weather, traffic-free route between Petersfield and Midhurst. Details about grants can be found in the 'Funding' section of the Park's website (<http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/communities/funding>) and ideas can be discussed with Mark Rose, External Funding Coordinator, on 01730 811755 or [Mark.Rose@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.Rose@southdowns.gov.uk)

- I have mentioned the NPA's new 'Local Sustainable Transport Fund' in my previous notes. This offers small grants to Parish Councils, businesses, voluntary groups and not for profit organisations to encourage sustainable travel to and in the National Park. These grants offer opportunities for village pubs and other rural businesses and more information is available online at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/transportfund](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/transportfund) or by calling 01730 811755
- Businesses across the National Park are now making use of the NPA's 'Sense of Place' Toolkit which provides free marketing resources drawing upon the special qualities of the Park. More information is available on the NPA website ([www.southdowns.gov.uk](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk)) at <http://www.collabor8.me/new-technologies/tech-articles/south-downs-sense-of-place-toolkit-.aspx>
- The South Downs was recently selected as one of four national parks to receive funding to rejuvenate cycling. More than £5 million will now be available for cycling routes into and around the Park. The money will be used to target cycling for all abilities, with improvements planned to existing routes in Hampshire, extensions to established routes in West Sussex and the creation of new recreational routes out of Brighton and in East Sussex. One of the aims will be to improve routes to / from railway stations so that communities have better access to sustainable transport links. Initial projects may also include links to employment centres and visitor attractions. Upgrading and extensions to two major traffic-free paths (the Meon Valley Trail and Centurion Way) are likely along with a new section of the Shipwrights Way
- During the summer the NPA also trialled a project to encourage a modal shift from cars to public transport. A small campaign, working with bus and rail companies around Brighton, encouraged families with children to "Discover Another Way" and initial results were very promising. Plans are being developed to extend the coverage of these ideas in future years ...
- The NPA's 2013 film and photo competitions are now open with the challenge to capture images which tell the story of how people who love, live in and visit the South Downs today value and care for it. There are attractive cash prizes for winners and runners-up with the competitions closing on 15 October (photographs) and 31 October (films). Details are available at: <http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/news/snap-up-great-prizes-in-south-downs-film-and-photo-competition>
- At the end of August the Park Authority joined together with Sussex Wildlife Trust, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, National Trust and Hampshire County Council to provide a free family event, 'Secrets of the Heath', in Petersfield. Lowland heath, a habitat that was created by humans to provide wood, turf and peat for fuel, is now rarer than rain forest. The Park Authority is now helping to improve the management of heathland to ensure habitats for rare insects, reptiles and birds
- The NPA is working closely with volunteers and the Environment Agency to improve the quality of local rivers. The River Rother is currently classified as 'poor ecological status' but community groups like the Liss Conservation Rangers and the Arun & Rother Rivers Trust are beginning to make real, practical improvements – reducing pollution, tackling invasive species and helping to improve access and education. Parish Councils may wish to encourage people to volunteer to help – or simply to discourage everyday actions that may cause damage. Throwing even small amounts of garden waste into rivers, for example, can cause serious harm as its break-down uses vital oxygen in the water that fish and plants need to survive. Encouraging residents to use home composting and EHDC's collection services can help iconic species, such as wild trout, thrive here again
- The most ambitious water vole reintroduction to be attempted in the UK is underway on the River Meon. Once a common sight in the area, water voles are thought to have been extinct

in the Meon Valley for at least five years. Now, thanks to a joint project led by the South Downs National Park Authority, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the UK's most rapidly declining mammal is making a come back

- A number of these innovative projects are overseen by the Park Authority's Western Downs team based at the Queen Elizabeth Country Park. The team acts as a 'first stop shop' for communities and land managers, providing advice and support towards achieving the national park's 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 Nick Heasman, our Area Manager, on [nick.heasman@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:nick.heasman@southdowns.gov.uk) or 02392 571381

The NPA is envisaging holding the next of the regular meetings with Hampshire Parish Councils in the autumn with a fairly 'open' agenda – ideas for any specific topics for discussion would be welcomed ...

Further information and updates about all the work of the NPA can be found on the National Park website [www.southdowns.gov.uk](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk) and there is also always plenty of interest on the 'Forum' pages: <http://southdownsforum.ning.com/main>

*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*  
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