

## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK**

### **Note for East Hampshire Association of Parish & Town Councils Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> September 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:

- South Downs Local Plan and forthcoming workshops for Parish Councils
- Partnership Management Plan
- The new edition of *South Downs View*
- Innovative film trail shows nature-friendly farming
- Nearby heathlands and the Serpent Trail
- Achievements of National Park Rangers and Volunteers
- Funding for local projects
- Local contacts.

#### **South Downs Local Plan and forthcoming workshops for Parish Councils**

As reported in my extra note, circulated in July (and attached again), the South Downs Local Plan (2014-2033) has now been formally adopted by the National Park Authority. Parish Councils with land inside the National Park should, therefore, now be using the new policies as none of the policies in the East Hampshire Joint Core Strategy (nor in the previous East Hampshire District Local Plan) are now relevant.

A significant portion of the forthcoming workshops for Parish Councils will be devoted to the new Local Plan – with opportunities for Councillors and Clerks to ask questions about the implementation of any of the policies. A number of Planning Policy Officers will be available during a ‘surgery’ session for discussion and clarification of policy matters.

To allow officers to provide the best possible service, it would be helpful if questions could be submitted in advance (to [planningpolicy@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@southdowns.gov.uk)) – but it will also be possible to ask questions on the night.

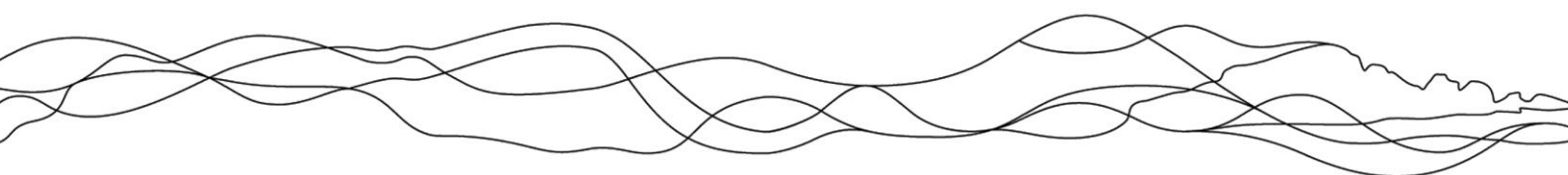
There will be three workshops (each from 6.30 to 9.30pm; with refreshments from 6.15pm) as follows:

- Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October - East Sussex Parishes, Lewes Town Hall Assembly Rooms
- Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October - West Sussex Parishes, South Downs Centre, Midhurst
- Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October - Hampshire Parishes Workshop, Meon Hall, Meonstoke.

The workshops will also include an item about the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), including changes in CIL Legislation and new responsibilities for Town and Parish Councils.

#### **Partnership Management Plan**

Following inputs from many Parish Councils, and other organisations, the South Downs Partnership Management Plan is set to be finalised over the next few months. It will describe a number of outcomes to be sought in the period 2020-25 with a number of priority areas for action. It is likely that Parish Councils will be able to contribute to many (if not all) of the outcome areas, including those



which are intended to help communities in the National Park become more sustainable. One specific action area is likely to be work to support community-led initiatives which enhance the towns, villages and landscapes of the National Park. The next round of parish workshops (spring 2020) will devote time to this topic but, in the meantime, Chris Paterson is happy to talk with any Parish Councils with ideas to contribute and he can be contacted via [chris.paterson@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:chris.paterson@southdowns.gov.uk)

### **New edition of South Downs View**

How nature can help people fight the winter blues, details of the 2020 Dark Skies Festival and information about some of the stunning heathlands in the National Park are amongst the contents of the latest edition of South Downs View. A centre map shows some of the many attractions, nature reserves and viewpoints, as well as an events listing of shows, walks, talks and exhibitions taking place from September to March 2020. People can [read it here](#) or pick up a hard copy from visitor centres, attractions and accommodation providers who stock it. For businesses who would like to stock this publication (or any other SDNPA leaflets): [see here for how you can order these for free](#).

### **Innovative film trail shows nature-friendly farming in the South Downs**

Some fascinating stories from farmers about their vital role in caring for the South Downs landscape are now part of a new “watch and listen” trail linked to a series of short films. Plaques along parts of the South Downs Way give people an insight into farming life. Simply holding a phone (with NFC function switched on) over the plaque, or reading the QR code, will reveal the film introducing the farmer responsible for caring for that stretch of land. The films include some stunning drone footage of the South Downs and close-up wildlife shots. Farmers explain how farming and conservation can sit side by side with examples showing how the creation of new wildlife habitats has seen bird biodiversity flourish and information about farms’ changing roles and diversification. As well as the plaques, the films can be seen by visiting [www.youtube.com/user/sdnpa/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/sdnpa/videos)

### **Nearby heathlands are well worth a visit**

Lowland heaths are recognised as one of the most important habitats in the world for conservation, due to an 80% decline since the 1800s – and the UK holds a fifth of the remaining global stock. The lowland heaths in the South Downs National Park are a treasure trove of wildlife and local history and the Heathlands Reunited project (a collaboration of 11 different partners which is working to restore, reconnect and recreate sites) has produced an on-line tool so that people can make plans [to visit a heathland](#) in the East Hampshire and nearby West Sussex areas to see what makes them so special.

### **Guide to the Serpent Trail**

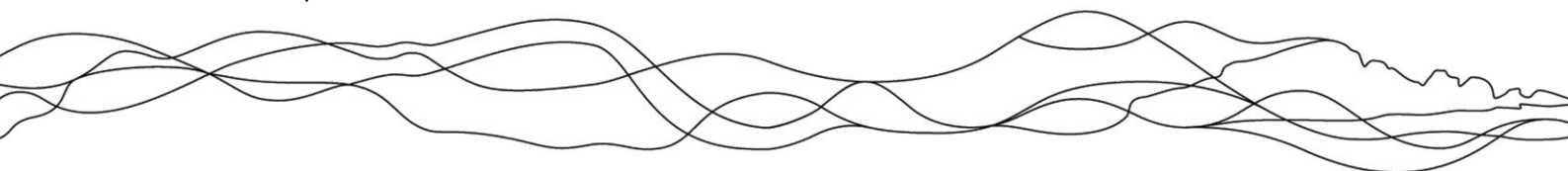
It may be surprising to learn that the South Downs National Park has more woodland than any other National Park in England or Wales – and the Serpent Trail follows a route takes in some lovely examples as well as a variety of other habitats. The greensand, on which much of the trail sits, is ideal habitat for reptiles and amphibians, including the sand lizard, adders and the Natterjack toad. After leaving Haslemere, the trail ‘snakes’ by Liphook, Milland, Fernhurst, Petworth, Fittleworth, Duncton, Heyshott, Midhurst, Stedham and Nyewood before finishing in Petersfield. Following the trail is relatively straightforward but people can now also [have a read of the Serpent Trail Guide](#) and save it to their phone (or print it out) in case guidance is needed along the way!

### **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.

Over the summer months the team has been expanding and diversifying its outreach audience with:

- a Youth Action Day at Rotherlands, where a group of 16-25 year olds helped remove invasive Himalayan Balsam



- a number of sessions with art based charity Artscape: bringing groups of people who, through health or other circumstances, are lacking the confidence or ability to visit parts of the National Park and create artwork based on their experiences. One final session is planned after which the artwork will go on display at the Merchistoun Hall in Horndean in October
- a number of National Citizen Service days where groups of 15-17 year olds undertook practical tasks in the National Nature Reserve on Butser Hill which included clearing a fence line and conducting reptile surveys
- five ecological consultants from the WSP Consultancy engaged on ragwort pulling task at Shortheath Common as a corporate volunteering exercise.

Other recent events and activities have included:

- volunteers have cut vegetation along footpaths at Shortheath Common
- removing Himalayan Balsam on the upper stretches of the River Rother near Empshott
- attending a Meon Valley Partnership site visit at East Meon to view the potential river restoration project to improve the flow in the eastern section of the village
- work with the Woodland Trust at the Binswood SSSI to open up rides and glades within the wood
- completion of the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative surveys for the 2019 season
- attending a Natural England 'National Nature Reserve Network' event at Old Winchester Hill and Buster Hill, encompassing discussions about the promotion of NNRs, climate change, ash die back, volunteering and grazing.

### **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 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 via: <http://southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/supporting-communities-business/sustainable-communities-fund/>

### **Local contacts**

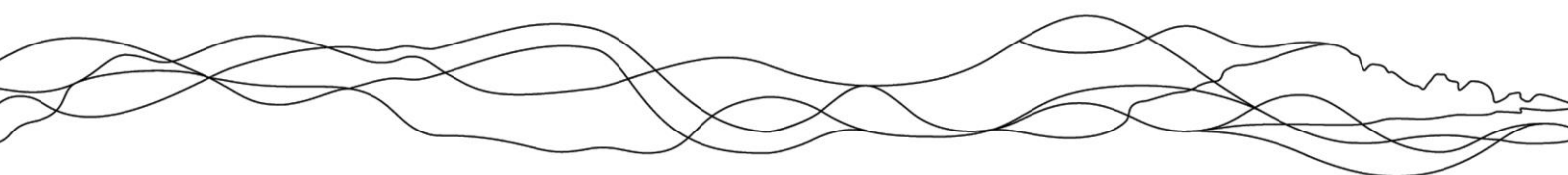
The Planning Link Officer role for East Hampshire is being covered by both Nat Belderson and Hannah Chapman. In the first instance, queries can be sent to Hannah: [Hannah.Chapman@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.Chapman@southdowns.gov.uk) and 01730 819270; [Nat.Belderson@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:Nat.Belderson@southdowns.gov.uk) 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](mailto:nigel.james@southdowns.gov.uk)) or Lead Ranger Elaina Whittaker-Slark ([elaina.whittaker-slark@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:doug.jones@southdowns.gov.uk)

*20 September 2019*



## **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK**

### **Extra note for East Hampshire Association of Parish & Town Councils July 2019**

This is an additional note providing information about the recent adoption of the South Downs Local Plan and my responsibilities following re-election to the National Park Authority.

The Local Plan has now been formally adopted by the National Park Authority, incorporating a small number of relatively minor modifications requested by the Independent Inspector.

Parish Councils with land inside the National Park should, therefore, begin to use the new policies as none of the policies in the East Hampshire Joint Core Strategy (nor in the previous East Hampshire District Local Plan) are now relevant.

Because it is acknowledged that there are many new aspects in the new Local Plan, the Park's officers have already provided training sessions for the EHDC officers and Councillors who will continue to consider many of the applications in the area. Feedback from this training has been very positive and will also be provided for Parish Councils in the months ahead.

For obvious reasons it was not possible to print copies of the final version of the Local Plan until it had been formally adopted, but printing is now underway and all relevant Parish Councils should receive a hard copy in the near future.

All the relevant material (including interactive policy maps) will also be available on-line via this link: [South Downs Local Plan](#).

The new Local Plan is an innovative landscape-focused document covering the period to 2033. There are 92 policies in the Plan which specify the high standards that all proposed development must meet to protect the precious natural environment and the vital 'ecosystem' services that it gives us such as clean water, food and space to breathe.

New housing sites have been dispersed across the towns and villages of the National Park, rather than just concentrated in the largest settlements, and high goals are being set for affordable housing: 50% in sites of 11 or more new homes.

Everyone at the National Park Authority is grateful for all the help and support provided by Parish Councils through all the rounds of public consultation over the last few years.

Having been on the Planning Committee for almost eight years, helping to shape the content of the Local Plan, I have now swapped onto the NPA's Policy Committee (and have been appointed as Deputy Chair of the Committee) where I will take great interest in updating and implementing the 'Partnership Management Plan' (PMP). This sets out how the SDNPA and a range of partner organisations would like the National Park to be in the future and identifies how they can work together over the next five years towards achieving this.

It is likely that Parish Councils will be able to contribute to each of the main priority areas in the PMP as well as conservation and heritage organisations, rural economy representatives, water companies, farming groups and volunteer networks. Projects need not be delivered by Parish Councils themselves, but could be undertaken by others in (or connected with) our communities.

*Doug Jones, Member of the South Downs National Park Authority and Buriton Parish Council*  
[doug.jones@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:doug.jones@southdowns.gov.uk)

*July 2019*

