

Update from your Planning & Policy Officer:

Dear All,

It has been a busy summer! Here is a summary report which I hope you will find of interest,

Regards Vic Ient

August 28th 2019

(all photos show are mine except were noted)



A27 Arundel Bypass further consultation: Have your say!

In preparation for a busy autumn season in planning and highways the Friends of the South Downs and the Campaign for National Parks undertook a review of critical planning & highways issues in the South Downs National Park. This included a visit to the possible routes for the proposed Highways England A27 by-pass. Now, the promised further consultation has now been announced: Highways England are holding a public consultation between **Friday 30 August and Thursday 24 October 2019**. Friends of the South Downs will be working with local groups in preparing our response. [Click here for more information](#)

The Challenge of Climate Change

In March 2019 Sir David Attenborough's BBC TV programme 'Climate Change – The Facts' was screened. Sir David introduced it by saying "What happens now and in the next few years profoundly affects what happens in the next few thousand." We at the Friends of the South Downs have studied what practical measures can be undertaken by members of the public and campaigning organisation like ours to reduce our carbon footprint, reduce all forms of pollution and improve the environment and countryside around us. We now launched a strategic approach to tackling climate change:

SEEC – Sustainability, Environment, Education and the Carbon challenge

Under each of these headings we have documented our approach and guide to further action. [Click here for details of the new SEEC set of documents which sit alongside our existing policies.](#)

New housing site in Petersfield: 'Climate Change in planning new development is a key issues' say the Society

At the South Downs National Park's planning committee meeting in August, the Friends of the South Downs (South Downs Society) challenged the National Park in five key areas over a planning application for commercial and housing development in Petersfield. The Society supported the comments of the Petersfield Society and Petersfield Town Council. Also the Society asked the National Park to require the developer to submit a 'zero carbon & renewable energy scheme.' There was a positive response to this from the planning officers when they agreed to strengthen 'Condition 16' to include changes coming forth from the Government's Green Futures Policy and the Climate Change Act. [Click here for more information](#)

Boomtown Festival in the South Downs National Park gets go-ahead for 6 years!

In April 2019 the South Downs National Park Authority resolved to grant a further temporary planning permission (for 6 years) to the Matterley Estate to change the use of approximately 2 square miles of downland from solely agriculture, enabling a music festival and a sports event to be held every year. In so doing they ignored Government advice not to grant more than one temporary planning consent and Government Policy that major development such as this should not be located in National Parks. This new permission will extend a similar 3-year temporary permission granted in 2016. [Click here for our report on this development.](#)

Over the past few months a number of parish council and individuals have written to the government asking the decision by the National Park be 'called in'. The Society have supported these pleas and have asked the Secretary of State to uphold the purposes of national parks and the Government's inspector who recently reviewed the National Park Local Plan. No doubt there will be further developments on this planning issue in the autumn!



Figure 1 by permission from Martin Hendry

Working with local societies - the Ditchling Society

In July (2019), the Friends of the South Downs (South Downs Society) were invited to speak at the Ditchling Society's AGM. There was a very good turnout for the talk by the South Downs Society's Policy Officer Vic Ient and Tony Whitbread, President of the Sussex Wildlife Trust.



Shirley Crowther, Chair of the Ditchling Society, pictured with Tony and Vic outside The Barn on Ditchling Green

Vic Ient briefed the members of the Ditchling Society on the recently approved South Downs National Park (SDNP) Local Plan. Vic Ient said "This new plan does away with the myriad of individual district council plans along the National Park's hundred mile length and provides a clear range of 95 policies which local people and organisations can refer to if they are concerned about a particular planning application in their own area". He recommended that anyone commenting on a planning application reminds SDNP of the importance of adhering to

their own policies. Vic went on to say, "The Local Plan was a 'landscape led' plan and ecosystems based and was a good basis for local organisations and residents to ensure that all new development took account of the biodiversity in their own area and. It gives us an opportunity to achieve sustainable planning solutions which can meet the challenge of climate change".

Tony Whitbread complimented Ditchling on their Neighbourhood Plan which included support for maintaining natural biodiverse areas around the village, Tony elaborated on the importance of safeguarding habitats for wildlife as they are part of the ecosystems which they rely upon.

Questions at the end of the talks returned to local planning issues which continued into the informal discussion after the presentations were concluded.

Planning Issues in Lewes

Lewes, which is the largest town in South Downs National Park and the largest town in any national park has had its fair share of planning applications over the recent years. It seems that being a major town in the National Park has made it much more attractive for developers.



Despite the North Street development, benefiting from planning permission in 2016 no building has started yet to create 415 homes and public realm buildings, including a medical centre. The pressure from the government to build new houses has meant that the Government's Inspector allocated new land at Old Malling Farm to the North East of Lewes. The Society has submitted their views on this development, which is likely to be considered by the SDNPA Planning Committee in the very near future. We have asked for an improvement to the scant use of solar panels so that the site is much more sustainable and the provision of renewable energy. We have also asked the National Park to tackle the problem of access to the site, not only by foot, but also via bicycle and to ensure there are bus facilities for 220 odd homes.

The former St Anne's School in Lewes has been left derelict by ESCC for some years and the society is keen that new housing is developed here as soon as possible. Housing on this site is in accordance with the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan. As yet we still don't know when any planning application will come forward. New houses and flats are proposed for the former police vehicle depot just off Western Road. Other developments are proposed in Lewes, but the one which we are most concerned about is possible development on the lower part of the Downs of Spital Road to the south-west of the town. There is no allocation in the Neighbourhood plan for this downland site and we believe it should remain as natural countryside and urban sprawl should not be allowed to creep up onto the Downs.

Societies across the Park Coming together!

The South Downs Network is hosted by the Friends of the South Downs (South Downs Society) and provides a forum for over 40 organisations concerned with or in the South Downs National Park. The network enables all the members to exchange views and get information from each other on all sorts of issues from problems in a particular village or area to major ones which affect us all like loss of habitat for wildlife, climate change and the ever

increasing amounts of traffic running through the National Park.

At the July meeting representatives debated and exchanged information on Park wide issues. The next meetings of the South Downs Network will be on 5 September and 10 December. We are hoping to have representatives from the National Park at the September meeting, and we have invited Dr Jane Sears, Senior Ecologist of '[Back from the Brink](#)' to speak at our December meeting.

South Downs National Park Research Conference (2019)

Friends of the South Downs (South Downs Society) attended the South Downs National Park Research Conference, The Society's Policy Officer, Vic Ient was on hand to answer questions from delegates on the Society's aim to protect the landscape and beauty of South Downs.



Speakers at the conference covered a wide range of subjects and issues, - from the importance of sustainable policies in a world threatened by climate change through to cultural and historical talks about people and places in the national park.

Discussing Ash die-back problems and replanting new strains of Dutch Elm at the SDNPA South Downs Research Conference today with Matthew Woodcock of the Forestry Commission

Vic Ient reports:

There was a particular interest in the keynote speaker, Prof Xavier Font of the University of Surrey, who works with national and international organisations trying to get them to adopt a more sustainable approach to travel and transport. There was an extremely interesting talk by Charlie Pugh of the University of Exeter, who spoke about sustainable tourism and the challenges and opportunities within the South Downs National Park. Dr Duncan of the University of Chichester talked about the importance of 'Forest Schools' in creating awareness and understanding of the environment around us. Prof Dan Osborn of UCL talked about the importance of people accessing, using and enjoying the open spaces in our countryside. Prof John Boardman's talk about soil erosion and freshwater pollution and mitigation measures in the Rother Valley in West Sussex. The study, carried out by the professor from University of Oxford, revealed how farming methods can exacerbate soil erosion. He put forward his proposals for measures to reduce the effect of soil erosion, including buffer zones, retention ponds and the use of vegetation to reduce run-off.

Simon Deacon of Portsmouth water gave a very interesting talk on the CPES project that Portsmouth Water is participating in. CPES schemes work by offering financial incentives to farmers and land managers to encourage them to implement more environmentally friendly methods of farming, such as ploughing orientation, targeted use of fertilisers and planting trees, which help significantly reduce the levels of run-off and nutrients in the water system. The incentives are funded through the establishment of a market with downstream users who benefit from cleaner water

supplies, for example water companies and tourism businesses. For the water companies (and us, the consumer) it means the reduction of nitrates leaching into the groundwater and therefore the water we drink!

The CPES scheme is supported by the EU Interreg France/England programme has announced the University of Chichester will lead a new €4million European project to significantly improve the water quality in rivers and lakes in the south of England and north of France.

Planning and Conservation committee



The July meeting of the Friends of the South Downs Planning and Conservation committee was well attended. Lucy Howard, the Policy Planning Manager of the South Downs National Park gave a presentation on the new Local Plan, now in force for the whole of the Park. Vic Ient said, "It's good to have meetings and cooperation between our District Officers (DOs) and National Park Officers – it helps understanding on both sides." Lucy said the new local plan is landscape led and focuses on ecosystems, supporting our environment.

This meeting was the committee's AGM. We are lucky that Nigel Brown volunteered to carry on in the chair. One of our new DOs, David Coldwell volunteered to be vice-chair.

The meeting discussed a whole range of planning issues across the park from the continued pressure on housing development in Lewes, at one end of the park, to the 'Glastonbury style festival' development at the other end of the park. It was particularly members were pleased to welcome a delegation of residents from the King Edward VII's Sanatorium development near Fernhurst. Residents described the difficulties caused by changing plans for the further development of the site, which is giving some of the new residents, some worrying times.

Members discussed the threat of heavy traffic using small lanes through the park. It was agreed we should ask the National Park to pressurise the government to ensure commercial vehicles use HGV Satnav, which would keep larger vehicles away from smaller lanes and stop them becoming 'rat runs'.

Planning decisions change the ancient hamlet of Greatham

The Domesday Book of 1086 records Greatham. Largely it has quietly existed for centuries. Until today! David Coldwell, one of our new DOs and Policy Officer Vic Ient visited the small hamlet of Greatham in West Sussex earlier this month, where there is a particularly difficult planning situation. Residents of the grade II ancient manor house next door house asked the Society for help in



tackling a planning appeal concerning a next-door property. Over the years the next-door property has gained the benefit of planning permissions, which are inconsistent with the park's aims and objectives.

Thankfully, the latest application about the new 'connecting' building which is intended to connect a partly converted barn and a new stable block has been refused, but an appeal has been lodged. The Society have submitted their views on this appeal. However, both David Coldwell and Vic Ient feel that it's going to be difficult to win over the inspector as there have been so many bad decisions made in the past. The hamlet stands on its own in what would otherwise be tranquil countryside. The major development of building and barn conversion goes against the Dark Sky Policy of the SDNP. The large picture windows will also be a major intrusion in the garden of the Grade II Manor house. The development of barns and buildings could lead to much more traffic using the Brook Lane and crossing the mediaeval bridge (14th C).

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