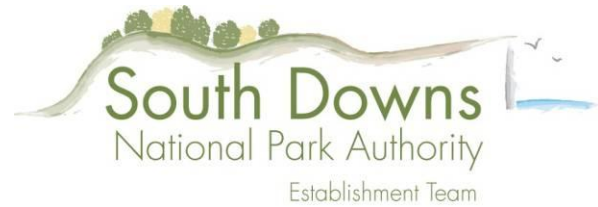


The News

South Downs National Park



Welcome to South Downs National Park News

We hope this regular newsletter will keep you up to date with the latest news on the new South Downs National Park and the establishment of the National Park Authority.

We are keen to hear from you. If there are any topics you would like us to cover in the newsletter then please let us know by contacting the Establishment Team.

Email: southdowns@defra.gsi.gov.uk

South Downs National Park Confirmed



On 12 November the South Downs was formally designated as a National Park. The Secretary of State for the Environment, Hilary Benn – shown here with a glass of South Downs sparkling wine - signed the historic Confirmation Order at Ditchling. The National Park designation will replace the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty on 31 March 2010.

The decision follows a consultation on the precise boundaries of the Park. Details of the Park boundary can be found at: www.defra.gov.uk/rural/national-parks/south-downs/index.htm

How many Members will be on the South Downs National Park Authority?

On 10 December, Hilary Benn announced that the Park Authority will have a membership of 27 comprised of:

- 14 nominated Councillors from the Local Authorities covering the Park
- 6 Parish Councillors from within the Park
- 7 national Members appointed by the Secretary of State through an open recruitment process

The consultation on Membership size did not provide a clear consensus, and so the Minister concluded that a smaller membership was likely to be more effective and less costly to administer.

The Board of 27 Members will take strategic decisions for the National Park. It will also ensure that the Park Authority responds to the aspirations of people living and working in the area as well as those who visit the Park.

The Members appointed to the Authority are expected to be announced in February 2010. They will join an induction programme in March and begin their roles in April 2010.

South Downs National Park Anticipated Timeline

~12 November 2009

The Secretary of State, Hilary Benn, confirms National Park designation for the South Downs and its precise boundary.

~10 December 2009

Announcement of the size and composition of the Park Authority's membership.

~January 2010

A Statutory Instrument is laid in Parliament enabling the establishment of the Park Authority.

~February 2010

The names of the Park Authority members are announced

~31 March 2010

The South Downs National Park designation takes effect. The two AONB designations are revoked.

~April 2010

The South Downs National Park Authority comes into being as a "shadow" authority, not yet fully operational.

~March 2011

The South Downs Joint Committee winds up.

~April 2011

The South Downs National Park Authority takes on its statutory planning responsibilities and becomes fully operational.

*Dept. for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Minister Visits the South Downs

Huw Irranca Davies, the Minister for the Marine and Natural Environment, visited Midhurst on 10 December for discussions with the Leaders of the 15 Local Authorities in the Park and with local farmers and landowners.



From left to right: Richard Shaw (Interim Chief Executive of the SDNPA Establishment Team) and the Minister are welcomed to Midhurst by John Etherington, Chairman of Midhurst Town Council outside Capron House.

Discussions focused on the future role of the new National Park Authority, arrangements for planning, the importance of land management in safeguarding the beauty of the South Downs and the economic and environmental opportunities that National Park status can bring.

South Downs Joint Committee News

Following a renewed agreement signed by Natural England and the 15 local authorities who fund the organisation, the South Downs Joint Committee will continue to provide countryside services until March 2011. The SDJC will wind up in March 2011, as the National Park Authority becomes operational.

What has the Establishment Team been doing?

In preparing for the new organisation, we have been hearing views from a wide range of people about how the new Authority can best add value. We have met farmers and landowners, local authorities, parish councils, voluntary and community groups and many more. We have found a great love of the South Downs - its diversity of landscapes, villages and market towns. Many people have told us that they want the National Park Authority to:

- recognise that the towns, villages and countryside of the South Downs are a working environment
- provide leadership and coordination, helping the many organisations in the Park to work more effectively together
- be in touch and respond to local communities
- use National Park status to attract additional grant funding

From January to March we will be holding seminars to seek more detailed views on the Park Authority's role on both these and other topic areas. We will use the results to help shape the Park Authority's priorities for the future.

Contact us at:

South Downs National Park Authority Establishment Team
Rosemary's Parlour
North Street
Midhurst
West Sussex
GU29 9SB

Email: southdowns@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Tel: 01730 817285

South Downs National Park Your Questions Answered

If you have a question about the National Park, please email: southdowns@defra.gsi.gov.uk and we will try to publish the answer here.

What budget will the National Park Authority have? Will it impact on council tax?

The Park Authority will be fully funded by national Government through Defra. The Authority cannot draw on local council tax, so there will be no impact locally on charging. Proposals are being developed for the Authority's budget next year. It is too early to predict the budget for Authority's first full operating year in 2011/12.

Will the National Park Authority delegate planning to Local Authorities?

This will be a decision for the Park Authority to take in its 'shadow' year. The Members will need to decide this at an early stage to ensure there is plenty of time to set up any systems for processing planning applications from April 2011 onwards.

The South Downs National Park Authority will become the Local Planning Authority in April 2011. The idea behind a scheme of delegation would be that the National Park Authority would set the policies and the standards, and decide all the major applications. But Local Authorities could deal with other applications in accordance with the policies of the Park Authority.

Where will the National Park Authority have its head office?

We are developing criteria that will help the Park Authority Members make an informed decision about premises after April 2010. For example, is it more important to be based within the Park, or to occupy premises that are low-cost or energy efficient or close to public transport links, or that are shared with another organisation? We intend to seek your views on this in the New Year.