The meeting took place over Zoom on Wednesday 2nd October and was very well attended, by Parishes across West Sussex and Hampshire. Notable attendees included many from the Senior Management including:

* Tim Slaney – interim CEO (tim.slaney@southdowns.gov.uk)
* Mike Hughes – Interim Director of Planning (mike.hughes@southdowns.gov.uk)
* Vanessa Rowlands – Chair (vanessa.rowlands@southdowns.gov.uk)

####  Welcome and Updates

All attendees were welcomed by Vanessa Rowlands and opened the meeting with a brief update, which covered:

* Introduction of improvements to the SDNP website which includes a “discovery map”.

This may prove useful as we move forwards with the creation of our own map for the “Discover Horndean Project”. This can be viewed at: <https://maps.southdowns.gov.uk/#filter=&route=&attract=&pin=>

#### Discover The Downs Project

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover-the-downs-new-project-connects-children-with-national-park/>

#### Protected Landscapes Project

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/custodians/farming/farming-in-protected-landscapes-fipl>

Some highlights have included the reintroduction of Beavers to streams in East Sussex, Golf Clubs working toward fighting “Biodiversity loss” challenges, improving the landscape at Seven Sisters Country Park and new conservation grazing schemes.

Currently this has ceased to offer funding, but the hopes are that it will start again in 2025 and run for a couple of years

#### Alan Alsbury – West Sussex member – Email not provided)

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/accessibility/changing-places-and-disabled-access-toilets>

Reported that in the year to date over £1m had been distributed for community facilities such as Rights of Way, and the “changing places” changing rooms and toilets in Petersfield (not yet updated on the website.

Advised that a new Five-Year Plan is being developed and will be out for Consultation (Discussed that slight delay will be down to concern that new government may interfere on the current “no building on the SDNP” position

***Alan made a point that there may be lots of Parish projects that aren’t known about at SDNP and has encouraged Parishes to make sure that they tell SDNP about them, as they may be able to help***

#### John Hyland Hampshire member – Email not provided

Updated us on the events at QECP, mainly around the National Muslim Society gathering for a walk around the park and encouraging engagement with the countryside.

A lot of work has gone into managing the grassland on Butser Hill, in an attempt to encourage the growth of Butterfly numbers

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/butterfly-birthday/>

We were also informed of the work to restore access to the Ashford Hangers across the park

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryside/finder/ashfordhangers>

A walk along the Hangers Way is also detailed in the following website:

<https://www.theamblingpath.co.uk/the-walks/ashford-hangers>

## Climate Change Officer – Sarah Osman –

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/climate-action-hub/>

Publicised the Climate Change Action Hub and encouraged all Parishes to review and register for the where there are many guides and resources, including mapping of Community Climate Action Groups. People can search an area to find groups to join

Encouraged the registering and setting up an account with the **Knowledge Hub**

<https://khub.net/web/guest/welcome?p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&refererPlid=721881976&saveLastPath=false&_com_liferay_login_web_>

This will provide a Library of toolkits and Templates that can be downloaded and modified to personalise the templates. The basis being: “Why re-invent the wheel if someone has already done it”. Examples given were:

#### Events plans

#### Risk Assessments

* + Newsletters

#### As well as a common library to share knowledge across the whole of the SDNP Parishes

Nature Recovery – Cath Jackson - Naturerecovery@southdowns.gov.uk

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/nature-recovery-information-for-delivery-partners/nature-recovery-for-communities/>

Pointed out the resources available and covered potential **funding sources** available and gave examples of the type of projects that may be considered such as:

* Buffer strips to hedgerows, woodlands and watercourses.
* Create or restore ponds
* Introduce pollinator mixes and pollinator strips.
* Increase species diversity in semi improved and improved grasslands.
* Provide winter stubbles, bird feed mixes, and arable weeds.
* Bird and bat boxes

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/nature-recovery-information-for-delivery-partners/nature-recovery-for-communities/>

Cath explained the funding opportunities around and gave examples:

* [South Downs National Park Trust](https://www.southdownstrust.org.uk/) – there are small grants that can help with individual projects. Small grants are available such as Trees for the downs and planting wildflowers for pollinators.
* Organisations such as the woodland trust and the tree council can help with trees and hedgerows:
	+ [Tree Council](https://treecouncil.org.uk/take-action/grants-for-trees/)
	+ [Woodland Trust](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/large-scale-planting/)
* [The National Lottery Community Fund](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/) is another potential source of funding for community wildlife projects.

The South Downs Trust is also working with the SDNPA on a campaign to help deliver Nature recovery on an ambitious scale. #ReNature

Cath can provide further information on a range of delivery mechanisms and funding opportunities. She pointed out that the funding situation is constantly evolving and it is important to take up to date advice.

## Miriam Swan – Grants Officer – miriam.swan@southdowns.gov.uk

01730 819223

Explained that many grants can be seasonal, so invited contact and conversation and enquiries directly.

Gave some examples that are included at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-communities/grants-and-funding/community-grants/>

Explained that Grants will not fund the full costs, they are normally available to the areas within the park, but they are happy to chat to those Parishes on the boundaries

Discussion took place on CIL and the importance of spending CIL Monies that may be held in bank accounts and discussed potential for sharing equipment, and encouraged joint Parish applications.

CIL held for 5 years must be returned, (Nikki Allen – added her confirmation from personal experiences), so could be “donated”

We were informed that “Expression of interest” documents should be submitted for projects as the CIL window opens again in **January 2025**

A discussion took place around the resources that are available to local Council Clerks from the **Society of Local Council Clerks** and explained that a large amount of model Policies and similar resources are available to our Clerk (Chief Officer)

A really good example was the provision of £500 for the purchase of Litter Picking Equipment that can be held by the Council and “signed out” to voluntary groups. This also could be for equipment to improve rights of way that could also be signed out.

## Tim Slaney – CEO – See above

Commented, in response to a question about creating new rights of way, made a point that the priority is really to maintain and improve existing rights of way and mentioned “all terrain bikes hire” and scooters as something he was very receptive to.

He pointed out that that his priority was “Access improvement to the park” and that he was very open to collaboration in that objective.

## Mike Hughes – Interim Planning Director - mike.hughes@southdowns.gov.uk

Planning@southdowns.gov.uk

Explained that:

Seeking pre-application advice before you make a planning application can help to improve the quality of a planning application and provide the necessary information.

He was challenged over the “reluctance of Planning Officers to engage with Parishes and act on enforcement notices”. He did give examples of two cases where enforcement action had been taken by the planning authority

Planning have CIL Monies available, but it is oversubscribed so expression of interest forms should be sent in asap.

Confirmed that previous CIL has been available for traffic calming measures, such as “white gates” for the entrances to villages.

The meeting ended at 19:57

## Other information

During the Q&A session I asked a question that publicised our Speed Camera initiative and whether other Parishes have found a lack of support for the use of data, from the PCCC and local police. This led to a contact with Sue Green, Speedwatch Coordinator (Slindon). We direct messaged during the meeting and agreed to speak “off line”.

I spoke to Sue on Thursday 03/10/2024 and her experiences were based on the Sussex Police area and expressed frustration at the lack of assistance from HCC.

She did explain that Sussex Constabulary, are “all over” speeding and she showed me web pages and initiatives run by Sussex Police including “Operation Crackdown”

<https://operationcrackdown.org/>

Sue explained that the Community Speedwatch in Sussex is mainly operated by Parish Councils but heavily supported by Sussex Police. They provide calibrated speed guns for volunteers as well as often maintain a presence at sites when in operation.

<https://sussexsaferroads.gov.uk/safer-speed/community-involvement/community-speedwatch/>

Volunteers have of course been subject to some abuse and name calling but they have the advantage that one of the volunteers is a retired Met Police Officer. He had witnessed and experienced the levels of anti-social behaviour and arranged for Body Cams for the volunteers.

We explored opportunities to contact the coordinator in Hampshire and whilst Sue tried, she expressed surprise that there appears to be very little support in Hampshire Constabularies area and she was unable to locate contact details of the Speedwatch Coordinator in Hampshire.

We have exchanged contact details, which I will pass to Cllr Prosser as she is keen to discuss experiences and collaborate with any help or advice. She was really interested in the average speed cameras and SIDs in use at Horndean (When they arrive)

## Next Steps

A recording of the full meeting will be available and I can forward the link to any interested Councillors, along with the PowerPoint slides, from each speaker, when I receive them.

Report to Council compiled by

Cllr Simon Freeman