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Planning news from your National Park

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# SOUTH DOWNS PLANNING

THE LATEST NEWS FROM YOUR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY



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## Taking positive steps to aid region's recovery

**Welcome to the summer edition of the South Downs National Park Authority's planning newsletter.**

The past few months have undoubtedly been a testing time for all our local communities, businesses, farmers and landowners.

In spite of all these challenges, many of them unprecedented in the modern era, one cannot fail to be impressed by the perseverance, fortitude, and sheer adaptability shown in so many quarters of the National Park.

It's testament to the strength of the human spirit and, furthermore, that kindness goes a long way.

In the midst of a post-pandemic recovery, we're clearly living in a changed world – and an effective planning system will be more important than ever before.

The South Downs National Park Authority has the ambition, resources and acumen to meet those challenges, albeit with the presupposition that adaptability and proportionality will be key in this rapidly-changing and often unpredictable situation.

Our motto in planning throughout the past few months has been to maintain as much of a “business as usual” approach as practically possible.

As one of the busiest planning authorities in a protected landscape in the UK, this is vital. Our statutory purposes of conserving and enhancing this wonderful landscape, together with promoting opportunities for its enjoyment, and our duty of supporting the social and economic well-being of our communities, remain front and centre, and always will be.

We're pleased that virtual committee meetings are well under way, and together with a member notification system, we have nearly caught up on any backlog.

Our host authorities are one of the lynchpins of the National Park Authority's efficient planning service and they operated in accord with their council's approach.

We suspended site visits for the minimum time possible, having regard to safety, and I'm pleased to say officers are now back on site, albeit social distancing.

Our teams have had numerous virtual meets with developers and agents and, of course, phone and email have ensured that work continues at good pace on pre-apps and emerging schemes.

We are responding effectively to the local, regional and national situation, but a great deal of work is still ahead, particularly as the Government has indicated that green recovery and job creation will be one of the key mechanisms in the economic growth strategy.

There are numerous Bills and the much-talked about Planning White Paper on the horizon – all of which the Authority will be monitoring closely and will be ready to respond.

The National Park Authority already stands in a strong position, not least because of our recently adopted award-winning Local Plan, which seeks to deliver multiple ecosystem services alongside a sustainable level of new development.

The National Park Authority is finalising a Planning Position Statement, which identifies priority sectors of the local economy that are at greatest risk under the pandemic. The Statement sets out how the Authority will help these sectors in three main ways. Firstly, through the planning process, for example, working proactively with businesses, which are currently applying for grants or funding that must have planning permissions in place prior to submission of their full funding application. Secondly, with financial factors, for example, provide Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payment holidays on request. Thirdly, through the interpretation of Local Plan policies, for example, considering positively all applications for commercial uses in our town and village centres that will increase footfall.

More news to come on this important work at a later date.

Our current endeavours underline our dedication to aiding recovery, while protecting and enhancing our treasured landscape and taking a proportionate approach to the challenges and opportunities.



**Tim Slaney**

*Director of Planning*

South Downs National Park Authority

## New community running track is ready, set, go!

Hundreds of schoolchildren and runners of all ages will benefit from a new [community running track](#), thanks to £71,000 of **Section 106 funding**.

[Read the full story here.](#)

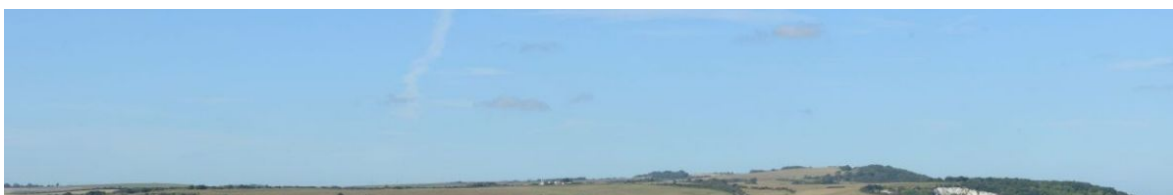




## Sustainable tourism plan gets the green light

New **sustainable tourism** accommodation has been approved by the Authority following a detailed landscape-led approach that put **design**, heritage and ecology at the heart of the development process.

Members of the [Planning Committee](#) voted unanimously to approve plans for 12 sustainable treehouses across two woodland sites in the Cowdray Estate near Midhurst. [Read the full report here.](#)





## Changes to planning system in response to COVID-19

Mike Hughes, Major Planning Projects and Performance Manager, outlines some of the **key changes to the planning system** in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, [including around temporary land uses](#).

## Planning policy updates

The South Downs National Park's first Local Plan was adopted last year and since then the National Park Authority has been working on a number of **Supplementary Documents (SPD) and Technical Advice Notes (TAN)**.

These documents will provide further guidance to support the implementation of certain Local Plan policies. Lucy Howard, Planning Policy Manager, gives [an overview of the key documents](#).



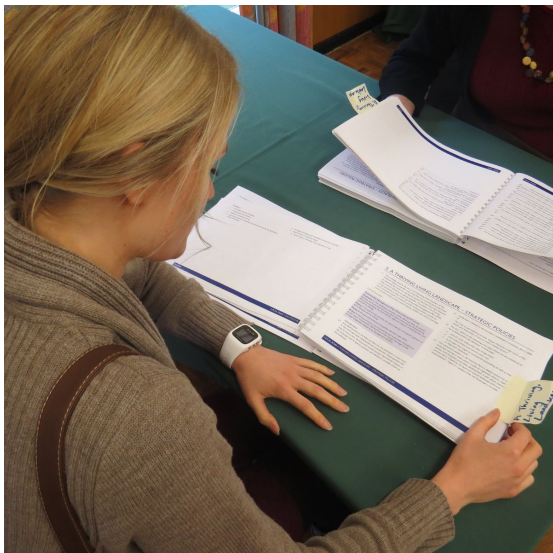


## Enforcement continues to provide vital service

**Planning enforcement** is a key service provided by the National Park Authority and teams have been busy throughout the lockdown period ensuring that approved plans and conditions are followed.

Site visits resumed in May with social distancing in place after a short, temporary pause.

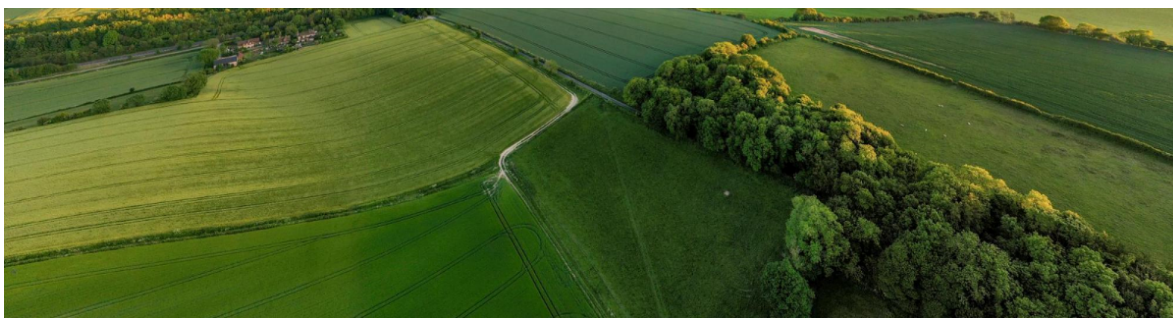
[Find out about enforcement cases across the National Park.](#)



## Soft Sand Review Update

Kirsten Williamson, Planning Policy Lead, gives the [latest on the Soft Sand Single Issue Review](#).



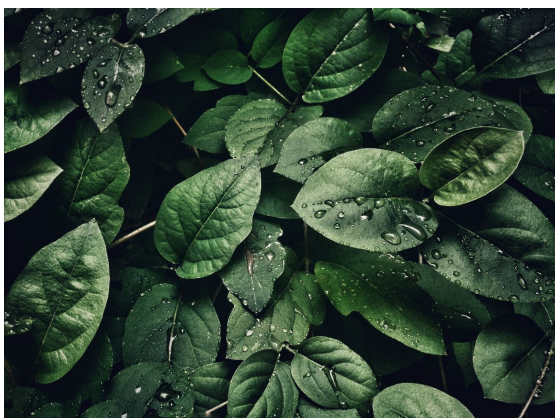


## Promoting the benefits of sustainable drainage at a strategic planning level

Earlier this year a major five-year £500,000 project was launched to help safeguard the chalk aquifer of the South Downs that supplies water to 1.2m people and is under increasing threat from climate change.

**The Aquifer Partnership** (TAP) will work to protect groundwater in the Brighton Chalk Block from pollution, as well as increase resilience to **climate change** and extreme weather events that can cause flooding and drought.

With the provision of “eco-system services” such as drinking water a core element of the Local Plan, Susie Howells, TAP’s Partnership Development Manager, looks at the emerging benefits of sustainable drainage – using plant power to help naturally cleanse polluted water.





## Did you know? A round-up from the last quarter

- Appeals submitted to Planning Inspectorate **11**
- Appeals started **23**
- Appeals determined **14**
- Appeals successfully defended **8**
- Statutory submissions received **1,006**
- Statutory submissions determined **879**
- Neighbours notified **3,239**
- Representations received **1,593**
- Consultations issued **2,620**
- Conditions imposed **3,129**
- Enquiries for planning advice **218**
- Enforcement complaints received **238**
- Enforcement cases opened **181**
- Enforcement related site inspections **150**
- Enforcement notices served **1**
- Enforcement cases closed **122**

*(statistics from period 1 April to 30 June)*



## Spotlight on heritage

Conservation Officer Michael Scammell takes an in-depth look at one fascinating feature of the National Park's **built heritage**.

It's well known that the National Trust is one of the largest landowners in Britain, but less widely appreciated that around one fifth of that land, over 50,000 hectares, was given over the years as a war memorial. [Learn more](#).



## Planning working for nature recovery as heathland site gets conservation boost

The future of one of England's most important and **wildlife-rich heathlands** is looking brighter than ever after a **major fundraising initiative** that was boosted by the National Park's planning teams.

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) successfully reached its target of raising £200,000, allowing the charity to buy 20 hectares of heathland at Blackmoor, near Bordon, Hampshire, extending its habitat conservation programme in the area.

During the year-long fundraising appeal, the National Park Authority was able to help with £42,600 of Section 106 funding. [Learn more.](#)

## Dates for the diary

Our forthcoming Planning Committee meetings will take place on 13 August, 10 September, 8 October, and 12 November.

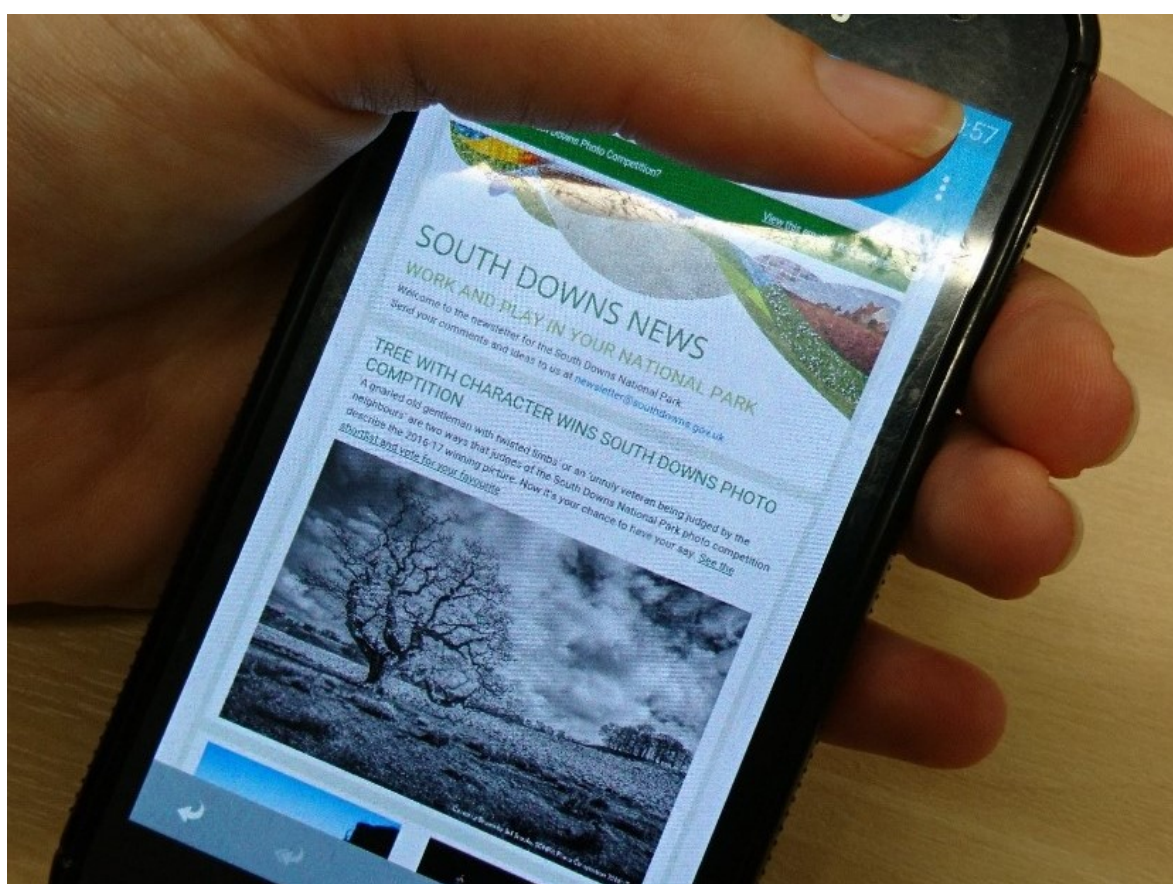


watch the committee meetings on live webcast

The next meeting of the **South Downs Agents' Forum** will be at 4pm Wednesday 30 September. We expect that it will be held virtually on Zoom. The meeting is for all agents, who regularly submit planning applications to the SDNPA and/or the host authorities. Please contact us on [agentsforum@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:agentsforum@southdowns.gov.uk) if you would like to attend.

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