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| **c/o Town Hall****High Street****Lewes** **East Sussex****BN 2QS** | **LEWES DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS** |

**DRAFT**

**Minutes of a meeting of Lewes District Association of Local Councils**

**held on Monday 1st November 2021 via zoom**

**Present:** Cllr S Catlin, Chairman (Lewes), Cllr C Armitage (Newick), Cllr C Baker (Iford), Cllr N Beaumont (Plumpton), Cllr S Carol (Rodmell), Cllr J Denis (Ringmer), Cllr F Harrison (Kingston), Cllr S Hitchcock (South Heighton), Cllr L Mills (Telscombe), Cllr G Sims (Ringmer), Cllr V Tickner (Westmeston)

Trevor Leggo (CEO ESALC), Vanessa Rowlands (SDNPA) and Emma Tingley (Lewes Town Council)

**Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr R O’Keeffe (Lewes), Mark Brown (Seaford) and Ken Jordon (Chailey)

**Minutes:** The Minutes of the Meeting on 12th July 2021 were approved as a correct record subject to amendments in item 1 (C7 MATTERS). This was agreed.

Future minutes would be sent out as **‘draft’** copy only provisionally to only members who had attended the meeting.

**SDNPA – Vanessa Rowlands:** The Chairman welcomed Vanessa Rowlands, Deputy Chairman of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Member who gave an update to member councils on various issues within the National Park. Mrs Rowlands is one of two East Sussex parish council representatives on the National Park, sits on the Planning Committee and a Director of their Trading Committee – Seven Sisters Park.

*Nature Recovery Campaign*

Mrs Rowlands began by updating members on the Nature Recovery Campaign which had been launched this summer and would be a 10-year campaign by the South Downs National Park with the ambition to increase the area managed for nature within the National Park from the current 25% to at least 33% by 2030. This was based on the Government’s commitment for at least 30% of the UK to be managed by nature by 2030. The ambition is to inspire and mobilise landowners and to secure £100,000,000 of investments through public, private and charitable finance.

The SDNPA had launched a film which had been shown widely and had 115,000 views to date and had been well received.

The next stage was a ‘call for sites’ which had been announced at a recent Webinar. A call was going out to landowners and communities across the park to put forward any projects; big or small, at any stage or scale of development that could potentially deliver nature recovery. SDNPA would then provide specialist expertise to guide and develop the projects and also be a matchmaker/broker to connect the projects with funding opportunities. The SDNPA would not be buying land it was a project to help enable nature recovery with landowners and communities. There was a new Digital Resource Hub on the Park’s website for individuals to seek information/resources on how to support or donate to the campaign. The ‘call for sites’ would be launched this month.

Another project that was supporting nature recovery within the National Park was ‘Farming and Protected Landscapes’ which was launched by DEFRA in July. Through the programme, farm and land managers within the protected landscapes can apply for funding to carry out ‘one-off’ projects that either support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to discover and enjoy the landscape or support nature friendly sustainable farm businesses. This project had proved popular with 58 enquiries in the first few months of its launch. So far, 12 projects totalling £150,000 had been approved with more being approved before December.

*Seven Sisters Country Park*

Mrs Rowlands explained to members that the process of taking ownership of the SSCP had been an extremely long process. The SDNPA took ownership of SSCP on 30th July. One of the first priorities, on day one of ownership was to re-open lavatory facilities which had been shut for over a year, together with an ‘events van’ being sites in the south carpark which was being manned every day. There was now a Commercial Manager and 12 other members of staff on site. There was also a Land Manager and Ranger and two apprentices.

Construction work had begun; Baxall Construction were awarded the £.1.6 million contract to deliver Phase I (property) which had started on 9th August. The phase of works was to install a new suspended floor in the Visitor Centre and to give it a complete upgrade. The Centre would be open 364 days per year; previously only being open in the summer months – this was due to the fact it was run by volunteers and there was no heating at the centre.

An updated café would be built together with a new toilet block. Camping facilities would be upgraded at ‘Foxholes’ together with ‘Foxhole’ cottages being refreshed for holidaymakers. It was hoped in the next phase of works the cottages would be upgraded to provide more facilities for disabled guests. New signage, bins and dog waste bins would be provided on site. Compete date would be Easter 2022.

 *Land Management*

Plumpton College were awarded to two-year grazing licence after a competitive tender process. The college would be providing conservation grazing. This had started with 30 Sussex cattle; however, this number would progressively increase. The two-year licence would enable significant improvements to the chalk and wet grassland on the site.

*Visitors*

On the first day of ownership a new web site and social media channel went live which provide information for visitors and already had substantial ‘followers.’ The channel enabled information regarding the SSCP to be distributed swiftly. The events van in the car park would be in site whist the visitor centre was re-developed.

*Seven Sisters Stake Holder Group*

**Stakeholders of this group included:**

East Sussex County Council

Cuckmere Valley

SDNPA Trust

Sussex Wildlife Trust

A Representative of the South Downs National Trading Company (*responsible for the day-to-day management of the site*)

*Parish Communications*

The SDNPA hold two Parish Council Workshops per year – these had been held virtually during the COVID pandemic. The Workshops were to update Parishes on the work of the South Downs National Park. Webinars had also been held for Parishes. It was intended that future workshops would comprise a face-to-face workshop be held in the Spring and a virtual meeting in the Autumn. The Workshop were an opportunity for Parishes to share knowledge and experiences. Mrs Rowlands was keen for Parish Members to propose topics at future Parish Council Workshops.

*Exceat Bridge*

In the ‘Levelling Up Fund’ announcements the Exceat Bridge had been awarded £8,000,000. This project was still in the Planning phase.

*Egrets Way*

A contractor for Phase 5 for Egrets Way had been appointed and work started in October. This had been funded by Lewes District Council, from CIL money and the SDNPA Strategic Fund.

*Falmer and Woodingdean Cycle/Walking Path*

This project had been completed. The SDNPA contributed £100,000 to the project.

*Eastbourne and the South Downs Way*

£20,000,000 had been awarded for local projects in Eastbourne including an ‘Art Trail’ which would connect the town centre, seafront and the downs. It was hoped that the start of the South Downs Way would now be in Eastbourne town centre by the Towner Art Gallery, connecting the downs into the town.

*Rampion Offshore Wind Farm*

The SDNPA had submitted a formal response to the expansion of this site. Although the Park supports renewable energy the Park had an objection due to landscape issues.

*North Street Quarter*

SDNPA had recently had a presentation from Human Nature regarding proposals at the site. The Authority were waiting for formal plans to be submitted.

QUESTIONS FOR MRS ROWLANDS:

Members raised a number of questions which Mrs Rowlands responded to at the Meeting or would contact members individually with responses.

**Finance Report:**

The Chairman gave a brief oral report. Barclays, Lewes Branch had recently closed. The Mandate for signatories was still in the process of being changed, therefore the Current Account and Community Account had not yet been merged. The total balance for the two accounts was currently £817.76.

**LDALC Conference:**

To date, there had only been one offer of assistance to organise this event. The Chairman proposed that the conference be postponed until Spring 2022 and would seek volunteers at the next meeting.

**Lewes District Council Planning Matters:**

It had been reported that Lewes District Council Planning were no longer sending decision notices for planning applications for Town and Parish Council’s. Council’s would need to search the Planning Portal for any decisions made by either the Officer of the Planning Committee.

Cllr Harrison reported that CSSRS (Eastbourne Borough Council) were sending a summary of planning decisions to her by email weekly.

Cllr Harrison forwarded members the email contact at Eastbourne Borough Council. CSSRS1@eastbourne.gov.uk

**Question from a Lewes Town Council Member – Deferred from July Meeting:**

The Chairman felt that today’s meeting was a good example in answer to the question raised by the Lewes Town Council Member. Trevor Leggo informed the meeting that there was an apparent communication gap between East Sussex County Council Highways and Parishes. This would be addressed at the ESALC Conference later this month.

**ESALC:**

The AGM and Conference would be held on 25th November 2021 1.30pm – 4.30pm. The Chairman asked all members to note the date and for a representative of each Parish to try to attend.

**Lewes Bus Station:**

The Lewes Town Council Planning Committee had recently had a presentation group from the Generator Group proposing to re-develop the Bus Station. The Chairman informed the meeting that Lewes Town Council had reminded the SDNPA of the Town Council’s Neighbourhood Plan which had accepted that the Bus Station would need to be re-developed. However, it was essential that another site be sought to house for the development of a new bus station in the centre of the town.

The Generator Group had sent 2,500 flyers to residents living within the vicinity of the bus station. The Chairman had stressed to the group the importance of the bus station to rural parishes surrounding Lewes who should be informed of any plans to be able to respond to a Planning Application.

**Date of Next Meeting:**

The Next meeting would be held on Monday 17th January 2022 via zoom.