



CPRE Sussex Policy Position Statement

SOUTH DOWNS

Section 1 - The scope of the problem / issue

England is home to 14 National Parks situated in some of the most spectacular and valued landscapes of Britain. Annually, they receive millions of visitors, attracted by the tranquillity the Parks provide.

Why is there need for National Park status?

- Since the 1950's great pressure has been placed on the area from changes in agricultural practices which has seen the introduction of intensification with large areas ploughed up for arable farming. The South Downs have been seriously degraded with much habitat loss. Otters, dormice, nightingales, orchids and the chalk hill blue butterfly have all declined.
- Currently only 3% of the South Downs remains as traditional chalk and 90 % of the precious lowland heaths have been lost.
- Historic landscape features and archaeological remains are being lost due to clearance and ploughing.
- Stretching for over 90 miles from Beachy Head to Winchester this rolling chalk Downland and Weald provides a green lung for the region.
- It is also a "recreational lung" for people living in the nearby conurbations -for walking, horse riding and cycling. Approx. 39 million people visit this area annually..
- The rural communities within the Downs must also be protected from developments.

Section 2 - Central and Local Government planning policy

National Parks were designated by the Government in 1949 to protect and enhance

these beautiful areas for the nation. Provision was also made to provide recreational opportunities for the public. In 1995 the National Parks Act was updated to give National Parks Authorities the duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities.

The South Downs

The South Downs Joint Committee www.southdowns.gov.uk policy statement includes the following:

To maintain a strong sense of momentum for action to conserve the South Downs
To develop with partners a number of important projects across the South Downs
To achieve an affective transfer to a permanent South Downs body

The SDJC's main aims are to:
Protect, conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the South Downs
Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the South Downs
Promote sustainable forms of economic and social development.

Natural England states that a National Park is the best way to protect and enhance the Downs and to build on the achievements of the past for future generations.

South Downs Policy – Draft

Lewes District Council has always supported the principle of National Park designation since this status would give the highest level of protection to the Downs. It would also bring more resources, a higher standard of management and the greatest powers for action.action.

Section 3 - CPRE Sussex Policy Statements

- CPRE Sussex believes that it is essential to achieve National Park status for the South Downs.
- It strongly supports the management of the National Park being governed by an independent statutory authority with appropriate weight to ensure the future strategy and planning within the region. This authority must adopt a sensitive approach to development in the area ensuring common standards are applied to all aspects of any proposed development and that only appropriate development is permitted. If the Park authority becomes the sole planning authority, it should have appropriate powers of designation eg local development control.
- The Downs, habitats and wildlife need to be restored through positive land management and agricultural practices.

Objectives for the South Downs

Our objectives, as well as supporting National objectives and Campaigns, are:

- To promote the conservation and enhancement of the landscape, the wildlife, the cultural and historic heritage.
- To encourage understanding and enjoyment of their qualities by visitors and local people.
- To promote the continued sustainable productive use of the land.
- To promote the local economic community, and use of local produce.
- To support the South Downs Campaign, and when it exists, the National Park Authority.
- To act as an independent watchdog on planning matters.
- To collaborate with other like minded organisations.
- To support production of Parish Plans.
- To oppose the sighting of wind turbines on or close to the Downs.
- To protect the Downs from all inappropriate development which would impinge upon the area.
- To attempt to moderate the policies and proposals for the South Coast sub-region.
- To end all waste disposal activities within the South Downs.

- To oppose inappropriate large scale development of the Shoreham Cement works site.
- To oppose further building (or "improvement") of major roads within the Downs.
- To try to persuade the Highway Authority to restore a more rural character to minor roads within the Downs.
- To try to influence the Highway Authority to limit the number of vehicles using minor roads within the Downs by campaigning for better and more affordable public transport in the area. To integrate protection of the Downs and its surroundings into policy for Sussex.

Section 4 - CPRE Branch contact

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Section 5 - What can you do?

- Contact the planning department at your local authority (the national park designation team) or Natural England.
- Web sites:
 - www.cpresussex.org.uk
 - www.southdownscampaign.org.uk
 - www.ramblers.org.uk
 - www.countryside.gov.uk
 - www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk/southdowns
 - www.lewes.gov.uk
 - www.answers.com/topic/south-downs-nationalpark
 - www.southdownssociety.org.uk