



Consultation on the South Downs National Park

**A response by the English National Park Authorities Association
September 2007**

1. ENPAA exists to promote the collective needs of the National Park Authorities in England. It has considered the case for a National Park covering the South Downs, and associated issues. We believe that the South Downs is worthy of National Park status, and support Natural England and the Government in pursuing this aim. We look forward to welcoming the South Downs National Park Authority as a new member of the Association, and as the last of the areas originally identified in the Hobhouse Report 1947 to receive that designation. We recognise the benefit of sharing good practice and hope that the experience of existing NPAs will be valuable to a new National Park Authority.

2. ENPAA welcomes the recommendation in the Inspectors report that the South Downs become a National Park. We are not convinced, however, of the merits of the proposal to use 'core landscapes' as a new criteria for the designation of National Parks. This does not accord with the original, or updated criteria for National Park designation – including in the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*. At principle, we believe that all land that meets the criteria for National Park designation, should be protected as such. We therefore support the position adopted by Natural England in seeking to retain the existing boundary, and wish to see no reduction in the level of protection afforded to land currently designated as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

3. The new National Park Authority will have sole planning powers and it is for the NPA to decide how to apply them. These powers will be essential for the new National Park Authority to be able to establish its vision for the area in a coherent way, and to then implement it. Given the volume and complexity of planning case work, this will have resource implications and we look to the Government as a whole to find the additional resources necessary to achieve the protection of the South Downs, in an augmented National Park Grant.

4. Strong partnership and collaborative working between bodies is an essential ingredient for the successful delivery of the aims in National Park Management Plans. We look to Defra to assist ENPAA, and individual NPAs (old and new) in facilitating other bodies to further National Park purposes in this way.

ENPAA
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