

South Downs

In Lord Renton's opening speech at our 43rd Annual General Meeting, he gave a brief update on the South Downs National Park. It now exists as a body with many powers, principally being the top planning body. It is working with farmers and landowners, to ensure the preservation of the area, promote the public enjoyment of facilities, provide sustainable transport, promote local goods and work within the landscape. He stressed the need for local groups to get to know the new personnel. The National Park will delegate many planning powers to the local authorities, but retain overall control. This has been agreed as necessary to preserve the beauty of the South Downs.

A Living, Working Countryside

At last year's AGM we had a presentation on the 'Taylor Review' entitled 'Planning for a Living, Working Countryside'. The presentation was given by Peter Home and his colleague Andrew Smith of Horsham District Council, and proved to be most stimulating.



Wolstonbury Hill

Matthew Taylor, the author of the review, was an MP for a Cornish constituency with a long term interest and expertise in rural economies.

He had long been concerned about the sustainability of rural communities, and warned



that if we did not provide the affordable homes and other facilities, we risked turning our villages into little more than enclaves of wealthy commuters and the retired.

The recommendations of the review were well received by the then government who, among other initiatives, launched a rural master-planning fund aimed at boosting the number of affordable homes. A further development has been the formation of a Rural Coalition which brings together six national organisations closely involved in countryside affairs.

These are :-

Action with Communities in Rural Association; The Campaign to Protect Rural England; The Country Land and Business Association; The Local Government Association (LGA); The RTPI and The Town and Country Planning Association.

The aim is to provide a broad basis of support for the recommendations of the Taylor Review. It is hoped that these can now be carried forward in the context of the greater localism and fundamental changes in the planning system as promised by the new government.

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