

Friends of Lewes  
**Via e-mail**

16 December 2025

Dear Ruth and Roger

### **Planning in Lewes District**

Thank you for your letter to Siôn following our shared announcement with Lewes District Council that the Planning service will return to the National Park Authority on 1 April 2026.

We have worked closely with the District Council, and many other groups in the town such as yourselves over the years. As you are aware the District Council has for many years processed the bulk of applications on our behalf and we have always valued this service.

Despite a number of meetings and follow up, by mutual agreement with Lewes District Council it has been decided neither party will enter into further contracts but rather we would fully recover the service. Lewes District Council have been party to this for many months.

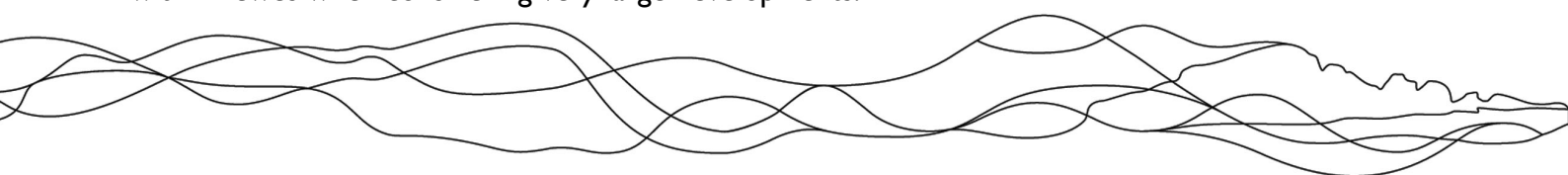
This change is against the backdrop of Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, and was not at the direction of the SDNPA, or even our starting position. Rather after some time it was agreed it would be appropriate for both authorities to work toward an efficient recovery of the full planning service rather than enter into a new contract.

I would mention we have recovered other services in the past, as we did with Horsham in 2024 and many other council areas before that. The other host authorities we currently work with are on different timeframes with their contracts.

Whilst formal processes are still underway, I am pleased to say that it is most likely that the current LDC officers who work within our team there, will be transferred to the employment of the SDNPA. So, it will be the same names and faces yourselves and others have worked with over the years.

Also, I believe it is important that we have a base in Lewes as the largest town in the National Park, and we are looking at all options for such a base in the town itself. This will be used for the new Lewes team, but also open to all colleagues at the South Downs National Park Authority so we can have a presence and further link to the town.

I understand your concern regarding future committee meetings, and we are very mindful of this. As we have done over the years, we will always seek to host planning committees within Lewes when considering very large developments.



As we look into office options, we are also looking at venues so we can host more meetings in Lewes. I need to be honest and say this will not be *all* Lewes cases, but our future presence in the town means we will be able to consider hosting more committees there than we do now. I am also delighted it will give us a grounding in the town more generally.

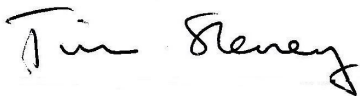
Government consulted us earlier this year on remote attendance of committee. This is currently making its way through the Parliament process and is likely to mean residents can speak to committee virtually rather than travel to a committee meeting. If allowed by law, we will support this to maximise engagement.

I appreciate this is a change, but I see this as a positive one and we will work with you throughout. With that in mind I would be happy to meet with yourself and other dedicated groups to present the transition plan and set up how we work together moving forward. We will be in touch on that point soon, but realistically it's likely to be late January or February.

I would like to finish by stating that we are committed to Lewes town and district and appreciate its special qualities as the largest historic town in the National Park. We have experienced officers in our Lewes team, and they will join the wider Authority team who have worked in historic towns across the region and have the expertise and dedication to deliver for Lewes.

We look forward to meeting you in the new year to discuss the future further and refresh our relationship.

Kind regards



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