



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Tuesday 2 February 2010**

### **South Downs National Park boost to house prices**

The creation of the South Downs National Park on 31 March 2010 will provide a significant boost to house prices and place further pressure on affordable rural homes.

These comments were made at a conference for land-owners and the farming community addressing the opportunities that will arise from the designation of the South Downs National Park on 31 March this year, held by chartered surveyors Smiths Gore and solicitors Adams & Remers and hosted by The Earl of March at Goodwood House on Friday 29 January 2010.

The South Downs National Park, which has taken 60 years to come to fruition, will be unique among England's 10 existing National Parks. Approximately 85 per cent of the land is under management with 60 per cent given over to arable, it will include more than 320,000km of footpaths. More than 120,000 people will live within the Park boundary and approximately eight million people live within one hour of its boundary. It is expected that the South Downs National Park will become England's most visited National Park.

Rupert Clark, a partner at Smiths Gore and head of Rural Estate Management, said: "There will be increased opportunities for landowners, both large and small, from the increase in tourism into the area and we expect to see a significant uplift in the value of cottage rentals. We would also expect to see house prices increase upwards of 10 per cent, as estate agents inevitably make a play on National Park status.

There will also be challenges ahead in the provision of affordable housing and increasing weekend holiday home ownership will have an impact on housing supply. The South Downs is already a relatively expensive part of the country to purchase property, particularly for agricultural and key workers. The added challenges and bureaucracy that will be involved in achieving planning permissions is only likely to make this position worse."

However, Richard Shaw, the interim chief executive of the South Downs National Park Authority, and Nick Herbert, MP for Arundel and South Downs and Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs offered delegates a glimmer of hope.

The very nature of the South Downs National Park, with the large number of people living and working within its boundary, together with tightening DEFRA budgets to National Park Authorities and the Conservative Government's election pledge to return power to local communities may mean that the South Downs National Park Authority has no choice but to delegate a significant proportion of responsibilities back to local authorities, including that of planning.

Andrew Pawlik, a partner at Adams & Remers based in Lewes, a town that falls within the Park boundary, said: "It is usual that a National Park Authority becomes the planning authority for all planning applications within the Park boundary. It was suggested that this may not be the case with the South Downs National Park. If so, this will be good news for home owners and businesses within the Park.

"Local authorities that border the South Downs National Park may also take some comfort from this as well, as there is always the danger that they become a 'dumping ground' for development that would not typically be allowed within National Park boundaries."

The 'South Downs National Park Which Direction?' conference was held on Friday 29 January and was attended by 100 landowners and farmers from across the National Park. The conference was chaired by David Fursdon, a consultant to Smiths Gore and former president of the Country Land & Business Association and a member of the government's Rural Affordable Housing Commission. Speakers included:

- The Earl of March, Goodwood Estate
- Richard Shaw, Interim Chief Executive, South Downs National Park Authority
- Nick Herbert, MP for Arundel and South Downs and Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- Paul Hamblin, Director, English National Park Authorities Association
- Rupert Clark, Partner, Smiths Gore
- Simon Blandford, Partner, Smiths Gore
- Andrew Pawlik, Partner, Adams & Remers
- Simon Wood, Partner, Adams & Remers

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