

Damian Hinds

News release

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For immediate release

SDNP Inquiry Re-opens

**** Qualified welcome for National Park Inquiry progress ****

In a joint statement MPs Michael Mates and James Arbuthnot and Tory candidate Damian Hinds have given a qualified welcome to the Inspector's apparent stance at the outset of the re-opened South Downs National Park inquiry.

Damian Hinds said: "It was encouraging to hear the inspector say at the pre-inquiry meeting that he would accept evidence on the case for Petersfield, Liss and the A3 corridor, along with the rest of the 'Western Weald', to be in the National Park. It offers real hope for the earlier decision to be reversed. And it reflects the dedication of the South Downs Campaign and all who have worked so hard to get this matter back on the table."

Michael Mates MP said: "I have already lobbied the Secretary of State directly about the Western Weald and will continue to do so because two crucial developments – a more recent landscape assessment and new legislation which may extend the inclusion criteria – make this an open question once more. The Inspector should now conduct open discussions, as well as taking written evidence, on the position of the Western Weald."

North East Hants MP James Arbuthnot added an additional concern specific to the northern 'Selborne outlier' Hampshire Hangers: "Although outside the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, this land was found by Natural England to be worthy of being in the National Park. I am not convinced by the case for it to be excluded now. It is in a particularly sensitive position, as it could not be linked with any new AONB formed of other areas deleted from the National Park proposal. It is vital that the Secretary of State base his decision on the most up-to-date landscape evidence and legislation."

ENDS

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