

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUTHORITY MEETING – 16 NOVEMBER 2006**

**CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY AND GREEN ISSUES**

**Report by:** Claire Gingell, Sustainable Development Fund Officer

**Summary:**

This report provides a summary of the range of environmental management systems currently available and makes recommendations on how the Authority might approach corporate sustainability issues and seek to reduce the negative environmental impacts of its work. The report includes a proposed environmental policy for Members to agree which would allow the Authority to progress its work in this area.

**Recommendations:**

- 1 To note the progress made by the Environmental Practices Group and nominate a Member to oversee and lead on sustainability issues.**
- 2 That the Authority authorises officers to develop an in-house Environmental Management System, selecting aspects of best practice from the range of recognised standards and examples available.**
- 3 That the Authority adopts the proposed Environmental Policy.**

**Resources and Corporate Plan:**

Staff time, mainly for the Sustainable Development Fund Officer.

Corporate Plan Objective A1 – Build the new Authority.

**Papers:**

NFNPA 143/06: Cover paper

NFNPA 143/06: Annex 1 – Remit and purpose of the Environmental Practices Group

NFNPA 143/06: Annex 2 – Proposed Environmental Policy

**Contact:**

Claire Gingell

Tel: 01590 646664

Email: [claire.gingell@newforestnpa.gov.uk](mailto:claire.gingell@newforestnpa.gov.uk)

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**1 Background**

- 1.1 Corporate sustainability in this context is about understanding how the New Forest National Park Authority impacts on societies, economies and the environment locally, nationally and globally. It involves considering these impacts and working to reduce the negative ones, while increasing the positive ones. It covers all aspects of the Authority's work including its corporate processes, management systems and day-to-day operations.
- 1.2 A key part of working towards corporate sustainability is managing the Authority's environmental impacts and some work has already begun in this area.
- 1.3 An Environmental Practices Group (the Group) of staff was established in June 2006 with the purpose of ensuring that the Authority minimises its environmental impacts and adopts a sustainable approach in all of its working practices and activities. The remit of the group as established at the first meeting and a list of members is included in **Annex 1**. The scope of the Group's activities include: waste, water and energy consumption, procurement, transport and awareness raising. The most significant direct environmental impact that the Authority has on the environment is almost certainly that of transport and the generation of carbon from the use of fossil fuels.
- 1.4 The Group has taken a number of actions as a starting point in reducing the Authority's environmental impacts. These include:
  - implementing a recycling system throughout South Efford House collecting plastic, glass, paper, compostable material, tins, cans and aluminium foil
  - monitoring the amount and type of waste produced at South Efford House
  - investigating the installation of water saving devices to taps and toilets
  - monitoring electricity and gas consumption at South Efford House

- investigating how the Authority will monitor the carbon emissions arising from its activities.

1.5 In order for the Authority effectively to progress its work on corporate sustainability it is important to obtain commitment at all levels of the management structure. The nomination of a Member to oversee and lead on sustainability issues would be pivotal in ensuring this.

## **Recommendation 1**

To note the progress made by the Environmental Practices Group and appoint a Member to oversee and lead on sustainability issues.

## **2 Environmental Management Systems**

2.1 An Environmental Management System provides a framework for identifying and therefore managing the environmental impacts of an organisation. It is based on continuously improving environmental performance and works to reduce impacts by controlling the amount and type of materials and energy used and the amount of waste produced.

2.2 Benefits of having an Environmental Management System in place include:

- demonstrating the Authority's commitment to the environment;
- improved public and community relations and enhanced image;
- cost savings through reductions in resource consumption and waste production;
- compliance with current environmental legislation (such as The Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations 1995).

2.3 An Environmental Management System can follow one of the accredited recognised standards or be developed in-house to suit the exact requirements of an organisation. In order to identify how best to develop a system for the Authority research was conducted into the recognised standards available, the experiences of local authorities in the area and the experiences of other national park authorities.

## **3 Accredited Recognised Standards**

3.1 There are a number of accredited recognised standards available which the Authority could choose to work towards.

### *ISO 14001*

3.2 The international standard ISO 14001 is the most widely adopted environmental standard among UK businesses. The standard does not specify target requirements but provides a framework for good

management practices. Certification is carried out by an accredited external third party via an audit followed by annual surveillance checks. Undergoing the necessary audits and surveillance to achieve this standard would cost approximately £4,000 to obtain certification and a further £4,500 to maintain it.

#### *EMAS*

- 3.3 EMAS (The European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) has similar aims to ISO 14001 with the additional aim of increasing public environmental reporting. Verification for the scheme is similar to that for ISO14001 but with an additional requirement for the publication of an Environmental Statement giving details of a company's progress and performance. The costs and time commitments associated with undertaking this scheme are similar to that of ISO14001.

#### *BS8555*

- 3.4 This is a six-stage process to achieving an Environmental Management System certification. This would allow the Authority to achieve certification at its own pace while receiving recognition at each stage. The costs associated with undertaking this scheme are similar to those of ISO14001 although are likely to be slightly higher as the stepped process requires more audit visits.

#### *IEMA Acorn Scheme*

- 3.5 This scheme is offered by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and offers the phased implementation of an Environmental Management System with a clearly defined path to either ISO 14001 or BS8555. As with the above schemes verification is by an external inspector and costs are likely to be similar to those for BS8555.

#### *Green Dragon*

- 3.6 The Green Dragon Environmental Standard is a scheme intended to assist organisations in designing an Environmental Management System appropriate to the nature and scale of their activities while fitting with their existing structure. The standard, which is a Welsh scheme but available to organisations throughout the UK, is a stepped system comprising five levels of achievement. The costs of following this scheme would be in the region of £4,000 for external auditing and verification.

#### *Sustainability Standard*

- 3.7 The Sustainability Standard is being developed by Forum for the Future to assist local authorities to improve their sustainability performance by

supporting the exchange of good practice and suggesting practical steps. It was expected that the Sustainability Standard would be launched in the autumn of 2006 although this seems to have been delayed until 2007. The costs of this scheme are not yet available.

#### **4 What Other Organisations Are Doing**

- 4.1 Local authorities in the area have taken a variety of approaches to implementing an Environmental Management System.

##### *Hampshire County Council*

- 4.2 Hampshire County Council has signed up to the Aalborg Commitments, which aim to help local authorities across Europe measure and improve their sustainability performance. The Council is in the process of completing an audit against the fifty commitments to generate an overall sustainability 'score'. The commitments are separated into the following ten themes:

- governance;
- local management towards sustainability;
- natural common goods (including energy, water, soils, air, biodiversity);
- responsible consumption and lifestyle choices;
- planning and design;
- better mobility, less traffic;
- local action for health;
- vibrant and sustainable local economy;
- social equity and justice;
- local to global (including climate change).

##### *New Forest District Council*

- 4.3 New Forest District Council has developed an in-house Environmental Management System rather than following one of the recognised standards which they felt were too resource intensive.

##### *Dorset County Council*

- 4.4 Dorset County Council has developed an in-house Environmental Management System based around an overall environmental policy and a range of specific issue policies (such as transport and waste management) which are supported by clear, annually reviewed action plans. This system is combined with conducting sustainability assessments on a range of services (such as the corporate business service) and a fun but effective staff awareness campaign.

## **5 National Park Authorities**

5.1 Other national park authorities have taken a varied approach to their corporate sustainability with most including it in their corporate or business plans and management plans. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority is currently working towards the Green Dragon standard although the vast majority of authorities have developed an in-house Environmental Management System to suit their own needs, finding the recognised standard schemes too costly, time consuming or restrictive. Many authorities take a rather ad hoc approach to managing their environmental impacts but all are undertaking practical actions to reduce them.

## **6 Discussion**

6.1 There are advantages and disadvantages both to developing an Environmental Management System following a recognised standard and to developing an in-house system.

6.2 Recognised standards:

- offer a structured, systematic approach
- provide accredited certification
- are often targeted at commercial businesses and therefore may not suit the Authority
- have significant cost implications due to the involvement of external auditors
- can be inflexible.

6.3 An in-house system would:

- allow the Authority to take a gradual process with bespoke systems and practices
- have fewer cost implications
- not provide recognised certification.

6.4 The appropriate skills exist within the Authority to develop an in-house Environmental Management System with a range of external organisations able to provide advice if necessary.

### **Recommendation 2**

That the Authority authorises officers to develop an in-house Environmental Management System, selecting aspects of best practice from the range of recognised standards and examples available.

## **7 Environmental Policy**

- 7.1 An environmental policy is the cornerstone of an Environmental Management System and will be fundamental to the Authority reducing its environmental impacts. An environmental policy should be clear and concise, stating the aims and principles of an organisation with regard to its environmental impacts. It is important that the policy is endorsed by the Chief Executive and the Members. An environmental policy is intended to be a 'work in progress' which will be regularly reviewed and altered accordingly. A proposed environmental policy for the Authority is at **Annex 2**.

### **Recommendation 3**

That the Authority adopts the proposed Environmental Policy.

## **Remit and Purpose of the Environmental Practices Group**

(As established at the Group's first meeting in June 2006)

The purpose of the Environmental Practices Group is to ensure the Authority adopts an environmentally friendly and sustainable approach in all of its working practices – and hence minimises its 'ecological footprint'.

The Group will work to involve and influence others by:

- championing green issues across the Authority;
- establishing a policy / strategy on green issues for the Authority's work;
- influencing the values, culture and work practices of the organisation and raising awareness so that green issues are at the heart of everything the Authority does;
- influencing the design and development of the Authority's new building - ensuring that green principles are incorporated into the project at an early stage;
- promoting wider ownership of the issues and solutions amongst all staff and Members – and those we employ or fund directly;
- implementing practical solutions within the Authority and learning from good practice in other organisations;
- innovation and trialling new ideas;
- leading others in the National Park by practising what we preach.

The Group endorses and adopts three overarching principles that will guide the Authority's approach to the use of resources and production of waste. These are to:

- reduce;
- reuse;
- recycle.

The Group consists of:

Claire Gingell	Sustainable Development Fund Officer
Emma Rigglesworth	Head of Sustainable Development
Steve Trotter	Director of Conservation and Enhancement
Alan Goddard	Office Services Manager
Paula Freeland	Head of Environmental Design
Sarah Manchester	Countryside Access Officer
Karen Evans	Communications Officer (Press and PR)
Nick Evans	Senior Planning Officer (Management Plan)
Sandy Tolmay	Senior Monitoring and Enforcement Officer

## **New Forest National Park Authority**

### **Proposed Environmental Policy**

The New Forest National Park Authority has a statutory purpose to conserve and enhance the environment and special qualities of the New Forest. We recognise that how we undertake our work impacts on the environment. In response to this we are committed to establishing an effective environmental management system through which we will work to reduce our negative environmental impacts.

Our aim is:

*To minimise our negative environmental impacts through continuous improvement in our use of resources.*

#### **We have set ourselves the following objectives:**

- to minimise our use of non-renewable materials, resources and energy;
- to reduce the amount of waste we produce to a minimum and to reuse and recycle materials wherever possible;
- to apply the best possible environmental practices in the way we purchase goods and services. This will be particularly relevant in selecting and specifying the Authority's permanent accommodation;
- to reduce our overall carbon emissions;
- to comply with all relevant environmental legislation.

#### **To achieve these objectives we will:**

- develop and implement policies, targets and action plans for all our key environmental impacts – energy, water, waste, transport and purchasing;
- ensure that Members and officers are aware of and understand their roles in taking this policy forward;
- monitor and regularly review our environmental performance, seeking continuous improvement and updating this policy accordingly.