

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
AUTHORITY MEETING – 18 AUGUST 2005**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

**Report by:** Lindsay Cornish, Chief Executive/National Park Officer

**Summary:**

Another month of steady progress. The highlight was a very successful stand at the New Forest Show.

**Recommendation:**

To **note** the report.

**Resources:**

Demands on staff time, particularly for developing national park functions, continues to be a significant constraint on progress.

**Other major considerations:**

None.



## CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

**Report by:** Lindsay Cornish, Chief Executive/National Park Officer

1. In this my first report as Chief Executive I would like to pay tribute to Susan Carter, and the team that has been supporting her, for the energy and commitment she has given to helping to shape and build the New Forest National Park Authority to date. I will be able to build on the solid foundations Susan has created and am pleased that she is able to stay with the Authority until early September to take forward work on communications and member services.
2. This report describes progress since the Authority's fourth meeting on 19 July 2005.

### Members

3. Members played a key part in welcoming members of the public to the Authority's stand at the New Forest Show. In addition, individual members are playing an increasingly important part in representing the Authority at external meetings. Bob Morris, for example, attended the Annual General Meeting of the Council for National Parks on 26 July. Members are attending training days with the Forestry Commission on 4 August and the Verderers on 10 August.

### *Next steps*

4. Advertisements for independent members of the Standards Committee will appear in the Press very soon. Arrangements are being made to hold three of the four workshops agreed at the July meeting in late August/early September, with the final workshop on resources to be held in October.

### Delivery of National Park purposes and functions

#### Progress since 19 July

5. The policy team has taken forward work on a number of fronts including:

**Transfer of planning functions:** Development of a proposal for the NPA's planning service for discussion at the first Steering Group meeting. Participation in the selection process for a project manager. NPA staff also met NFDC planning staff to talk about the National Park and to answer questions.

**Influencing planning policy and development:** Local planning authorities have been notified about the criteria for identifying planning applications for comment by the NPA. Staff and members have been involved in a range of meetings on planning policy including representation of National Park interests on the recent plenary session of the South East Regional Assembly.

**Preparation of the NPA's Local Development Scheme:** Local planning authorities have been updated on the Authority's planned timetable for the preparation of the Local Development Scheme, and the first Steering Group met on 17 August to take work forward.

**Communications and stakeholders:** The New Forest Consultative Panel meeting was held on 7 July. Further information on this meeting is included in paper 27/05. All the policy team were heavily involved with the New Forest Show.

**Sustainable Development:** We are updating the Forest Friendly Farming website and the 'Local Producers Directory'. The website is at: [www.forestfriendlyfarming.org.uk](http://www.forestfriendlyfarming.org.uk).

**Transport:** Hampshire County Council has been advised that the Authority wishes to be a partner in funding the Transport Strategy Officer post from next April.

#### *Next steps*

6. The Steering Group guiding the establishment of the Authority's planning function will be meeting monthly, and work is underway to recruit appropriate staff to take this work forward, including a project manager.
7. Proposals for the operation of the Sustainable Development Fund will be brought to the next Authority meeting.

#### **Stakeholders and Communications**

8. The Authority's stand at the New Forest Show, with display boards, a wishing tree, and children's activities was very well received. It attracted significant media interest and I gave a number of television, radio and Press interviews. Other progress has included work in hand to update the Authority's communications strategy for the coming months and developing a corporate style guide. There has been a steady stream of contributions to other organisations' publications.

#### *Next steps*

9. We will be following up the comments, queries and wishes left by visitors to the stand at the New Forest Show. Work is progressing on three stakeholder events in October: one for land owners / managers; one for recreation and access groups; and one for the general public, to secure their views on emerging priorities for the Authority in the light of the summer Member workshops. We propose to produce two new publications in the autumn: a newsletter for local residents on the Authority's activities and an updated fact sheet about the National Park and the National Park Authority for wider, more long-term distribution.

#### **Staffing**

10.
  - Three Director Posts – Strategy and Planning, Conservation and Enhancement and Understanding and Enjoyment – have been advertised from 20 July, with closing date of Friday 12 August. At the time of compiling this report, the number of application packs sent out were 155 (U&E), 110 (C&E) and 49 (S&P). There will be an oral update at the meeting on the number of applications received by the closing date.
  - The intention is to have the S&P appointment made by the middle of September and the other two by the end of that month.
  - Members are involved in the recruitment process for all three post – S&P Pat Wyeth, C&E Clive Chatters, U&E Susan Achmatowitz.
  - The Director of Corporate Services post, Head of Communications, Members' Services Officer and Head of ICT will be advertised from 18 August, with interviews taking place though the second half of September and into October.
  - A great deal of activity and time is being taken up by this process.
  - Work is also in hand to recruit other key posts.

## Accommodation

11. Progress on medium term accommodation is being reported separately at the 18 August meeting.

## Corporate Services

12. Separate papers are being presented to the meeting on the Authority's **budget, including the Quarter 1 outturn** and on a **draft Business Statement for 2005/6**, setting out the work the Authority is and expects to undertake in 2005/6.
13. In addition and having reviewed the scope and volume of work needed to continue the development of the National Park Authority to fully functioning state by 1 April 2006 I believe it would be prudent to engage consultants to develop and manage a New Forest National Park Authority Development Programme. Their first task would be to draw up a programme plan (based on a critical path analysis) identifying all of the key activities, milestones and risks to delivery. This overarching programme would include the two separate projects on the transfer of planning functions and on the development and implementation of the ICT strategy. In effect this represents a modest extension to the project brief for the consultants being engaged to carry out the two specific projects, given that much of the preparatory work is common to all three. The programme plan would then provide the basis for me to report to Members and for them to monitor progress on the development of the Authority at its monthly meetings. In due course, and dependent on progress, consideration may need to be given to creating a Members' Steering Group to monitor and guide the programme.

## Delivery of ICT

14. Selection of consultants to develop the ICT strategy for the NPA, manage its implementation, and manage the transfer of planning project and overall Development Programme is complete, subject to taking up references. There will be intensive work especially on the IT in support of the planning function, to meet the start date of 1 April 2006.

## *Next steps*

15. I will report progress at the next meeting, in the light of which member involvement with the Development Programme should be considered.

## Finance

16. On 21 July, the Authority's senior management team met representatives from Defra and the Countryside Agency on their annual round of National Park finance meetings. The most important discussion was around budgets for the Authority, and a call from Defra to all funded organisations to relinquish any unspent money back to the centre, to contribute to budget short-falls in other areas. We re-emphasised the need to fund suitable long-term accommodation for the Authority in due course and, in view of our uncertain cash flow this year, we have resisted giving up any of our funding at this stage.