

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 20 MAY 2009

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Report by: Lindsay Cornish, Chief Executive

Summary:

This report covers the period since the last Authority meeting on 26 March 2009 except planning development control and enforcement which covers activity in March and April.

Recommendation:

To note the report

Paper:

NFNPA 297/09: Cover paper

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Members

- 2 Some members were involved in some or all of the following meetings and events:
- Discussion about noise reduction at Bournemouth Airport, 30 March
 - All Party Parliamentary Group on National Parks, 31 March
 - English National Park Authorities' Association meeting, 1 April
 - Meeting with the New Forest Youth Council, 1 April
 - National Park Plan Horse Keeping Working Group, 1 April
 - Meeting with Julian Lewis MP, 3 April
 - Talk at Friends of St Barbe Museum AGM, 3 April
 - Planning Development Control Tour, 9 April
 - North West Parishes meeting on the Park Plan, 15 April
 - South West Parishes meeting on the Park Plan, 16 April
 - Planning Development Control Committee, 21 April
 - Meeting with Mike Seddon, Forestry Commission, 21 April
 - Meeting with Ward Councillors about National Park Plan, 22 April
 - Association of National Park Authorities workshop on water management, Broads Authority, 23-24 April
 - New Forest Association AGM, 25 April
 - Resources and Performance Committee, 27 April
 - South East Parishes meeting on the Park Plan, 30 April
 - North East Parishes meeting on the Park Plan, 5 May
 - New Forest Consultative Panel, 7 May
 - Chief Executive representing the Chairman at the Defra South Downs National Park event, 7 May
 - North Solent Shoreline Management Plan joint Elected Members Group and Client Steering Group meeting, 8 May
 - Standards Committee, 11 May
 - Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing, 12 May
 - Report back on peer review process, 12 May
 - Chairman's informal briefing, 15 May
 - Key Partners Steering Group, 15 May

- Chairman's informal member briefing, 15 May
- The Alice Adventure - Lyndhurst 2009, 15 May
- Planning Development Control Committee, 19 May
- Shoreline Management Plan Appropriate Assessment, 19 May
- Local Strategic Partnership Community Engagement Event, 21 May
- Joint Members Core Strategy Advisory Group meeting, 27 May

3 Forthcoming activities include:

- Access Forum, 1 June
- Recreation Management Strategy Group, 2 June
- Resources and Performance Committee, 15 June
- Planning Development Control Committee, 16 June
- Campaign for National Parks - Trustees' meeting, 24 June

DELIVERY OF NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development

4 Partnership working

Funding

- Officers met with the Community Affairs Manager and Adviser at ExxonMobil to discuss the Maritime Archaeology Project. They have generously agreed to contribute £15,000 towards the educational elements of this project, as well as £8,340 towards the coastal ranger post.
- The Authority facilitated a meeting with key partners (New Forest Trust, New Forest District Council, New Forest Tourism Association and the Forestry Commission) to discuss and agree the criteria and application process for a New Forest Visitor Gift Scheme. This work will continue over the next few months.
- The External Funding Officer has provided further advice to a number of community groups, estate owners and farmers developing LEADER applications.
- The External Funding Officer presented an update report from the Income Generation Group to the Resources and Performance Committee, including a draft sponsorship policy (which requires some minor changes). The group will be continuing to develop ideas before developing final recommendations which will be taken back to Resources and Performance Committee for final approval later in 2009.
- A meeting was held with the Forestry Commission and the New Forest Livestock Society to discuss the consents and legal arrangements for the utility installations at Beaulieu Road Sales Yard.

5 Corporate Plan

Landscape (C1)

- Work on developing a draft Landscape Strategy is continuing and plans for a series of public consultation events are being prepared.
- A site meeting was attended with the Transport Officer and Hampshire Highways Engineers on the A326 close to Marchwood Primary School where Hampshire County Council is planning to install a Puffin road crossing and street lighting from this junction to the next road junction north. This lighting will be visible from the National Park and a landscape report is being prepared on this issue.

Nature Conservation (C3)

- Site visits were made with Forestry Commission and Commoners Defence Association to review proposals for wetland restoration linked to unfavourable SSSI condition and to look at some proposals from the Commoners for lawn restoration and clearance of drifting routes within woodland. Sites covered included Jacks Wood and Peaked Bottom.
- The Ecologist met with Wiltshire Council and Natural England to agree the approach within the Salisbury Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment to visitor pressure on Forest European sites arising from new development. A facility for developer contributions towards management of visitors and recognition of the need for partnership working with the Authority are to be considered for inclusion in the Core strategy.
- Officers also attended the meeting of the Open Forest Advisory Committee (OFAC), chaired by the Forestry Commission. Some attendees expressed concern regarding the lack of resources for management (e.g. burning) and that not all planned work is completed each season (although the shortfall is in fact quite small). Discussion also concentrated on ragwort control and the need for earlier activity within highway land by various agencies, as well as coordination and promotion of control on private land.

Archaeology (C6)

- Site visits were made to monitor the woodland archaeological survey being managed by Anthony Pasmore at Oakley Plantation. The woodland survey by Berkshire Archaeological Services at Roydon woods was also monitored and has been informed by the historical research undertaken by Richard Reeves to update the historic data for Brockenhurst.

- The Quaternary Research Associations annual meeting was held in Hampshire and Sussex this year. The Archaeologist attended for the Milford and Lepe sessions where the artefact bearing geological deposits were investigated and explained. This included trenches on the beach at Lepe being opened to reveal the sequence of peat and silts from a stream bed from the last interglacial period that are about 125 thousand years old.
- A day was spent with the Forestry Commission examining stream and habitat restoration work at Longwater Lawn, White Moor Bog and Fort Bog and its implications for archaeological sites.
- A meeting took place with colleagues from Natural England to resolve outstanding issues for specific Higher Level Stewardship Farm Environment Plans within the Authority's area. Requests for archaeological information from students and others have been promptly met and various data sets provided.

Building Conservation and Design (C7)

- The review of conservation areas in the National Park as set out in **Corporate Plan Objective C7** is continuing. Following the designation of four new conservation areas the review has moved on to look at the boundaries of the existing conservation areas inherited by the National Park Authority and produce character appraisals for these areas. Work is continuing on the first conservation area specific management plan which will be for the Western Escarpment conservation area.
- Work is continuing on the preparation of a draft Building Design Guide, for consultation in 2009. (**Corporate Plan Objective A4**).
- In June the Authority will host the quarterly meeting of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Building Conservation Officers group. It is planned to look at archaeology in the New Forest as part of that meeting and preparations are being made for that and an appropriate field visit.

Traffic, transport and tourism (U2)

- The Authority attended the Lymington to Brockenhurst Community Rail Partnership AGM on the Isle of Wight. The Authority contributes funding towards the Partnership and further meetings are being held with the Project Officer to help promote the service.
- Officers attended the quarterly Transport Liaison Meeting between Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and the Authority. The meeting provides updates on various transport schemes and studies taking place in and around the National Park.

- Preparations have commenced for the 2009 New Forest Tour. The Tour will operate between 20 June and 13 September and will once again perform a circular route of the Forest with an hourly frequency. For more information see www.thenewforesttour.info. Activities in April included hosting a Steering Group Meeting, confirming the route, timetable and pricing and planning the marketing campaign.
- The Authority has contributed to the Department for Transport's ongoing Traffic Signs Review, by commenting on a draft paper produced by the Department for Transport's Signs and Environment Working Group.
- The Authority has commented on the Department for Transport's consultation on Local Transport Plan Guidance, which will influence the third round of Local Transport Plans post 2011 and commented on a proposed safety engineering scheme on the A337 at Setley.

U6 Access

- A Panel meeting was held with Hampshire County Council to assess applications to the Small Grants Scheme for countryside access improvements. Funding was approved for several projects including an information leaflet for Fordingbridge and, conditionally, the replacement of gates in Minstead Parish. The Authority attended the launch of the Small Grants Scheme funded Lyndhurst circular walk leaflet and the unveiling ceremony of a map board in Hordle.
- Officers have worked with an Access Forum sub-group to start organising this year's workshop, which will look at how access could be improved in the southern coastal parishes between New Milton and Calshot.
- A site visit was made with the Rights of Way Area Officer to investigate the potential for some drainage and resurfacing works to improve a well-used footpath in Minstead.
- The Access Officer attended a meeting of the South East Local Access Forum Officers Working Group to discuss the achievements of Forums, and the working of the England Access Forum and the regional Forums.
- The Access Officer has also been involved in the Steering Group meeting for Hampshire County Council's "Access to Hampshire's Coast" project, to establish the desired outcomes of the project and the anticipated involvement of the local access forums.

- The process of re-appointing / appointing members to the New Forest Access Forum has been completed by the Authority and Hampshire County Council. The first meeting of the newly constituted Forum will take place early in June.

Sustainable development (SE1)

- Following the successful application to LEADER by New Forest Produce Limited, the Authority has now completed the transfer of the New Forest Marque Manager post from New Forest District Council. Sarah Green, the New Forest Marque Manager is now based at South Efford and will be working with local producers to promote and market their local produce through a range of outlets. Officers will be working closely with Sarah to support this important and exciting project to ensure its success.
- A student placement has started to review Commoners Dwelling Scheme and in particular to identify key issues associated with development control and the planning of commoners holdings.
- The Sustainable Development Fund Officer has attended several meetings and made several site visits to monitor progress of Sustainable Development Fund projects and support their implementation.
- Officers have also met with the Olive Consultancy to arrange a series of 'resource efficiency audits' which will be available to some New Forest businesses. This will help them identify, understand and reduce their energy costs during the recession - and hopefully provide some useful advice to enable them improve their environmental performance.

Information and Visitor Services

6 Corporate Plan

- Andy Brennan has returned to lead on the use of the mobile information and interpretation unit (the National Park Explorer). The Explorer visited 15 sites in April and attracted over 1,100 people to talk with officers. In early May it was taken, for the first time, to the Pony Sales at Beaulieu Road. **(U3)**
- School contact has been particularly productive of late with a range of schools asking for National Park input both for within the school and on field trips. **(U4)**
- Good progress has been made with preparing interpretative material about World War II, including audio-trails, for the website. **(U3)**
- New leaflets have been published explaining 'who does what' in the New Forest for use in response to requests and to hand out at public events. The theme will be continued in the Authority's 2009 stand at the New Forest Show. **(A1)**

7 Partnership working

- Officers are analysing the consultation responses received on the draft Recreation Management Strategy and planning the process of drawing up options for revisions and improvements and the workshops that will consider these. The first workshop is planned for 2 June. **(U1)**
- Officers helped in the joint training of seasonal rangers and volunteers from various delivery organisations within the Park. **(U5)**
- A drifts code of conduct leaflet to support the Verderers' information leaflet has been printed. **(U1)**
- The joint training of front-of-house staff from the Authority, Visitor Information Centres, New Forest District Council, Forestry Commission, Local Information Points and Lepe Country Park was well-received. **(U3)**
- Leanne Atkinson has returned as seasonal Coastal Ranger (joint with Hampshire County Council) enabling the Authority to engage with local people and visitors along the coastline of the National Park. **(U5)**
- A leaflet incorporating a folding fortune-teller-like 'flick-flack' has been printed to highlight issues around not petting or feeding ponies. **(U3)**
- The spring edition of *New Forest Today* magazine has been published jointly with New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission along with the 2009 edition of *Forest Focus* jointly with the Forestry Commission **(A1, U3)**
- Work to support a funding bid to SEEDA for a sustainable tourism project is progressing. If successful the project will promote sustainable tourism across nine South East Protected Landscapes, linked to the special qualities of each. The bid has the support of New Forest District Council Tourism Service and the New Forest Tourism Association. **(SE1)**
- A 'Date with Nature in the New Forest' (formerly Aren't Birds Brilliant) started at the Reptile Centre on 4 April, with an average of over 150 people a day attending during April. **(U3)**
- The first of the spring's partnership public events have gone well with good attendances at 'Fangs and Feathers' and 'Jump into Spring'. **(U3)**

8 Other activities

- Regular work was carried out answering media queries, writing news releases, producing *The Update*, responding to talks requests and answering queries via the enquiries e-mail address. **(A1, U3)**

Planning Policy

9 Corporate Plan

Corporate Plan Objective A3: Management Plan and Objective A4: Spatial Planning Policies

- The team's work during March and April has been dominated by the series of National Park Plan topic working group meetings. The five working groups were: Zoning; Service Villages and Affordable Housing; Traffic and Transport; Socio-Economic Issues; and Recreational Horsekeeping. The meetings consisted of between 15 – 35 invited organisations and individuals and looked in greater detail at the aspects of the Plan that had attracted the most responses during the consultation period last year. The first four meetings were chaired and facilitated by National Park Authority staff and members, with the Recreational Horsekeeping working group being externally facilitated. A second Horsekeeping working group was held at the request of the majority of the participants.
- The Authority has also hosted four Parish and Town Council quadrant meetings during April, to which all 37 Town and Parish Councils within the National Park were invited. These meetings provided Parish and Town Councils with the opportunity to look at the emerging outcomes of the working groups and make positive suggestions for how the Plan could be taken forward.
- Finally, the Authority also hosted a meeting to which all county, district and borough ward councillors within and immediately adjacent to the National Park were invited. The meeting was held at the Beaulieu Hotel on 22 April and provided the opportunity for the Authority to engage with ward councillors from across the National Park.
- The notes of the key outcomes of the first five meetings have been agreed by participants and are on the Authority's website. Notes of the key outcomes of the second Horsekeeping meeting are in the process of being finalised. All of the background papers prepared for these working groups are also on the website. The notes of the four Parish quadrant meetings and the ward councillors meeting will be placed on the website once they have been agreed by participants.
- Presentations on the draft National Park Plan and the next stages were given to the New Forest Access Forum and to planning agents a meeting hosted by the Authority.
- Richard Lemon gave a presentation on the National Park Plan and the recent engagement to Godshill Parish Council on 27 April. Authority staff are also attending other parish council

meetings during the next couple of months to provide updates on the National Park Plan process.

10 Other work

- Richard Lemon met with planning policy officers from Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council to discuss the proposed 600 home urban extension north of Christchurch. Issues discussed included the potential impacts on the National Park in terms of landscape impact, increased recreational pressures and the potential loss of back up grazing land.
- Nick Evans attended the Landford Parish Council Village Design Statement meeting on 12 March on behalf of the Authority.
- Nick Evans and Bob Morris attended the Southern (Wiltshire) Area Community Partnership Meeting in Downton on 24 March.
- The Authority was represented at the Bournemouth Airport Consultative Committee on 2 April. The meeting included an update from Manchester Airport Groups (the owners of Bournemouth Airport) on the progress made on the redevelopment of the main terminal buildings and associated works.
- David Illsley attended the Pre-Hearing meeting at Appletree Court for the New Forest District Core Strategy Examination in Public. The Examination is due to take place in early June 2009 and the Authority has been invited to participate in six of the ten examination sessions.
- Sarah Applegate attended the Gypsy and Traveller Sub-Group meeting in Winchester on 29 April.

11 Development Control

During **March** the Development Control unit carried out the following work:

Planning applications: received 85. Applications were registered within three working days following receipt.

Planning decisions: 62 issued, of which 49 were approved (79%) and 13 were refused (21%). One application was withdrawn. Four (7%) of these decisions were made by the Planning Committee at the meeting held on 17 March 2009.

92% of householder applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 80%); and 75% of minor applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 65%).

Live planning applications: 288 at 31 March, compared with 267 at 28 February.

Appeals: Four new appeals received this month. There were nine appeal decisions in March, five were dismissed and four were allowed with conditions. One appeal was withdrawn.

Enforcement: 53 new enforcement cases were registered in March and 24 cases were closed. There were 314 outstanding enforcement cases at the end of the month. Two Enforcement Notices were served during March.

The tree team received 14 consultations from Development Control in respect of trees on development sites. 12 consultations were returned within the 21 day target. **(Corporate Plan Objective A5, C7)**

Forty four tree work applications were registered and 28 determined. The target for determining applications is 80% within eight weeks of registration. 100% were determined within the eight week target date. Two Tree Preservation Orders were made.

During **April** the Development Control unit carried out the following work:

Planning applications: received 74. Applications were registered within three working days following receipt.

Planning decisions: 83 issued, of which 72 were approved (87%) and 11 were refused (13%). Six applications were withdrawn. Nine (11%) of these decisions were made by the Planning Committee at the meeting held on 21 April 2009.

91% of householder applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 80%); and 93% of minor applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 65%).

Live planning applications: 278 at 30 April, compared with 288 at 31 March.

Appeals: Three new appeals received this month. There were nine appeal decisions in April, four were dismissed and five were allowed with conditions. Two appeals were withdrawn.

Enforcement: 52 new enforcement cases were registered in April and 24 cases were closed. There were 366 outstanding enforcement cases at the end of the month. One Enforcement Notice and one Breach of Condition Notice were served during April.

The tree team received 25 consultations from Development Control in respect of trees on development sites. 18 consultations were returned within the 21 day target. **(Corporate Plan Objective A5, C7)**

Twenty three tree work applications were registered and 30 determined. The target for determining applications is 80% within eight weeks of registration. 98% were determined within the eight week target date. Three Tree Preservation Orders were made.

12 **Member Services**

- The Member Services section has been involved in providing support to meetings of the Authority and its Committees, including a meeting of the Tree Preservation Order Objection Panel, and followed up on actions arising from these meetings.
- The team has been monitoring and assisting with responses to complaints and requests received under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations, as well as the Data Protection Act. Member Services have been working with the ICT Section in introducing the Sharepoint system for handling complaints with effect from 1 April 2009, and is now working with ICT to introduce a similar system for information requests.
- Member Services also facilitates meetings of the New Forest Consultative Panel. Following safety concerns with the current venue used by the New Forest Consultative Panel, the team has arranged for a change in venue for future meetings of the Panel which will facilitate rapid and safe evacuation in the event of an emergency.
- The team also worked with Development Control in arranging for the annual planning tour by Authority members on 9 April and has liaised with members in setting up the Chairman's quarterly members briefing on 15 May. Further work with members included arranging for the two newly appointed members of the Authority (Jeremy Heron and John Pemberton) to receive their induction material, undertake a tour of the Authority offices and meet with the Senior Management Team on 31 March.
- The Section arranged for a representative of the New Forest Disability Information Service to re-visit the offices and observe the Planning Development Control Committee meeting on 21 April – although several issues for action were identified, the ensuing report was largely very positive on meeting arrangements.

Corporate Services

13 **Human resources**

As of 28 May 2009 there are 74 members of staff or 67.83 full time equivalents, of whom 15 are part-time and 10 are on a fixed-term contract.

- Richard Reeves, Historic Rural Settlement Project Officer, ended his four month contract with the Authority on 31 March.
- In March we welcomed back Andy Brennan, Seasonal Mobile Unit Ranger, and Leanne Atkinson, Coastal Ranger.
- Sarah Richards joined the Authority on 1 May 2009 as the New Forest Marke Manager (one-year fixed-term). Sarah has transferred to the Authority from the New Forest District Council where this role was originally based.
- On 11 May we welcomed Rebecca Raine, GIS Technician (one-year fixed-term) and Amy Rawlins, Climate Change Officer (one-year fixed-term).
- We also welcomed Mark James, Project Officer, and James Brown, Education and Outreach Officer, who commenced their two-year fixed-term contracts on 11 May 2009. They have been recruited to deliver the maritime archaeology project along the New Forest coast with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund was also received for an Institute for Archaeology Historic Landscape Research Learning Bursary (one-year fixed-term). Recruitment is currently in progress for this post which will commence in September 2009.

14 **ICT**

- The complaints section of the Microsoft SharePoint testing has been a success, and is now in use as a live system. Work continues on developing the consultations section for trials with the Recreation Management Strategy.**(A1)**
- The Contact Management System has finished the testing (beta) phase and is now 'live'. The second phase of development is now being planned which will include: integration with GIS, development of administration pages, enhancements to custom tables and enhancements to the look and design of the pages.**(A1)**

15 **Finance and performance**

- Financial management activity this month has focused on finalising the 2008/09 outturn figures which will be submitted to the Authority for approval in the final accounts in June. The Financial Regulations and Standing Orders as to Contract have also been reviewed and will be submitted for approval in June. The Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer met the new District Auditor assigned to Authority business - Patrick Jarvis.

- Further work has been carried out to complete the 2009/10 Corporate Plan for approval in June, together with incorporating the revised nationally agreed key national park Performance Indicators. Proposals for rationalising the Authority's performance management, budget setting and corporate planning arrangements are also nearing completion for consideration by Resources and Performance Committee in June.

16 **Accommodation**

Separate Agenda item

Recommendation

To note the report.