

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 28 MAY 2009

**NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL REPORT
SUMMARY OF THE MEETING ON THURSDAY 7 MAY 2009**

Report by: Stephen Trotter, Director of Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development

Summary:

This report outlines the main issues discussed by the Consultative Panel on 7 May 2009.

Recommendations:

To note:

- i) **issues of interest at the meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel on 7 May 2009**
- ii) **the date of the next Panel meeting which is Thursday 2 July 2009.**

Paper:

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1 Forestry Commission items

1.1 Open Habitats in England Consultation

Mike Seddon (Deputy Surveyor, Forestry Commission) drew members' attention to the national consultation on the formation of policy on the restoration of open habitats. Some of the issues under consideration included the costs of implementing an open habitats policy, the potential carbon impact of reducing woodland areas and the biodiversity benefits of open habitats. Community engagement in the consultation process was critical and members were encouraged to respond; the deadline was 5 June 2009 and details could be found on the Forestry Commission website at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats.

Panel members warned against the dangers of the introduction of invasive non-native species such as Himalayan Balsam. Steve Trotter advised that a study of non-native species would be conducted shortly by a number of partner organisations including the Wildlife Trust, Natural England, the Forestry Commission, the National Park Authority and the Environment Agency. He was invited by the Chairman to make a presentation on this subject to the next meeting.

1.2 Crown Lands Management Plan

Mike Seddon announced that the Management Plan was complete and was available on the Forestry Commission website at www.forestry.gov.uk/newforest. Copies were also available on CD, and paper copies were available at the offices of the Forestry Commission and the National Park Authority.

1.3 Forestry Commission finance

Mike Seddon outlined the Forestry Commission's income and expenditure streams, explaining that although the Forestry Commission generated some income its budget deficit was funded by central government. The Commission was therefore subject to direction from government, including the current efficiency programme that sought to

ensure the Commission maximised local income streams. It was felt that the Forestry Commission delivered exceptional value for money.

1.4 Presentment to Verderers' Court regarding mobile shop(s) for camp sites

A presentment would be made to the Verderers' Court seeking agreement to a mobile shop to visit Forest Holidays' campsites at Hollands Wood, Roundhills and Ashurst twice daily (Forest Holidays was a joint venture partly owned by the Forestry Commission). The van would stock local produce and New Forest Marque foods, and would be branded with the Marque logo. Of further advantage would be to reduce car journeys made by campers to purchase certain goods. Some members expressed concerns at the potential impact on local shops, particularly in view of the current economic climate, and invited anyone who was concerned to attend the Verderers' Court meeting.

2. Animal accidents

2.1 Jonathan Gerrelli, Head Agister, gave an interesting update on animal accidents in the New Forest, following on from his presentation to the Panel the previous year. Most accidents occurred on commuter routes between 5.00 and 7.00 pm, particularly after the clocks were changed in Autumn. Accidents did not appear to be caused solely by people travelling at over 40 mph; other factors included volume of traffic and numbers of stock in particular areas. Accidents were also caused by drivers failing to adjust their speed where stock were present at the roadside.

2.2 Jonathan Gerrelli explained that the Agisters had met with some success in reducing accident numbers through a number of methods, including those set out below:

- speed indication devices, which collected data that could be used by police in managing and directing their enforcement activity;
- signage where recent accidents had occurred;
- improved data collection including equipping the Agisters with GPS and digital cameras;
- the provision of reflective collars; and
- educational talks and general awareness raising, particularly of seasonal messages such as the special dangers encountered in foaling season.

2.3 Kevin Fuller (Hampshire County Council) commended the work of the Agisters and the Animal Accident Reduction Group (chaired by the National Park Authority). Panel members suggested that reflective material be displayed at animal crossing points. Jonathan Gerrelli said that post and rail fencing was often installed at blind corners and crossing points to prevent animals from walking straight on to the road. Members also asked that signs be reinstated advising the public not to feed the stock, including some signs in French.

3. Next Panel meeting

- 3.1 The next Consultative Panel meeting would be held at 7.30 pm on Thursday, 2 July 2009. For future meetings the meeting venue would be changed to the Louisa Suite at the Lyndhurst Park Hotel on a trial basis, starting with the Panel meeting scheduled for July.

Recommendations:

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