

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUTHORITY MEETING – 24 APRIL 2007**

**RESPONSE TO THE 'FUTURE MATTERS' CONSULTATION**

Report by: Nick Evans, Senior Planning Officer

**Summary:**

This paper presents an initial analysis of the results of the public consultation on 'Future Matters' – the issues and options for the New Forest.

It gives details of the level of response and outlines some of the broad trends emerging from the consultation. The highest and lowest 'scores' are listed to indicate the concerns which overall either generated the most interest or were considered of lower priority. The findings relating to a number of questions are discussed further, as examples which may be of particular interest to the work of the Authority and its partners.

A full report on the consultation results is being compiled and will be published on the National Park Authority and District Council websites in due course (also available as a hard copy).

**Recommendation**

**To note the contents of this report.**

**Resources:** Continuing staff involvement in analysing the responses and incorporating them into the National Park Management Plan and Local Development Framework Core Strategy processes (to May 2007)

**Papers:**

NPNPA 180/07	Cover paper
NFNPA 180/07	Annex 1: Percentage of individuals and organisations responding to each topic
NFNPA 180/07	Annex 2: Issues felt to be of the highest and lowest importance
NFNPA 180/07	Annex 3: Issues felt to be of the highest and lowest importance

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**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The ‘Future Matters’ consultation took place between November 2006 and January 2007. The document set out in detail the key issues for the New Forest (the District and National Park combined) and asked for views on both the issues and a series of possible options for addressing them.
- 1.2 The issues and options were structured according to 13 topics, ranging from the natural environment and cultural heritage, to the economy, leisure and recreation, transport and community safety (see **Annex 1**). The spatial planning topic dealt with options only, in relation to the location of development.
- 1.3 This was a joint consultation produced by the National Park Authority, New Forest District Council and the Local Strategic Partnership. Members and officers from all these bodies were involved in defining the content. The document was designed to help inform work on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, the National Park Management Plan and the New Forest District Community Strategy.
- 1.4 This paper aims to give a flavour of the responses and comments on some of the clear trends emerging. It highlights the issues and options felt to be of the very highest importance by respondents and those considered to be of lower priority.
- 1.5 The many individual comments made to the ‘open-ended’ questions are still being drawn together and so this paper does not attempt to give a detailed overall analysis. A summary report of the consultation results together with a breakdown of the responses to each question will be published on the District and Authority’s websites in due course (paper copies will be available on request).

## **2 Level of response**

- 2.1 The document was sent to about 1700 individuals and organisations both within and adjacent to the area. Eight hundred and ninety seven of these were local residents who are members of New Forest District's Citizens Panel.
- 2.2 All statutory agencies, parish and town councils and members of the New Forest Consultative Panel received a copy of the document, as did the local steering committees for parish and town plans. It was well-publicised in the local press, and available on the web-sites of the District Council and National Park Authority.
- 2.3 Responses were received from 429 individuals and 146 organisations. This represents a high return rate of about 33% of those targeted and is unusual in the high proportion of individual responses. Unlike other recent consultations the results are therefore particularly useful in giving a good indication of the concerns and views of 'ordinary' people.
- 2.4 Organisations that responded included seven major statutory bodies (for example, local authorities, the Highways Agency and Southern Water), 22 town and parish councils, a number of local businesses and housing associations and a cross-section of community and voluntary sector organisations.
- 2.5 It should be noted that consultees were able to choose which topics and questions to complete. Overall there was a high response to all topics, ranging between 84% and 96%. A list of all the topics with response rates is shown at **Annex 1**.

## **3 Main findings relating to the issues**

- 3.1 Nearly all those responding agreed that most of the issues as set out were relevant and that they were either 'important or 'very important'.
- 3.2 Issues were not ranked in terms of comparative priority, but it is interesting to note that sixteen issues were considered 'important' or 'very important' by 90% or more of respondents. The majority of these fall within the three topic areas of Natural Environment and Landscape, Environmental Protection and Children and Young People. They are listed in **Annex 2**.

3.3 The issues which were felt overall to be of lower importance are also shown in **Annex 2**. These include:

- social inclusion and inequality issues, which did not score highly, particularly in the responses from individuals (as opposed to organisations)
- several tourism issues, possibly because it is felt these are already being addressed sufficiently
- certain access issues, presumably because respondents felt existing access arrangements were adequate for them.

#### **4 Main findings relating to the options**

4.1 In common with the issues, respondents were not specifically asked to rank the options in priority order, but **Annex 3** does show which of the options were (a) felt to be 'important' or 'very important' by 80% or more of respondents and (b) considered **not** 'important' or 'very important' by 50% or more of respondents. This provides an indication of the kinds of option which were supported.

4.2 General themes which were favoured strongly include:

- initiatives which support the locally distinctive character of the landscape, local skills and local produce
- initiatives which encourage young people to participate positively as part of the community
- initiatives which improve independent living amongst older people.

4.3 Overall respondents tended to take a fairly 'conservative' view and avoided options which would involve major changes or limit the choices of local people. For example, of the options for reducing traffic, providing better public transport was given very high support, whereas road charging, road closure and taxes on vehicles gained relatively little support.

- 4.4 Nevertheless a number of more radical or potentially contentious ideas were supported by the majority. For example:
- 61% felt it was very important or important to protect or increase tranquil areas in the National Park, even if this meant the closure of some minor roads, or re-locating some car-parks
  - 78% felt it was very important or important to support commoning and farming even if this required public subsidy.
- 4.5 Responses to the 'open-ended' questions within the consultation document require further analysis, but may provide additional ideas for options as well as a considerable amount of useful information based on local knowledge.

## 5 Spatial Planning options

- 5.1 The spatial planning questions were framed differently from those in the other topics. They asked respondents to make direct choices comparing locations where development could take place and the kinds of development which would be acceptable.
- 5.2 Options for development which separated the National Park from the District outside the Park resulted in a clearly different approach. Although in both cases the majority felt there should be a balance between higher density development and retaining existing character, a far greater percentage felt that retaining special character was more important within the National Park.

Options	District outside the National Park	Land within the National Park
Higher density development within existing built-up areas	20%	8%
Retain character of built environment	17% (could mean some green-field development)	43% (could mean reduced levels of development)
Strike a balance between the above two options	63%	48%

5.3 A clear consensus seems apparent from the responses to the majority of the development related questions, including the following (summarised) views:

- It is either unacceptable to take land out of the green belt for development or only acceptable to meet a local need
- All strategic gaps between settlements should continue to be protected as at present (although with a high proportion of 'do not know' responses for the gaps adjacent to Fordingbridge)
- Lymington, New Milton, Ringwood and Totton should be maintained as the main town centres, and Hythe, Fordingbridge and Lyndhurst should be defined as 'District Centres'
- It would be beneficial to locate a new country park east of the National Park (to reduce recreational pressure from development in South Hampshire)
- 'Areas of Special Character' and 'landscape features' (defined in the current Local Plan policies) should be retained
- Countryside policies should not be relaxed to allow more built development for sport and recreation
- Provision of most community facilities and services is good or very good (leisure, shops, health, education, libraries), but the exceptions are local information\* and police services.

*\*according to individuals responding, but not organisations*

5.4 In a few cases the responses were split approximately evenly between those who agreed, disagreed or did not know, and so gave no clear overall view. These include:

- The development of green-field land south of the M27 junction 2
- The provision of land for new retail development in the four main town centres.

5.5 Many respondents also made comments relating to current development issues under the other topic headings. Although these have not yet been fully compiled they include strong concerns about:

- The density of development in the towns and larger villages (particularly the replacement of large properties with estates or blocks of flats)

- Increased traffic levels (particularly around Lyndhurst, Totton and on the A337, B3078/9 and the A326)
- The impacts of major development proposals in South Hampshire and South East Dorset.

## **6 Using the results**

6.1 The Future Matters consultation has endorsed the majority of the key issues under consideration and given a strong indication of the options likely to be supported by the general public. As such it will be useful guide in developing firmer proposals for the National Park Management Plan, the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and the Community Strategy for the District.

6.2 More specifically the consultation results will inform:

- Detailed discussions with partners and stakeholders on what should go into the draft National Park Management Plan – particularly the policies and actions it should contain
- The next stage of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, which will involve developing policy options, including preferred options, for further public consultation
- The work of the Local Strategic Partnership in revising the priority issues and actions for the draft Community Strategy for New Forest District.

## **7 Recommendation**

**To note the contents of this report.**

**NFNPA 180/07**  
**Annex 1**

**Percentage of individuals and organisations responding to each topic**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>% of organisations (max number 146)</b>	<b>% of individuals (max number 429)</b>	<b>Overall percentage (max number 575)</b>
1.	Natural Environment and Landscape	85%	96%	93%
2.	Cultural Heritage	62%	91%	84%
3.	Environmental Protection and the Wise Use of Natural Resources	83%	92%	90%
4.	Housing	85%	92%	90%
5.	Economy	86%	91%	90%
6.	Transport	82%	92%	90%
7.	Tourism	86%	92%	90%
8.	Leisure and Recreation	83%	91%	89%
9.	Health	80%	91%	88%
10.	Community Safety	81%	91%	88%
11.	Children and Young People	81%	91%	88%
12.	Older People	81%	91%	88%
13.	Towns, Villages and Countryside – Spatial Planning Issues	88%	91%	90%

**Issues**

**Issues felt to be of the highest importance and the lowest importance**

<b>HIGHEST SCORES</b> <i>(issues which were 'important' or 'very important' to 90% or more of respondents)</i>	
<b>Natural Environment and Landscape</b>	
Managing development pressures in and around the National Park	96%
Taking a holistic approach to conserving habitats and species	91%
Managing cumulative effects of small scale impacts	93%
Maintaining tranquillity of the natural environment	92%
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	
Conserving the distinctiveness of cultural heritage of the area	90%
<b>Environmental Protection</b>	
Making wise use of natural resources (water, energy, non-renewable materials)	98%
Reducing and managing waste	98%
Reducing pollution (litter and fly tipping were of particular concern)	98%
<b>Housing</b>	
Making best use of the available housing stock	90%
<b>Transport</b>	
Meeting the challenge of future growth	93%
<b>Community Safety</b>	
Reducing offending rates of young people	91%
Reducing road accidents	94%
<b>Children and Young People</b>	
Improving health of children and young people	90%
Improving safety of children and young people	95%
Higher achievement / enjoyment of children and young people	90%
<b>Older people</b>	
Older people having continued independence	90%

<b>LOWEST SCORES</b> <i>(issues which 30% or more of respondents felt were <b>not</b> 'important' or 'very important')</i>	
<b>Housing</b>	
Addressing housing needs of gypsies and travellers	65%
<b>Transport</b>	
Improving access to services and town centres	33%
<b>Tourism</b>	
Visitor engagement	33%
Improving competitiveness in the tourism industry	43%
Delivering tangible community benefits from tourism	49%
<b>Leisure and recreation</b>	
Improving accessibility to leisure opportunities	31%
<b>Health</b>	
Tackling health inequalities	36%

## Options

### Options felt to be of the highest importance and the lowest importance

<b>HIGHEST SCORES</b> <i>(options which were 'important' or 'very important' to 80% or more of respondents)</i>	
<b>Natural Environment and Landscape</b>	
Resisting the impact of gradual small-scale development	85%
Conserving and managing wildlife habitats in a 'joined-up' way	80%
Identifying and conserving the distinctive individual features of the landscape	93%
Resisting visually intrusive telecommunications masts in the areas of protected landscape	80%
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	
Supporting local skills and trades	87%
<b>Environmental Protection</b>	
Managing the coast and marine areas in an integrated way	86%
Encouraging various aspects of water and energy efficiency	86% - 95%
Improving various aspects of waste minimisation and recycling	86% - 93%
Promoting more campaigns to reduce litter	80%
<b>Housing</b>	
Providing more affordable housing	81%
Building private sector housing to high environmental standards	80%
<b>Economy</b>	
Encouraging business development in rural areas through use of existing buildings	90%
Developing closer working between colleges and local businesses	83%
Encouraging a wide range of farm businesses to sustain the rural economy	81%
Encouraging good environmental and ethical practice amongst local businesses	84%
Encouraging public sector organisations to buy goods and services from local producers	85%

<b>Transport</b>	
Providing better public transport to reduce car use	86%
<b>Tourism</b>	
Encouraging better use of local produce / products	82%
<b>Leisure and Recreation</b>	
Recreation Management Strategy for the National Park should address: cycleways and footpaths, location of car parks, alternatives to car use	80% - 84%
<b>Health</b>	
Better promotion of walking for health	83%
<b>Community Safety</b>	
Investing more in young peoples activities	82%
Providing better parenting support to families	84%
Educating drivers about keeping to the speed limit	80%
Better enforcement concerning sales of alcohol to young people	81%
Educating young people about the dangers of alcohol	80%
Closer work between local people and the police service to resolve local issues	84%
<b>Children and Young People</b>	
Promoting healthy eating at schools	88%
Promoting healthy eating through range of educational programmes	85%
Fostering the development of self esteem in young people	86%
Putting in place arrangements to address the needs of particular young people when identified	82%
Ensuring all agencies share information which will help safeguard children	82%
Involving young people in projects allowing them to make a positive contribution	90%
Promoting positive messages about the achievements of young people	85%
<b>Older people</b>	
Service providers work better together to promote access to services and information for older people	80%
Developing schemes to help increase the independence of older people at home, including adapting the home and better co-ordination amongst agencies involved	85% - 91%
Giving more support to voluntary / community sector work with	88%

older people	
Improving performance in meeting the needs of older people	87%
Creating more opportunities for older people to take part in leisure activities	81%
<b>LOWEST SCORES</b> (Options which 50% or more of respondents felt were <b>not</b> 'important' or 'very important')	
<b>Environmental quality</b>	
Use of domestic wind turbines	54%
Use of on-shore wind farms	51%
Use of off-shore wind turbines	66%
<b>Housing</b>	
Do more to provide affordable housing for single people	62%
Allowing some 'market housing' to be built in rural areas	72%
Providing more flats / bungalows / larger houses (as apposed to small houses)	56% - 85%
Spending more public money to raise standard of private sector housing	50%
Providing more sites for travellers and gypsies	64%
<b>Economy</b>	
Allocating land for employment beyond existing requirements	64%
Encouraging rural businesses through new development	66%
<b>Transport</b>	
Increasing capacity of A31 to take pressure off other roads	58%
Introducing selective closures of minor roads	69%
Introducing road charging	69%
Do nothing – allow people to find their own solutions to congestion	79%
Introducing higher taxes on car users	76%
<b>Tourism</b>	
Allowing serviced accommodation to expand, while taking into account the character of the area	52%
Using the community planning process to build stronger community tourism in towns and villages	53%
<b>Leisure and recreation</b>	
Acquiring new sites for leisure facilities	84%
Recreation Management Strategy for the National park should address new locations for countryside recreation within the Park	57%

<b>Health</b>	
Health provision should target those most at risk, including groups such as gypsies, travellers, mental health sufferers	51%
Raising awareness of other organisations about local health issues	55%
Investing more resources in Participatory Needs Assessments	64%
Taking services to where people are and give greater health emphasis to gyms	51%
<b>Community Safety</b>	
Increasing the use of public spaces to deter arson	52%