

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 16 OCTOBER 2008 AT 09.30 HOURS IN THE THEATRE, WATERSIDE SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB, HOLBURY

Present:

Members

Clive Chatters (Chairman)
Barry Rickman (Deputy Chairman)

Lee Dunsdon	Bob Morris
Peter Frost	Vicky Myers
Tony Gentle	Leo Randall
Roger Heape	Alan Rice
Kathy Heron	John Sanger
Maureen Holding	Stan Wade
Julian Johnson	Alan Weeks
Ted Johnson	Pat Wyeth

Officers

Lindsay Cornish, Kevin Gardner (Monitoring Officer), Paul Carey-Kent, Richard Lemon, Steve Trotter, Martin O'Neill, Barry Holland, Paula Freeland, Bryan Wilson, Tony Spence, Karen Evans, Mark Stephenson, David Illsley, David Stone and Rosalind Alderman.

PART I – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

18. Apologies for absence

18.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mel Kendal and Clive Maton.

19. Declarations of interest

19.1 On advice from the Monitoring Officer, Local Authority members accepted and declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in agenda items which related to their role as County, District or Parish members. In particular, members of Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute items 23 (Chief Executive's Report) and 29 (Report on New Forest Access Forum), which contained references to partnership working with the Authority. Advice was given that any member who owned (or a member of whose family or a close personal associate of whom owned) land within a conservation area in the Park would have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 27 (Conservation area management – adoption of Conservation Areas Management Plan). Further, any member who owned (or a member of whose family or a close personal associate of whom owned) land within the proposed amended or existing boundaries of the Lyndhurst, Swan Green and Bank conservation areas, and the financial value of that land was likely to be affected by the proposals, would have a personal and prejudicial interest in minute item 28 (Conservation Area Review – Lyndhurst, Swan Green and Bank – Character Appraisals and proposed changes to boundaries). Members declared their interests in accordance with this guidance. In particular, Pat Wyeth declared a personal interest in minute item 28 as her sister owned property within the proposed boundary.

20. Chairman's announcements

- 20.1 The Chairman announced that there were a number of people who had registered to speak under minute item 22 (Public Question Time). He announced that Diana Halford had recently passed away and was joined by members in paying tribute to her excellent work as an Authority member and active commoner and Verderer.

21. Minutes of meeting on 26 June and 24 July 2008

- 21.1 The minutes of the meetings on 26 June and 24 July 2008 were agreed as a true record.

22. Public Question Time

- 22.1 Julian Lewis, Member of Parliament, said that he felt that the Authority's recent issue of the consultation draft of the National Park Plan was an example of the arm of central government taking over a local area and disregarding the interests of the local community. Dr Lewis urged the Authority to extend the consultation period by more than two weeks and to produce a document with the agreement of local people which is clear and understandable.
- 22.2 James Binns, Lead member of the Youth Parliament for New Forest and Test Valley South, said that there was insufficient reference to young people and their access to facilities in the New Forest in the draft National Park Plan and Recreation Management Strategy; he asked why the New Forest Youth Council had not been consulted. He asked what the Authority proposed to help young people and help them stay in the New Forest.
- 22.3 Penny Jackman, Forest Uprising Group, spoke about the formation of the Group and what it had achieved, comparing its resources with the Authority's communications budget. She asked the Authority to listen to the community and expressed the hope that the draft Plan would be amended accordingly.
- 22.4 Tina Cant, Forest Uprising Group, said that the Authority was unelected and apparently unaccountable. She felt the draft Plan was flawed, inaccurate and negatively biased against the best interests of the vast majority of residents, businesses and visitors. She asked that the Plan be reworked, in consultation with appropriately competent and relevant stakeholder groups.
- 22.5 Gary Russell, New Forest Pony Enthusiasts Club, said that the Authority's proposals concerning recreational horse keeping would result in the destruction of the Club's achievement of developing a fine stock of ponies.
- 22.6 Fiona Macdonald, a veterinary surgeon, queried the scientific basis for the draft proposals, such as the statement that erosion was caused by recreational horse keeping and the need for one hectare of grazing per horse. Recreational horse keeping was inextricably linked with commoning.
- 22.7 David Dickenson, NFD OG, said that there was a strong contrast between the draft 'documents' discussed by stakeholders in March 2008 – which in his view emphasised a light touch, consensual approach – and that presented to the Authority in June 2008, which he described as highly prescriptive. He felt the Authority had not adequately assessed the need for measures such as dog free car parks and restraints on recreational horse keeping via the planning system.
- 22.8 Sue Baillie, for 'One Voice', said she felt there was no clear mechanism to include members of the public who did not belong to any of the stakeholder groups in the consultation process. Mrs Baillie quoted the code of practice on

central Government consultations, which specified that where consultation took place over a holiday period or was for less than 12 weeks, efforts should be made to ensure that the written exercise was supplemented by stakeholder and public meetings. Mrs Baillie asked that a series of appropriately publicised public meetings be arranged, involving Authority members who were conversant with the draft Plan and any external advisers; these meetings should be at accessible venues and outside office hours.

- 22.9 John Beaumont said that the formal consultation period on the draft Plan had been poor and did not meet the criteria for central Government consultations. The draft Plan should be much abbreviated and clarified and written in accordance with the “crystal mark” of plain English.
- 22.10 Mike Chilcott, New Forest Association, said that the Authority was here to stay and as a result the New Forest Association was fully engaged in the Plan process. The Association felt that most of the draft policies were a continuation and development of policies of New Forest Committee and New Forest District Council. Although the Association supported many of the proposals, it had serious misgivings about the zoning strategy: once one zone was said to be more fragile than another there was a danger of down-grading allegedly more robust zones. The overall strategy and zoning deserved serious debate; but this should be held in a forum free from the media and political opportunism that was currently much in evidence.
- 22.11 The Chairman thanked speakers for their input.

23. Chief Executive’s Report

- 23.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 266/08). Responding to a query, the Chief Executive said she would advise members whether the inaugural meeting of the New Archaeological Society for the New Forest (referred to at page five of the report) was open to members.
- 23.2 Referring to page ten of the report and the National Park Plan, Alan Weeks said that the reference to road pricing in the draft had been taken from a suggestion in the Local Transport Plan adopted by Hampshire County Council for the region in 2006. Maureen Holding suggested the reference be removed from the Plan as the Authority had no control over matters of road pricing. The Chief Executive explained that the Plan referred to pressures on the Park and potential solutions; among other things the role of the Authority would be to influence the strategies of other statutory bodies where these affected the Park.
- 23.3 Referring to page eight of the report, John Sanger asked officers to liaise with the Authority’s partners such as Hampshire County Council over signage, as some of the new 30mph village limit signs which had been recently introduced were obtrusive.
- 23.4 Members congratulated officers on recent successes with planning appeals, on beating targets for development control applications and on the Authority’s prompt action to protect the two Ogden cottages, which had recently been sold.
- 23.5 Members then noted the report.

24. Oral report from the Resources and Performance Committee meetings on 28 August and 10 September 2008

- 24.1 Roger Heape, the Committee Chairman, summarised the issues considered at the Resources and Performance Committee meetings on 28 August and 10 September 2008. At the first of these meetings, Roger Heape had been re-elected as Chairman of the Committee and Julian Johnson had been elected as Deputy Chairman. The Committee had looked at the underspend during the first three months of the financial year; an assurance had been given by officers that the budget would be fully spent by year end. Roger Heape updated members on the External Funding Strategy and asked for volunteers to join Alan Weeks and Bob Morris on the Income Generation Group to look at external funding strategies for the work of the Authority and its partners in the New Forest. The Committee meeting in September had received the District Auditor's report, which members were pleased to note was unqualified as regards to the Authority's accounts, value for money and risk management.
- 24.2 In response to queries, Lindsay Cornish said that all national park authorities were concerned that sustainable development fund budgets had not been increased; she had raised the question with Defra. Members then noted the report.

25. Local procedures for the handling and determination of complaints under the Local Protocols

- 25.1 Kevin Gardner introduced the report (Paper NFPNA 267/08) and explained that the Authority's approval was sought for the revised procedures for the handling and determination of a complaint that a member of the Authority had failed to comply with the Authority's "Local Protocol for Members and Officers dealing with Planning Matters" or "Protocol for Member and Officer Relations". The proposed revisions had been considered and supported by the Authority's Standards Committee at its meeting on 6 October 2008.
- 25.2 John Sanger queried whether the provisions of paragraph 18.2.4 of the draft procedure (which allowed an Investigating Officer to state whether he or she wished to have any part of the investigation report or other documents withheld from the public) could also be applied to the member the subject of the complaint, such that he or she would also have the right to ask that documents be withheld from the public. Members agreed to defer the adoption of the report to a later meeting pending clarification of this issue by the Monitoring Officer.

26. Budgetary Control Report for period to 30 September 2008

- 26.1 Paul Carey-Kent introduced the report (Paper NFNPA 268/08) and advised that the Resources and Performance Committee had discussed the current project underspend and directors' detailed plans. He explained that investments made by New Forest District Council on behalf of the Authority included approximately £500,000 invested in an Icelandic bank but that this money was not believed to be at risk despite recent reports that a number of Icelandic banks were likely to collapse.

- 26.2 Paul Carey-Kent would report back to Pat Wyeth as to whether the budget for Development Control had taken account of the increase in permitted development rights (effective from 1 October 2008) in terms of a possible lessening of fee income from planning applications.
- 26.3 Following the officer's recommendation, members considered the current expenditure position and noted the position of the Reserves.
- 27. Conservation area management – adoption of Conservation Areas Management Plan**
- 27.1 Mark Stephenson introduced the report (Paper NFNPA 269/08), explaining that the report presented the results of the draft Conservation Areas Management Plan consultation with stakeholders as authorised by the Authority at its meeting on 22 May 2008. The report sought the formal adoption of the Conservation Areas Management Plan.
- 27.2 Members discussed the potential for conflict between conservation and the economic interests of businesses and individuals in the area, including concerns that had been raised by the National Farmers Union. Officers explained that the management plan was not intended to prevent development but to ensure any development was appropriate to the area.
- 27.3 Referring to paragraph 7.1 of the report, which pointed out the opportunity to work with stakeholders, including local residents, in the development of conservation specific management plans, John Sanger requested that Hyde, Hale and Copythorne be approached first as they had responded to the consultation initially.

Resolved: That the Conservation Areas Management Plan be adopted.

Voting: none voting against

- 28. Conservation Area Review – Lyndhurst, Swan Green and Bank – Character Appraisals and proposed changes to boundaries**
- 28.1 Paula Freeland introduced the report (Paper NFNPA 270/08), and explained to members that the report presented character appraisals for the conservation areas of Lyndhurst, Swan Green and Bank for adoption and proposed changes to the boundaries of Lyndhurst and Bank. Pat Wyeth commended officers on a very user friendly report.
- 28.2 Officers were asked to ensure any post-consultation changes to proposed Conservation Area boundaries were notified to the relevant Parish Councils and District Councillors before reverting to the Authority for adoption. In response to a query, Paula Freeland said she would investigate and advise Pat Wyeth whether the Authority's power to make Article 4(2) Directions would be affected by recent changes to legislation on permitted development rights. Maureen Holding suggested that more advice be given to locals on the implications of Article 4(2) Directions.

Resolved:

1. that in accordance with the powers contained in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, conservation areas be re-designated, to be known as:
 - Lyndhurst
 - Bank

to cover the areas shown on the plans annexed to report NFNPA 270/08 (Annex 2 and 5 respectively) and that notice of the designation be duly given and advertised in accordance with the provisions of Section 70 of the Act.
2. that Character Appraisals of Lyndhurst, Swan Green and Bank conservation areas, including illustrations and maps, be published.

Voting: Unanimous

29. New Forest Access Forum Report

- 29.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (NFNPA 271/08) and briefly updated members on the issues which had been discussed at the meeting of the Forum on 8 September 2008. Ted Johnson asked that officers thank the Access Forum for the constructive debate and input on the consultation on the draft National Park Plan and Recreation Management Strategy.

Resolved:

1. That issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 8 September 2008 be noted.
2. That the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting, to be held on Monday 1 December 2008 at Foxlease, Lyndhurst, be noted.

Voting: Unanimous

30. Report on New Forest Consultative Panel

- 30.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (NFNPA 272/08) and briefly updated members on the issues which had been discussed at the meetings of the Panel on 10 July and 4 September 2008.

Resolved:

1. that issues of interest at the meetings of the New Forest Consultative Panel on 10 July and 4 September 2008 be noted.
2. that the date of the next Panel meeting, being Thursday 6 November 2008, be noted.

Voting: Unanimous

31. Urgent Items by the Chairman

- 31.1 The Chairman advised that there were no matters of urgency that he intended to raise under this item.

The meeting closed at 11:56 hours.

SignedDate:.....
(Chairman)