

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2007 AT 09.30 HOURS IN THE FUNCTIONS ROOM AT THE FOUNTAIN COURT HOTEL, HYTHE

Present:

Members

Clive Chatters (Chairman)
Barry Rickman (Deputy Chairman)

Susan Achmatowicz	Bob Morris
Lee Dunsdon	Vicky Myers
Peter Frost	Leo Randall
Roger Heape	Alan Rice
Maureen Holding	John Sanger
Ted Johnson	Stan Wade
Mel Kendal	Alan Weeks
Clive Maton	Pat Wyeth

Officers

Lindsay Cornish, Kevin Gardner (Monitoring Officer), Barry Holland, Steve Trotter, John Ward, Paula Freeland, Frank Green, Sarah Kelly, Sarah Applegate, David Stone, Rosalind Alderman and Carolyn Hoole.

PART I – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

22. Apologies for absence

22.1 Tony Gentle, Diana Halford, Kathy Heron and Julian Johnson.

23. Declarations of interest

- 23.1 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, the Monitoring Officer explained that Hampshire County Councillors would have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute items 30 (Chief Executive's Report), 34 (Defra consultation on proposals to improve access to the English Coast: New Forest National Park Authority response), 38 (Minerals Plan Development Plan Document – preferred options), and 19 (Report on New Forest Access Forum meeting, 3 September). County and District Councillors would have a personal interest in minute item 36 (Developing the Landscape Strategy for the New Forest National Park).
- 23.2 Clive Chatters and Vicky Myers each declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 35 (Towards an Authority position on woodland and landscape) as employees of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and the Forestry Commission respectively.
- 23.3 Clive Chatters, Peter Frost, Bob Morris and Vicky Myers each declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 36 (Developing the Landscape Strategy for the New Forest National Park) as a member of the New Forest Association.

23.4 Clive Chatters declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 36 (Developing the Landscape Strategy for the New Forest National Park) as an employee of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

23.5 Alan Rice declared an interest in minute item 34 (Defra consultation on proposals to improve access to the English coast: New Forest National Park Authority response) as a member of the Lymington-Keyhaven Coastal Area Advisory and Management Committees as a representative of the landowner.

24. Chairman's announcements

24.1 The Chairman made no announcements on this occasion.

25. Minutes of meeting on 28 June 2007

25.1 Subject to the correction of a typographical error at paragraph 3.7, the minutes of the meeting on 28 June 2007 were agreed as a true record.

26. Public Question Time

26.1 Cllr. Sally Arnold, Chairman of Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council, asked when the Authority would employ building inspectors to regulate compliance with planning conditions. She said she felt that the public did not respect the Authority's enforcement activity. In addition, Cllr. Arnold asked how, under the Code of Conduct, Parish Councillors who were also members of the Authority were allowed to vote on planning matters that affected their parish. Cllr. Arnold praised Jane Cooper, one of the Authority's enforcement officers, for her helpfulness and efficiency.

26.2 The Chairman thanked Cllr. Arnold for her comments and said that she would receive a written response on the points she had made. Kevin Gardner explained that the Authority had supplemented the Code of Conduct by adopting a Protocol for Members and Officers dealing with Planning Matters, and members were aware of the dangers of conflict of interest and predetermination. Members did not hesitate to seek advice from the Monitoring and Deputy Monitoring Officers on particular issues relating to the Code and declarations of interest.

27. Revised Model Code of Conduct for Members

27.1 Kevin Gardner presented the report (NFNPA 196/07) and explained that the adoption of most of the Model Code was mandatory but some sections, such as paragraph 12(2), were optional for National Park Authorities. It was thought advisable that paragraph 12(2) should be adopted by the Authority. A revised form on which members could detail their personal and financial interests for inclusion in the Authority's Register of Members' Interests had been tabled, and members were asked to complete and return this form by 11 October 2007.

Resolved: That subject to the exclusion of the provisions that are not mandatory for National Park Authorities, other than Paragraph 12(2), the revised Code of Conduct be adopted.

Voting: 16 (1 abstention)

28. Amendments to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers

28.1 Kevin Gardner presented the report (NFNPA 197/07) and explained that the Scheme of Delegation had been revised to reflect the retirement of the Director

of Understanding and Enjoyment and the re-allocation of his responsibilities and staff to the remaining senior managers in the Authority. There were no other changes of substance.

Resolved: That the revised Scheme of Delegation of Authority attached as Annex 1 to NFNPA 197/07 be approved.

Voting: 16 (1 abstention)

29. Historic Environment and Design Champion

- 29.1 Paula Freeland introduced the report (NFNPA 198/07) and explained that, following a meeting of the Planning Development Control Committee in April 2007 at which it was decided that there was a need for a Historic Environment and Design Champion, members were now required to make an appointment.

Resolved: That Peter Frost be appointed as the Authority's Historic Environment and Design Champion.

Voting: Unanimous

30. Chief Executive's Report

- 30.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 199/07). Ted Johnson drew members' attention to the text at the final bullet point on page 16 of the report, which noted that the Authority had been provisionally awarded a Planning Delivery Grant of £125,000 for 2007/08, and congratulated the Authority's staff as this was a performance related grant. Pat Wyeth thanked the Member Services section of the Authority for their ongoing assistance. Questions were also raised on progress with the Conservation Areas review, and on the number of enforcement cases.
- 30.2 Members noted the report.

31. Oral report from the Resources and Performance Committee

- 31.1 Roger Heape, Chairman of the Resources and Performance Committee, updated members on matters dealt with at the last meeting of the Committee on 28 August 2007, namely approval of the Health and Safety Policy, the Equality and Diversity Strategy, budget monitoring in connection with the current financial year and the Authority's future funding position.
- 31.2 Referring to this latter point, Roger Heape advised that the Chief Executive had identified an error in the formula used by Defra to calculate its grant funding to National Park Authorities. The resulting improved grant, coupled with a once off planning delivery grant of £125,000, had strengthened the Authority's financial position for the current year by £400,000. However, the long term position continued to be unsustainable with the Authority's projected budget expenditure exceeding its annual grant by approximately £500,000.
- 31.3 Further factors which would impact on future budgets were uncertainties in connection with the outcome of the Authority's application for Partnership Funding from Defra for 2007/08 of £200,000 and whether future Defra grants would be flat or inflation linked.
- 31.4 Members then noted this report.

32. Budgetary Control Report for the period to 31 July 2007

- 32.1 Barry Holland outlined the salient points in report NFNPA 200/07 which described the spending profiles of the various directorates up to 31 July 2007 and additional unbudgeted income received. He advised that the Authority was working with finance officers at New Forest District Council to refine the current profiles to assist in presenting a clearer picture of projected expenditure and accuracy of budget variances.
- 32.2 Extensive discussion then ensued on the post of Compliance Officer with members being strongly in favour of filling the post. A number of points were then raised in connection with the remit and term of the position with further clarification being provided by John Ward in response to members' queries on performance monitoring, improvements to database recording and monitoring, enhancing public awareness of the role, the use of alternative resources within development control and procedures set in place for compliance monitoring by other National Park Authorities. The Chief Executive also reminded members that the Authority's budget was finite and that it was not possible to fund all of members' priorities for work – including their wish to see more project work in the National Park.
- 32.3 At the conclusion of the debate, a proposal for the appointment to be made on a part-time basis was not carried as was a further proposal for the appointment to be subject to review after the first year.
- 32.4 Members then voted on and agreed the recommendations contained in the report including the appointment of a Compliance Officer for a two year period on the terms stated.

Resolved:

1. That the current expenditure position of the Authority be **noted**.
2. That the budget transfers arising from the recent restructuring of the Authority as outlined in Annex 1 to the submitted report, be approved.
3. That a two-year Compliance Officer post be funded from the Planning Delivery Grant; with the associated transfer of £26,000 to a specific reserve.
4. That the items set out in the revised General Fund budget in Annex 1 to the submitted report be approved, subject to appropriate amendments to reflect the decision to fund the Compliance Officer post.
5. That the transfer of the balance of £39,870 to the General Fund Reserve be approved, subject to appropriate amendments to reflect the decision to fund the Compliance Officer post.

Voting: None voting against

33. Equality and Diversity Strategy 2007-2010

- 33.1 Barry Holland introduced the report (NFNPA 201/07) and thanked Cathie Turner-Jones, the Authority's Human Resources Manager, the staff who had been involved in the process, and John Sanger as the Authority's equality and diversity champion, for their work on the Strategy.
- 33.2 In reply to queries from members, Barry Holland said that the initial priorities for adopting the strategy had focussed on the three core issues of disability, race and gender but that in time the scope of the strategy would be broadened to include issues such as sexual orientation, age and religion.

Resolved: That the content of the Strategy and three year action plan be noted and the Strategy be approved.

Voting: None voting against

34. Defra consultation on proposals to improve access to the English coast: New Forest National Park Authority response

- 34.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (NFNPA 202/07) and said that the proposals, if adopted, would result in significant changes to the National Park. Members noted that it was important to maintain a balance between encouraging access to the coast and preventing excessive human impact on the area. Steve Trotter pointed out that the proposals acknowledged that exceptions to access would have to be made in areas where there was particular potential for damage. The Chairman thanked officers for drafting the Authority's response.

Resolved: That the response to the Defra consultation at Annex 1 of NFNPA 202/07 be approved.

Voting: None voting against

35. Towards an Authority position on woodland and landscape

- 35.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (NFNPA 203/07). It included a response to the New Forest Association's Vision for Recovering Lost Landscapes. In response to a query, Steve Trotter reassured members that work would be carried out on raising awareness of woodland and landscape issues.

- 35.2 Members also raised the following points:

- (a) where, in paragraph 4.5 of the report, it stated that around 80% of Crown Lands were in a favourable or recovering position, members should be aware that (i) 17% of that area had not yet been improved but this work was expected to be done, and (ii) the state of the land was measured by Natural England by dividing the Forest into units and if any part of a unit was in a favourable or recovering condition, the whole unit was said also to be in that condition. A great deal of work therefore remained to be done; and
- (b) one issue of particular concern was that of climate change, and it was important that the Authority determine a clear direction on this and similar issues of concern, which should be strongly reflected in the strategy.

Resolved:

- 1 That the national and regional policy framework for woodland management be **noted**.
- 2 That the Director of Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development be authorised to respond to the New Forest Association on its proposals to restore lost landscapes of the New Forest, as outlined in Section 6 of NFNPA 203/07.
- 3 That the long term development of a *strategy for trees and woodland in the New Forest* and associated actions within the context of the existing policy frameworks be approved.

Voting: None voting against

36. Developing the Landscape Strategy for the New Forest National Park

- 36.1 Sarah Kelly introduced the report (NFNPA 204/07) and explained that the strategy had been drafted in accordance with the Authority's Corporate Plan.

Resolved: That the proposed timetable, preparation process, partnerships and scope for the Landscape Strategy be noted and approved.

Voting: None voting against

37. Developing the Cultural Heritage Strategy

- 37.1 Paula Freeland introduced the report (NFNPA 205/07). Members pointed out that it was important to prioritise capturing the oral history of older members of the New Forest's population, as this resource would be lost over time; Paula Freeland reassured members that an oral history recording programme was already under way. It was suggested that courses on commoning and other cultural traditions of the area, such as shipbuilding, should be encouraged. Some cultural heritage resources already existed, and it was important to find the gaps in existing recording rather than to duplicate work that had already been carried out.

Resolved: That the continuing preparation of a Cultural Heritage Strategy as proposed be endorsed.

Voting: None voting against

38. Minerals Plan Development Plan Document – preferred options

- 38.1 Sarah Applegate introduced the report (NFNPA 206/07) and explained that the Preferred Options document was now proposed for public consultation. The Chairman said the Authority would welcome the public's views on the document. Members raised a number of points, including the following:

- (a) it was important that the consultation document should include information on sites beyond the county or National Park boundary to give consultees the full picture of minerals working in the area. The Authority would liaise with its partners to consider how existing sites could be reflected in the draft document;
- (b) in identifying sites, it was important to take into account road infrastructure to ensure heavy goods vehicles were not taking routes through the villages;
- (c) the apportionment figures, which were received from central government on the basis of projections made to 2016, were still the subject of debate; it was possible that the figures were higher than they needed to be and there was a possibility they would be amended; and
- (d) in the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals and Waste Development Framework, three potential sites on the boundary of the National Park had been identified, and the Authority should monitor this. Sarah Applegate replied that the Authority had been consulted on these and would respond;

Resolved: That the Hampshire Minerals Plan - Preferred Options document, attached to NFNPA 206/07, be approved for public consultation.

Voting: 14-1 (2 abstentions)

39. Hyde Village Design Statement

39.1 Paula Freeland introduced the report (NFNPA 207/07). The Chairman congratulated Hyde Parish Council on producing the Village Design Statement, and John Sanger thanked Paula Freeland for supporting the Parish Council in the drafting process.

Resolved:

- 1 That the work undertaken by the local community in producing the Hyde Village Design Statement be supported and its contents endorsed.
- 2 That some elements of the Statement be incorporated in the Authority's Building Design guide Supplementary Planning Document.
- 3 That the Statement be included at an appropriate time in the Local Development Scheme, for adoption within the Local Development Framework.

40. Report on New Forest Access Forum Meeting (3 September)

40.1 Members noted issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 3 September 2007, and the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting on Monday 3 December 2007.

41. Report on New Forest Consultative Panel Meeting (5 July)

41.1 Members noted issues of interest at the meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel on 5 July 2007 and the date of the next Panel meeting on Thursday 15 November 2007.

42. Urgent Items by the Chairman

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

PART II – ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ON THE GROUNDS THAT EXEMPTED INFORMATION MAY BE DISCLOSED

43.1 There were no agenda items for consideration under Part II of the agenda.

The meeting closed at 12:12 pm.

Signed Date:.....
(Chairman)