

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
AUTHORITY MEETING – 16 OCTOBER 2008**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Report by: Lindsay Cornish, Chief Executive

Summary:

This report covers the period since the last Authority meeting on 26 June 2008 except planning development control and enforcement which covers activity since the start of June.

Recommendation:

To note the report

Paper:

NFNPA 266/08: Cover paper

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NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 26 JUNE 2008

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Report by: Lindsay Cornish, Chief Executive

- 1 This report covers the period since the last Authority meeting on 26 June 2008 except planning development control and enforcement which covers activity since the start of June.

Members

- 2 Some members were involved in some or all of the following meetings and events:

- New Forest Consultative Panel, 10 July
- Minerals briefing, 18 July
- Core Strategy Joint Members Advisory Group, 18 July
- Planning Development Control Committee, 22 July
- Extraordinary Authority meeting, 24 July
- Peer review and self assessment workshop, 4 August
- Tree Preservation Order Objection Panel, 18 August
- Planning Development Control Committee, 19 August
- Resources and Performance Committee, 28 August
- Core Strategy Joint Members Advisory Group, 1 September
- New Forest Consultative Panel, 4 September
- New Forest Access Forum, 8 September
- Resources and Performance Committee, 10 September
- Exmoor Development Control tour, 11 September
- New Forest Consultative Panel tour, 11 September
- Planning Development Control Committee, 16 September
- ANPA Conference, 17-19 September
- Dorset and South Wiltshire Planning and Transportation Liaison Committee, 22 September
- Peer review member sessions, 1-3 October
- Standards Committee, 6 October
- Meeting with Christchurch Borough Councillors, 14 October
- Beaulieu river, 15 October

- 3 Forthcoming activities include:

- Planning Development Control Committee, 21 October
- Code of Conduct briefing, 21 October
- New Forest Consultative Panel, 6 November
- Planning Development Control Committee, 18 November

- New Forest Access Forum, 1 December
- Resources and Performance Committee, 4 December

DELIVERY OF NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development

4 Partnership working

Funding

- The External Funding Strategy for the 2008-2011 period was approved by Resources and Performance Committee on 28 August 2008. The Strategy outlines the Authority approach to external fundraising and the areas of focus for the next three years in order to optimise the amount of external funding secured. Attached to the Strategy is an action plan which sets out how the Strategy will be delivered.
- Discussions were held with the New Forest Livestock Society, architects and contractors at Beaulieu Road Sales Yard on the proposed sales ring roof design and the potential installation of a water supply.
- Work with colleagues in New Forest District Council to develop an application pack for LEADER funding is complete. The pack is being sent out to potential applicants. Advice has been given to a number of applicants on the application process and their potential applications.
- Further information was provided to the Heritage Lottery Fund to answer their specific questions on aspects of the Maritime Archaeology project and a visit by their project officer took place. The project was approved by the Fund and a grant of £175,000 was awarded. Work has now started with partners to secure the remaining match funding required with a view to starting the project early in 2009.
- The funding bulletin which provides funding information for community groups has been updated and is also being produced as a leaflet which can be given out at events such as the New Forest Voluntary Sector Funding Fayre.

5 Corporate Plan

Nature Conservation (C3)

- The Authority's Ecologist has contributed to the Sustainability Appraisal of the New Forest District Council's Core Strategy through the joint appraisal group and work has started to assist the Council's production of a final Habitats Regulations Assessment.

- Meetings were held with Natural England's new contact for strategic planning issues in order to brief him on background to the Core Strategy, Recreation Management Strategy and associated Habitats Regulations issues. A draft brief for further research to inform assessment of visitor pressure and disturbance, particularly to those species which form the interest features of the international nature conservation designations has been agreed.

Conservation of cultural heritage (C6)

- Drafts of the Cadland Woodland Archaeological Survey have been received, over 50 new archaeological sites and landscape features have been located including an un-documented first World War concrete firing range.
- Visits were made over the summer to the excavation projects being undertaken near Fritham by the New Forest Section of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society. The excavated section across the line of the possible 'Roman Road' has confirmed the existence of a road and that cart ruts could be identified in its surface see illustration below. Two other trenches were excavated across banks and ditches in the vicinity and in one case rare examples of a buried soil have been located. The Authority funding will be used to fund a carbon 14 date from charcoal from a post hole associated with the road.
- The inaugural meeting of the New Archaeological Society for the New Forest will take place in November once the New Forest Section of the Hampshire Field Club ceases to exist. The inaugural lecture at the first meeting of the new society will be given by Frank Green at the Lyndhurst Centre.

Climate Change Work (C8)

- A Woodfuel Workshop was held at Ipley Manor to use the district heating system there (part-funded by the Sustainable Development Fund) as a case study to inspire others who are interested in using or producing woodfuel. The workshop was attended by 18 people.
- Officers attended a meeting at Lyndhurst Community Centre to support the potential use of biomass for heating at the centre.
- Officers also met Hyde Climate Change Forum to discuss their plans and ways in which the Authority may support their work.

Recreation (U1)

- Both the Recreation Officer and Coastal Ranger met New Forest District Council's Coastal Manager to discuss ways of working together in the future. One way is to work more closely with the

River Warden at Keyhaven and the Beach Wardens at Calshot and Milford on Sea. In addition to this the Recreation Officer also met New Forest District Council staff and local kite surfers at Keyhaven to discuss perceived conflicts and implementation of future management procedures. This will now be taken forward in the form of a local Kite Surfing Club and partnership approach.

- The Recreation Officer also attended a meeting with the Verderers and Forestry Commission to discuss this season's pilot management of visitors and spectators at drifts. A Drift Liaison Officer role has been created and two people have been attending the identified drifts (a Forestry Commission Voluntary Ranger, and a National Park Authority Officer) to communicate information on health and safety, and the tradition behind this Commoners practice. An end of season report will be produced in November with recommendations for future involvement.
- Campsite surveys have been organised at several Forest Holidays sites across the Forest to gather information to inform the consultation process of the National Park Plan and Recreation Management Strategy. This information is being collated and analysed.
- Staff also helped at the Forestry Commission's Open Day at Wilverley.

Traffic, transport and tourism (U2)

- 31 August was the last day of service for the New Forest Tour for 2008. Passenger journey numbers and revenue generation are currently being calculated which will influence the format of the Tour in 2009, and a paper to the Authority in December.
- Officers were consulted on several highway schemes, including proposals for a safety engineering scheme at Setthorns Road junction with Brighton Road, measures to combat verge erosion on Blackhill Road and traffic indicators for the Hampshire Local Area Agreement.

Access (U6)

- Work has been undertaken with Natural England and Hampshire County Council to audit the existing coastal access in advance of the proposed legislation for Coastal Access. Natural England will use this information, which they are collecting from all coastal access authorities, to estimate the required resources for implementation of the route, including provision of new infrastructure.

- Officers also arranged and took part in a very helpful visit for members of the Natural England national coastal access team to look at some local issues, and raise some potential areas of concern.

Sustainable Development (SE1)

- A site visit was carried out to Avon Tyrrell Activity Centre to view progress on the strawbale classroom project. The compost toilet has been completed and construction of the classroom is well underway, completion is expected in autumn 2008. Officers also attended the official opening of the Fairweather's Learning Garden (opened by Chris Packham and Stephen Trotter). Project development advice has been provided to a number of potential applicants to the Fund and four projects were recently approved by the Sustainable Development Fund Panel:
 - the designing of a biomass boiler system at Lyndhurst Community Centre
 - the installation of cycle racks at St Saviours Church, Brockenhurst
 - Get Out of Town! (conservation volunteering project with Fairbridge Solent)
 - purchase of a mobile saw mill by a local tree surgeon.

Information and Visitor Services

6 Corporate Plan

- All 46 timber boundary markers are installed and in good shape. After delays beyond our control, negotiations for trunk road boundary signs (for the A36, A31 and M27) have recommenced. **(U3)**
- All fifteen of the pre-planned and publicised events for 2008 have been organised. Feedback has been positive but careful thought is being given to how these events can be made more effective at conveying key National Park messages to our key target audiences next year. **(U3)**
- The mobile information and interpretation unit (the National Park Explorer) has been operational since mid August, providing the Authority with an excellent 'platform' from which to engage with local people and visitors. Partnership events, local fairs and a range of different car parks have all proved ideal venues and the response from members of the public, and partner organisations who have contributed staff assistance, has been positive. **(U3)**
- Local Information Points have opened in Brockenhurst (Best Sellers bookshop), Beaulieu (Abbey Stores and Post Office) and Burley (Forest Tea House). Leaflet racks, awareness panels and

local maps are on display and exterior signage is being arranged. **(U3)**

- Three more education factsheets are at the printers, bringing the total to 16, covering all aspects of the National Park. **(U4)**
- The leaflet, poster and postcard specifically to promote the Park's special qualities were promoted in the latest edition of the Park Life newsletter. **(A1, U3)**
- Work to test the usability of the National Park website has been completed and is starting to inform development of the site. **(A1)**
- The Funzone on the website has a new Forest Quiz and some downloadable colouring sheets, and we are considering how to make planning and development control issues interesting and fun for children! **(U4)**
- The National Park Authority stand at the New Forest Show in July welcomed more than 5,000 visitors over the three days and won two awards. **(A1, U3)**

7 Partnership working

- The cost of replacing the very large shield-shaped signs located at the start of high-risk routes with new animal accident warning signs is being assessed with a view to trialing them on the B3054 Lymington to Dibden Purlieu road, as part of the wider sign rationalisation programme on this pilot route. **(U3)**
- The first phase of improvements to the New Forest Centre, reflecting its new focus on the National Park, is nearly complete. The main current thrust is the development of a new website. **(U3)**
- A tour, with partners, of sites where the feeding of ponies is a particular issue has resulted in a range of proposals to reduce the problem. **(U3)**
- The joint RSPB, Forestry Commission, Carnyx Films and National Park 'Aren't Birds Brilliant! *in the New Forest*' project ran at the Reptile Centre until the end of August. It attracted nearly 19,000 people (more people than last year) and again promoted strong ground nesting bird messages alongside the drama of nesting birds of goshawks and hobbies. **(U3)**
- Continuing education work includes the New Forest Outdoor Science Project, which we hope will expand to include all New Forest secondary schools this year, an early years initiative and a sustainability charter for education providers. **(U4)**
- Officers continue to liaise with New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission to find ways of reducing the amount of litter in the New Forest. **(U3)**
- Work is under way to produce autumn edition of *New Forest Today* magazine jointly with New Forest District Council and the Forestry

Commission and the 2009 edition of *Forest Focus* jointly with the Forestry Commission. **(A1, U3)**

- A progress report on work on the EUROPARC Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas will be presented to the December meeting. A recent meeting with New Forest District Council helped to shape their emerging Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. **(SE1)**

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. Issues arising from the draft Park Plan and the draft Recreation Management Strategy have prompted scores of detailed media enquiries during the consultation process. **(A1, U3)**

Planning Policy

9 Corporate Plan

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

- The Authority was represented at the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Officer Project Panel meeting in Winchester on 19 June. This officer meeting discussed the timetable for the production of the Minerals Plan, the Waste Management Plan; and the current consultation from SEERA on the sub-regional aggregates apportionment. Progress on the Hampshire Minerals Plan has been delayed due to the necessity to undertake a review of the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy. This is in part due to the partially successful legal challenge on the Core Strategy in September that has resulted in a number of policies and supporting text being 'quashed'.
- Staff are amending the Authority's Local Development Scheme partly as a result of the recent publication of the revised Planning Policy Statement 12 (Local Spatial Planning) and the associated Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, which have introduced significant changes to the Plan making process. The scheme also now reflects a number of changes to the Authority's programme for preparation of local development documents, including the decision to prepare the Core Strategy in tandem with the National Park Management Plan. Changes to the Minerals and Waste documents requires liaison with Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils over the timetabling of the joint documents. The draft Local Development Scheme will be

submitted to the Government Office for the South East in the autumn for approval.

- In August the draft National Park Plan was published for a ten week period of consultation. Copies have been made available at South Efford House, via the Authority's website, at local district/borough council offices and libraries. To date over 1500 copies of the draft Plan have been posted to statutory bodies, individuals and other consultees for comment and there have been over 22,300 downloads from the website.
- Officers and members from the National Park Authority and New Forest District Council (NFDC) met in July, and again in September, to discuss the development of the District's Core Strategy and the Authority's National Park Plan, to ensure the respective Plans are complementary wherever possible. The September meeting also considered the response to the Government's Proposed Changes to the draft South East Plan. The Authority is concerned at the Government's proposal for an annual housing requirement for the New Forest National Park and will be responding to the Government in due course.
- The team's work in September has focussed on the on-going consultation for the draft National Park Plan, responding to queries and logging responses as they come in.

10 Other work

- The Authority responded to the Test Valley Borough Council draft Cycle Strategy and Network Supplementary Planning Document, supporting the proposal for an additional cycle link between Test Valley and the New Forest National Park via West Wellow. The proposed route runs adjacent to the National Trust's Foxbury Plantation, where a number of off-road cycle routes are proposed.
- Senior National Park Authority officers met Christchurch Borough Council and the operators of Bournemouth Airport on 18 July as part of the regular liaison meetings. The airport's expansion plans were discussed, as well as their noise monitoring arrangements. The next meeting is timetabled for November 2008.
- Policy and Plans staff were present at the Authority's New Forest Show stand to deal with queries including the Authority's proposed future planning policies for the area and the impacts of airport expansion on the National Park.
- The Government's decision on which planning policies within the New Forest District Local Plan First Alterations (2005) will be 'saved' and remain in force was received during August. All of the New Forest policies remain and will be used to make decisions on

planning applications until replaced through the Local Development Framework.

- Work has continued on the preparation of the 'State of the Park Report'.
- The Authority was represented at a public meeting held in Copythorne on 26 August to discuss the possible development of local needs affordable housing on a small site within Cadnam. Over 100 members of the public were in attendance, as well as officers from New Forest District Council.
- Policy and Plans staff were present at the Forestry Commission's Open Day at Wilverley on 29 August to deal with any planning queries.
- The Authority was represented at the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Planning Officers' Group meeting at the beginning of September, where the Government's proposed changes to the South East Plan were discussed.
- The Policy and Plans team was represented at the Saltmarsh Conference, organised by the Solent Protection Society in Beaulieu. The conference looked at coastal change in the Solent and was useful for the coastal/climate change policies in the draft National Park Plan.
- The Authority was represented at officer and member level at the Dorset and South Wiltshire Planning and Transportation Liaison Committee, held in Poole on 22 September. The meeting discussed the Government's proposed changes to the South West Plan, which increased the level of development proposed in the Bournemouth – Poole – Christchurch area.
- Staff in the Policy and Plans team attended the seminar on the recently updated Planning Policy Statement 12 (Local Spatial Planning), organised by the Government Office for the South East in Guildford.
- The Authority wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport urging her to endorse the recommendations in the Pilling Report reviewing the Civil Aviation Authority. The Authority commends the recommendation for the Government to update their guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority on environmental considerations.

11 Development Control

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

Planning applications: received 96. Applications were registered within three working days following receipt.

Planning decisions: 108 issued, of which 82 were approved (76%) and 25 were refused (24%). Eight applications were withdrawn. Nine (8%) of these decisions were made by the Planning Committee at the meeting held on 17 June.

83% 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: 342 at 30 June, compared with 340 at 31 May.

Appeals: Four new appeals received this month. There were four appeal decisions in June. All four appeals were dismissed.

Enforcement: 42 new enforcement cases were registered in June and 48 cases were closed. There were 273 outstanding enforcement cases at the end of the month. Three enforcement notices were served during June.

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

Planning applications: received 90. Applications were registered within three working days following receipt.

Planning decisions: 89 issued, of which 72 were approved (81%) and 16 were refused (18%). Eleven applications were withdrawn. Six (7%) of these decisions were made by the Planning Committee at the meeting held on 22 July.

91% of householder applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 80%); and 89% of minor applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 65%).

Live planning applications: 338 at 31 July, compared with 342 at 30 June.

Appeals: Ten new appeals received this month. There were five appeal decisions in July. Three were dismissed and two allowed.

Enforcement: 61 new enforcement cases were registered in July and 42 cases were closed. There were 292 outstanding enforcement cases at the end of the month. Two enforcement notices were served during July.

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

Planning applications: received 93. Applications were registered within three working days following receipt.

Planning decisions: 87 issued, of which 71 were approved (82%) and 16 were refused (18%). Six applications were withdrawn. Six (7%) of these decisions were made by the Planning Committee at the meeting held on 19 August 2008.

88% of householder applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 80%); and 82% of minor applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 65%).

Live planning applications: 346 at 31 August, compared with 342 at 31 July.

Appeals: Seven new appeals received this month. There were six appeal decisions in August. Five appeals were dismissed, one allowed.

Enforcement: 46 new enforcement cases were registered in August and 54 cases were closed. There were 277 outstanding enforcement cases at the end of the month. No enforcement notices were served during August.

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

Planning applications: received 89. Applications were registered within three working days following receipt.

Planning decisions: 80 issued, of which 63 were approved (79%) and 17 were refused (21%). Four applications were withdrawn. Six (7%) of these decisions were made by the Planning Committee at the meeting held on 16 September 2008.

86% of householder applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 80%); and 62% of minor applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 65%).

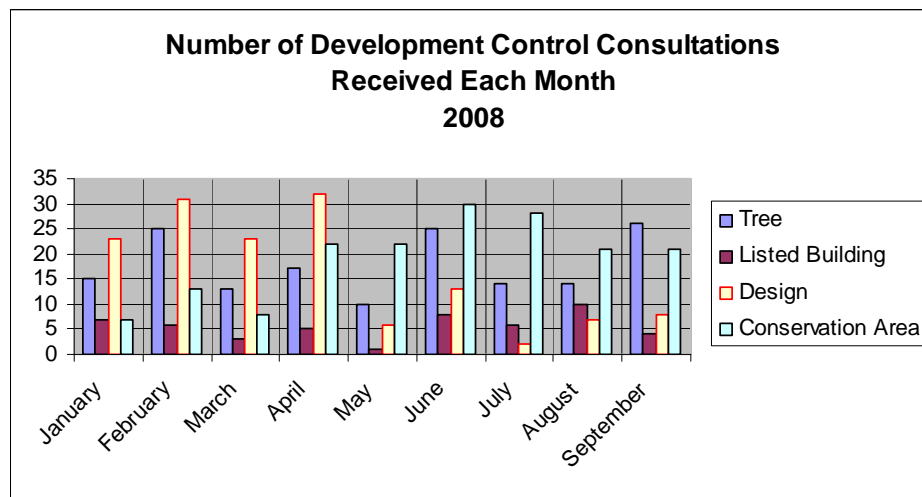
Live planning applications: 359 at 30 September, compared with 346 at 31 August.

Appeals: Six new appeals received this month. There was one appeal decision in September which was dismissed and one appeal was withdrawn.

Enforcement: 49 new enforcement cases were registered in September and 44 cases were closed. There were 279 outstanding enforcement cases at the end of the month. One Enforcement Notice and one Temporary Stop Notice were served during September.

12 Environmental Design

- The team was consulted by Development Control on 76 applications during June, 53 of which were returned within the 21 day target. **(Corporate Plan Objective A5, C7)**
- The team was consulted by Development Control on 50 applications during July, 36 of which were returned within the 21 day target. **(Corporate Plan Objective A5, C7)**
- The team was consulted by Development Control on 52 applications during August, 30 of which were returned within the 21 day target. **(Corporate Plan Objective A5, C7)**
- The team was consulted by Development Control on 59 applications during September, 36 of which were returned within the 21 day target. There are 17 still live and in time. **(Corporate Plan Objective A5, C7)**



- Twelve tree work applications were registered during June and 18 determined, 100% of which within the eight week target date. Three Tree Preservation Orders were made.
- Twenty eight tree work applications were registered during July and 17 determined, 98% of which within the eight week target date. Two Tree Preservation Orders were made.
- Thirty six tree work applications were registered during August and 16 determined, 100% of which within the eight week target date. One Tree Preservation Order was made.
- Thirty five tree work applications were registered during September and 38 determined. 100% were determined within the 8 week target date. Four Tree Preservation Orders were made.

- In February 2008 the Authority served two Building Preservation Notices on two traditional thatched cottages in Hyde Parish. The Department for Culture Media and Sport has confirmed that these two buildings, Thatched Cottage and The Cottage, Ogden's, Hyde, Fordingbridge, have now been added to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.
- Work still continues on the Acolaid planning system in respect of tree preservation orders and managing tree work applications. As the system has been steadily developed over many months a full overview of all operational processes and procedures for tree work applications has been undertaken and some changes are being made. **(Corporate Plan Objective A1)**
- A normal reactive service continues to be provided in respect of general enquiries and planning, listed building consent and tree work applications, providing advice on trees and listed buildings and building design.
- 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 now moves on to look at the boundaries of the existing conservation areas inherited by the National Park Authority and produce character appraisals for these areas. The first three areas to be reviewed, Lyndhurst, Swan Green and Bank, are set out in a separate report for this meeting. Review of the next three conservation areas, Beaulieu, Bucklers Hard and Exbury is now underway and details of proposed boundary changes will be on display at Beaulieu Abbey Church Hall on 9 October and copies of the draft character appraisals will be available.
- A framework for conservation area management has been developed. Responses to the consultation on the draft Conservation Area Management Plan, approved by the Authority in May, are reported as a separate item for this meeting.
- Work is continuing on the preparation of a draft Building Design Guide, for consultation later in the year. **(Corporate Plan Objective A4)**
- Work is continuing on a project to identify the ancient/veteran tree resource in the Park to formulate methods for future strategic management of the resource and engagement with stakeholders. A pilot survey is planned to begin by the end of December for a limited number of sites and this will be undertaken using volunteer rangers co-ordinated by the Forestry Commission. The data gathered will be submitted to the Ancient Tree Hunt and copied to the Authority for distribution as required to other key stakeholders.

13 **Member Services**

- The Member Services section has been involved in facilitating preparations for Authority and committee meetings, providing committee and member support and following up on actions arising from meetings, as well as monitoring complaints and Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests received by the Authority. The section held a meeting with Sue Kilbride, Senior Solicitor, Hampshire County Council on dealing with requests received under the Environmental Information Regulations.
- Member Services also provides support to the New Forest Consultative Panel, and facilitated meetings of the Panel on 10 July and 4 September 2008.
- The team has completed the binding of signed copies of Authority and committee minute books. Member Services have assisted in the setting up of the Peer Review and assisted the Internal Audit team in their audit of Committee structures and reporting and ethics. The revised Authority yearbook, containing updated information pages and diary pages for 2009, will be published shortly.
- The team were involved in organising several training events and meetings for members including Code of Conduct briefing on 21 October and the setting up of a joint members' meeting with Christchurch Borough Council on 14 October.

Corporate Services

15 **Business Support**

- Partnership working with New Forest District Council has enabled the Authority to negotiate fuel supply and servicing through the District Council's depot.
- The number of calls received by the Authority switchboard has increased steadily since July and is now 64% higher at 490 calls per month.

16 **Human resources**

- As of 30 September 2008 there are 70 members of staff or 64.7 full time equivalents, of whom 12 are part-time and 11 are on a fixed term contract.
 - Carolyn Hoole, Administration Assistant in Member Services left the Authority on 4 July to move to Sandhurst. We wish her well in her new job with the World Wildlife Fund.

- George Trevelyan, Finance and Performance Manager, Corporate Services left the Authority on 29 August and will be working part time for the European Commission. We are grateful to George for his work in helping to set up the organisation and its systems.
- John Ward, Director of Strategy and Planning retired from the Authority on 30 September. We are grateful to John for bringing his extensive knowledge and working experience of the New Forest to our work, particularly on strategic planning, and wish him well in his retirement.
- Recruitment began for a Senior Administrative Assistant in Planning Administration and for the new role of System Support Officer in ICT.
- Andy Brennan joined the Authority on 11 August as the Seasonal Mobile Unit Ranger.
- Sue Palma joined us on 15 September 2008 as Education Officer on a fixed term contract to cover Amanda Elmes' maternity leave.
- Richard Lemon joined the Authority on 1 October as Director of Strategy and Planning, joining us from the Government Office for the South East.

17 ICT

- Kristin Leimer has been working with us on GIS projects, including working with the Verderers on a project to map commoning backup grazing land. Kristin was with the Authority for four weeks of this in September on a short internship. This has been successful trial of the new student placement scheme run by the Education Officer and both the Authority's staff and Kristin gained from the experience and the sharing of knowledge.
- A scheduled upgrade for the IDOX system raised several issues which the supplier and the Authority's ICT team have now managed to resolve. The delay in installing the upgrade has impacted on the scheduled date for the document management pilot which will now commence in November.
- To support the ICT replacement plan the Authority has introduced a disposal policy that will maximise the recycling of equipment and will hopefully help to support some of the Authority's partners by giving them first call on redundant equipment.
- Historic planning information from Salisbury District has now been fully integrated into the Authority's GIS system.

18 Finance and performance

- The District Auditor presented her Annual Governance Report and draft audit letter to the Resources And Performance Committee on 10 September. For the first time the Authority received an unqualified opinion. This indicates that all the key systems and policy and procedures are in place and being operated effectively. A significant achievement within the first two years of operation.
- The financial management arrangements put in place on 15 May are working well with partnership working across Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council. A final review will be presented to Resources and Performance Committee members in December for a decision on whether to extend the period of the current Service level agreement after April 2009.
- The Authority has been undergoing a Peer Review, equivalent to the National Park Authorities Performance Assessment, and the external Peer Review team visited the New Forest from 1-3 October meeting over a hundred people including staff, partners and stakeholders. Initial informal feedback from the Peer Review team was very positive and acknowledged in particular the passion and dedication of all the Authority's staff.

Recommendation

To note the report.