

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 25 JUNE 2009

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Report by: Lindsay Cornish, Chief Executive

Summary:

This report covers the period since the last Authority meeting on 28 May 2009 except planning development control and enforcement which covers activity in May.

Recommendation:

To note the report

Paper:

NFNPA 304/09: Cover paper

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NFNPA 304/09

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- 1 This report covers the period since the last Authority meeting on 28 May 2009 except planning development control and enforcement which covers activity in May.

Members

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

- Access Forum, 1 June
- Recreation Management Strategy Group, 2 June
- Resources and Performance Committee, 15 June
- Planning Development Control Committee, 16 June
- Hampshire Farming Conference, 17 June
- Campaign for National Parks Trustees' meeting, 24 June

- 3 Forthcoming activities include:

- Meeting with Desmond Swayne, MP, 26 June
- Photo shoot with representatives from the RSPB, 26 June
- New Forest Consultative Panel meeting, 2 July
- English National Park Authorities' Association Chairs pre-meeting, Balloch, 2 July
- English National Park Authorities' Association AGM, Balloch, 2 July
- UK Association of National Park Authorities Executive AGM and Meeting, Balloch, 3 July
- South East England Partnership Board briefing workshop, 9 July
- North Solent Shoreline Management Plan Elected Members Group, 9 July
- Hampshire Rural Forum, 10 July
- Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing, 14 July
- Campaign for National Parks meeting, 15 July
- Planning Development Control Committee, 21 July
- North Solent Shoreline Management Plan members working group, 22 July
- National Parks Week, 27 July
- New Forest Show, 28-30 July
- Planning Development Control Committee, 18 August

- New Forest Consultative Panel meeting, 3 September
- New Forest Local Access Forum meeting, 7 September
- Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing, 9 September
- Exmoor Development Control Tour, 10 September
- Planning Development Control Committee, 15 September
- Association of National Park Authorities induction course, 15-17 September
- English National Park Authorities' Association meeting, 23 September
- Association of National Park Authorities conference, Llandudno, 23-25 September.

DELIVERY OF NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development

4 Partnership working Funding

- Officers attended the Local Action Group meeting to provide feedback on the potential LEADER applicants that had been provided with development advice and on those with applications being appraised.
- A meeting was held with the New Forest Livestock Society and the New Forest Trust about the Beaulieu Road Sales Yard project to discuss progress regarding the phase 2 improvements.
- The External Funding Officer provided funding advice and assistance, including some match-funding to a number of community groups including the Woodgreen Community Shop and Milford Community Centre. She also circulated a funding update to staff, partner organisations and community groups.

5 Corporate Plan

Landscape (C1)

- In addition to casework, landscape advice was given to the Foxbury Plantation Farm Environment Plan, detailing historic and current landscape character and type.
- A visit was made with the Hampshire Gardens Trust Research Group to Notherwood House, Lyndhurst to increase knowledge of gardens of historic houses with a guide explaining the history of the house and garden.
- Work on developing a draft Landscape Strategy is continuing and plans for a series of public consultation events in the autumn are being prepared.

Archaeology (C6)

- The Archaeologist has organised a tour of New Forest medieval church and church sites for the Hampshire Field Club in the autumn that he will be leading. He has also organised an autumn tour of the recent woodland archaeological survey at Roydon woods for the Countryside Committee of the Association of local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO).
- A meeting was attended to discuss the historic environment and other implications of the proposed replacement cross Solent electricity cable to the West of Lepe Country Park. A meeting was also held to review the History Environment data sets required for the Higher Level Stewardship of the Farm Environment Plans.
- The Authority's Archaeologist undertook a routine site visit and monitoring work at Buckland Rings as required by English Heritage. The minor development work as expected provided no archaeological information.
- A lecture was given on the natural and cultural heritage of the New Forest National Park to the Friends of Michlemersh Church at their Annual General Meeting.

Maritime Archaeology Project

- The Maritime Archaeology Project Officer has now started work with the Authority and the project is moving forward fairly rapidly. In preparation for the tendering process the boundaries for the Desk-Based survey are being finalised and the Project Design has been updated for circulation. The process of finalising documents for the creation of a steering group to provide advice throughout the project is underway.

Building Conservation and Design (C7)

- Work is continuing on the first conservation area specific management plan which will be for the Western Escarpment conservation area.
- Work is continuing on the preparation of a draft Building Design Guide, for consultation in 2009. **(Corporate Plan Objective A4).**
- The Authority was represented at a conference on Sustainability and Historic Buildings organised by the Chartered Institute of Building. This provided a useful insight into a number of sustainability matters such as the use of renewable energy, the implications of Part L of the Building Regulations which is currently being revised (Building Regulations Approved Document Part L, Conservation of Fuel and Power) and planning for the impacts of climate change.

- The Authority was represented at the annual National Parks' Historic Environment conference attended by building conservation and archaeology officers from most of the National Parks in England and Wales. This provides a useful opportunity to understand and debate the issues facing many of the parks in this field and to look at opportunities for joint working.

Traffic, transport and tourism (U2)

- Officers met the Lymington to Brockenhurst Community Rail Partnership Officer to discuss joint working opportunities. The Authority is currently working with the partnership on a map board which will be sighted outside Brockenhurst Railway Station which will help to promote healthy activities in and around the village.
- The Transport Officer also met Hampshire County Council's New Forest Highways Manager to discuss a number of matters including planned highway maintenance schemes, the use of temporary cattle grids, the A326 and edge repair trials.
- Planning continues for the introduction of the New Forest Tour on 20 June. Key activities in May included:
 - hosting a meeting of the New Forest Tour Steering Group
 - briefing Visitor Information Centre Staff on arrangements for 2009
 - arranging for effective distribution of 60,000 promotional leaflets
 - testing a revised New Forest Tour commentary for 2009
 - performing a risk assessment on the proposed route
 - producing the New Forest Tour Official Guide, a publication given to all customers to enhance their understanding and experience of the New Forest.

U6 Access

- Officers attended a conference about 'Managing Dogs in the Countryside'.
- The Access Officer has made site visits to Brockenhurst to advise on a forthcoming Small Grants Scheme application to renew the existing path surfacing at Culverley Green, and to Sway to advise on rights of way issues.
- The Access Officer also represented the Authority at the Forest Fun Day and Doggie Fun Day events.

Sustainable development (SE1)

New Forest Marque

- The New Forest Marque Manager, Sarah Richards, has now completed her move to work from the Authority's offices at South Efford.
- Simon Howlett, Chief Executive of the Fuller Smith and Turner Inns, which is one of the biggest supporters of the New Forest Marque, took time to tour some local farms and outlets which supply produce to their pubs in the New Forest. The tour included visits to:
 - Tatchbury Manor Farm – supplying pigs, ducks and chickens
 - the Kitchen Garden Company – Exbury supplying herb and salad pots plus strawberry baskets for the pubs
 - Beaulieu Chocolate Studio – supplying Honey truffles, chocolate leaves, new forest bark
 - Mange-to go – supplying desserts
 - the Pilgrims Inn (Fullers) held their official opening and provided a buffet completely from New Forest Marque produce. Each of the Fullers pubs highlight their menu with the Marque sign for any of the dishes they provide.
- Two new members joined the Marque this month.
- The project supported the ADAS Small Pig Management course at Sparsholt. 15 people attended the course of which 10 were New Forest Marque members.
- The preparation of newsletters for the public and members is underway.

Other Sustainable Development activities

- Some time has been spent supporting applicants to the New Forest Rural Development Programme England (LEADER) programme under the sustainable community facilities measure.
- Officers have been working with colleagues in Natural England and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to review and revise arrangements for the provision of land management advice in the National Park.

Sustainable Development Fund

- A variety of meetings has been held this month to go through the grant agreements with recently funded projects. Meetings were also held with potential projects to aid their development. Several

meetings took place to develop further the biomass heating system project at Lyndhurst Community Centre and identify a local fuel source.

Information and Visitor Services

6 Corporate Plan

- The National Park Explorer mobile unit continues to be well-used at venues around the National Park both at events and in its own right and officers have led and attended a range of additional public events, both inland and on the coast. **(U3)**
- Our contact with students continues to grow, both in school and out in the Forest providing excellent opportunities to celebrate the special qualities of the National Park as well as highlight behavioural issues such as litter. **(U4)**
- Work continues in preparing interpretative material about World War II, including audio-trails, for the website. **(U3)**
- Initial educational work has started on the Maritime Archaeology Project with text being prepared for the website and a leaflet and contact being made with a range of potential partners. **(U3)**
- Preparations are well under way for the Authority's stand at the 2009 New Forest Show with a theme of 'who's who in the New Forest'. **(A1)**
- The spring/summer edition of *Park Life* was published on the website at the beginning of June **(A1)**
- Officers continue analysis of the consultation responses received about the draft Recreation Management Strategy. A workshop was held on 2 June; this provided useful feedback from a range of stakeholders which will be used to inform options for revisions and improvements. **(U1)**

7 Partnership working

- The summer edition of *New Forest Today* magazine is being produced jointly with New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission **(A1, U3)**
- Work to support a funding bid to SEEDA for a sustainable tourism project continues. If successful the project will promote sustainable tourism across nine South East Protected Landscapes, linked to the special qualities of each. The bid has the support of New Forest District Council Tourism Service and the New Forest Tourism Association. **(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. **(A1, U3)**
- Installation of signs marking railway stations as gateways to the New Forest National Park is under way. The signs will appear at all four stations within the Park – Brockenhurst, Sway, Beaulieu Road and Ashurst. The signs complement the National Park's boundary markers and aim to give a sense of arrival and identity for those travelling by train. They also help to convey a 'green transport' message: the New Forest is one of the most accessible National Parks by train, giving the opportunity for visitors to leave their cars at home. **(A1, U3)**

Planning Policy

9 Corporate Plan

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

- During May, the Policy and Plans team completed the schedule of meetings with Parish Councils, with the North East Parish Council Quadrant meeting taking place on 5 May in Bramshaw. Notes from all of the meetings held with the Town and Parish Councils, ward councillors and the five National Park Plan Working Groups have been circulated to participants for agreement and placed on the Authority's website. The background papers for the working groups are also available online.
- The team also hosted an informal session with Authority members on 28 May to discuss some of the key areas in the Plan where an early steer from members was sought. This will allow the team to start revising the Plan over the next few months.
- The regular Joint Members' Advisory Group meeting, with members and officers from the National Park Authority and New Forest District Council, took place at South Efford House on 27 May. The meeting focused on the District Council's consultation comments on the draft National Park Plan, as well as the Authority's involvement in the New Forest District Core Strategy Examination in Public.
- The Key Partners' Steering Group met on 15 May at Queen's House, Lyndhurst, to discuss the draft National Park Plan.

10 Other work

- The Authority was represented at the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) Green Infrastructure Workshop held at the Winchester Guildhall on 6 May. The South Hampshire planning authorities are looking to develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy to support the development proposed in the sub-region in the recently adopted South East Plan.
- Nick Evans met Tom Bray – representing the South Wiltshire Area Board on 26 May to discuss arrangements with the new Wiltshire Council.
- The National Park Authority was invited to participate in six of the ten hearing sessions timetabled for the New Forest District Core Strategy Examination in Public. The Examination started on 2 June and lasted for two weeks.

11 Development Control

During May the Development Control unit carried out the following work:

Planning applications: received 99. Applications were registered within three working days following receipt.

Planning decisions: 70 issued, of which 52 were approved (74%) and 18 were refused (26%). Seven applications were withdrawn. Two (3%) of these decisions were made by the Planning Committee at the meeting held on 19 May 2009.

98% of householder applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 80%); and 90% of minor applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 65%).

Live planning applications: 304 at 31 May, compared with 278 at 30 April.

Appeals: Five new appeals received this month. There were two appeal decisions in May, one was dismissed and one was allowed with conditions.

Enforcement: 55 new enforcement cases were registered in May and 62 cases were closed. There were 355 outstanding enforcement cases at the end of the month. No Enforcement Notices were served during May.

The tree team received 24 consultations from Development Control in respect of trees on development sites. 19 consultations were returned within the 21 day target. **(Corporate Plan Objective A5, C7)**

Twenty nine tree work applications were registered and 38 determined. The target for determining applications is 80% within 8 weeks of registration. 98% were determined within the 8 week target date. No Tree Preservation Orders were made.

12 **Member Services**

- The Member Services section has been involved in providing support to meetings of the Authority and its Committees, and followed up on actions arising from these meetings and also actions arising from the recent disability and equality assessment of a Planning Development Control Committee meeting held at South Efford House. The team has been involved in preparations for the annual Authority meeting, in particular work towards the re-appointment of committees and external representatives. Member Services also facilitates meetings of the New Forest Consultative Panel.
- The team has been monitoring and assisting with responses to complaints and requests received under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations, as well as the Data Protection Act. Member Services has recently presented a report on information requests to the Resources and Performance Committee.
- The Authority's new members have now received Code of Conduct training and induction materials. The team is now looking into the re-appointment of the independent members of the Standards Committee, which falls due later this year.
- The section has held a meeting with IT to arrange for the design of a system in Sharepoint to handle requests for information, similar to the new system for complaints handling which has been a great success. The team are also hoping to acquire a committee management system to assist with the production of meeting reports, agendas and minutes and are working with the IT team on this.

Corporate Services

13 **Human resources**

As of 25 June 2009 there are 75 members of staff or 68.83 full time equivalents, of whom 15 are part-time and 10 are on a fixed-term contract, 2.5 of whom are supported through external funding.

- In June, Katie Crabb ended her secondment as interim Head of Performance and Administration. Katie has returned to Hampshire County Council and we are very grateful for all the work Katie completed during her time with us.

- Hélène Rossiter joined the Authority on 8 June 2009 as Head of Performance and Administration. Hélène joins us from the private sector.

14 **ICT**

- Work continues on developing the consultations section of the Microsoft SharePoint system for trials with the Recreation Management Strategy.(A1)
- Blue Chip have been selected as consultants to work with the Authority to refresh the ICT Services strategy. They will be meeting the Management Board and other key users during June with a view to producing a report back to Management Board in July. (A1)

15 **Finance and performance**

- Work on the Authority's Corporate Plan for 2009/10 was completed and is for approval as a separate Agenda item.
- Similarly work on closing the 2008/09 Accounts, on revising the 2009/10 Budget and revising the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders as to Contracts was completed and are separate Agenda items; together with proposals for provision of Legal Services to the Authority.

16 **Accommodation**

Separate Agenda item.

Recommendation

To note the report.