

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2008 AT 09.30 HOURS AT BROCKENHURST VILLAGE HALL

Present:

Members

Clive Chatters (Chairman)

Susan Achmatowicz

Peter Frost

Tony Gentle

Ted Johnson

Clive Maton

Bob Morris

Vicky Myers

Alan Rice

Barry Rickman

John Sanger

Stan Wade

Pat Wyeth

Officers

Lindsay Cornish, Kevin Gardner (Monitoring Officer), Paul Carey Kent (Chief Finance Officer), John Ward, Steve Trotter, Barry Holland, Martin O'Neill, Nigel Matthews, Chris Gregory, Claire Gingell, John Clements, David Stone, Rosalind Alderman and Carolyn Hoole.

Other attendees

Colonel Peter Sweet.

PART I – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

87. Apologies for absence

87.1 Lee Dunsdon, Diana Halford, Roger Heape, Maureen Holding, Leo Randall and Alan Weeks.

88. Declarations of interest

88.1 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, Wiltshire County Council, Test Valley Borough Council and New Forest District Council would have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 96 (Signage and Animal Reduction Strategies for the New Forest National Park) as these authorities had a responsibility for traffic and transport matters. Members of New Forest District Council would also have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 97 (Arrangements for tourism in the New Forest and EUROPARC, European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas). Members declared their interests in accordance with this guidance. In addition, Alan Rice declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 97 as the Hampshire County Council representative on Tourism South East and Pat Wyeth declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 96 as Chairman of the New Forest Road Safety Committee.

- 88.2 Vicky Myers declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 99 (Response to the Forestry Commission's consultation on the Crown Lands Management Plan) as an employee of the Forestry Commission.

89. Chairman's announcements

- 89.1 The Chairman announced that there would be a Part II session to the meeting. The date of the next meeting of the Authority had been altered to Wednesday 26 March 2008. The minerals briefing session that was originally scheduled to follow the current meeting had been postponed, and would now follow the Authority meeting in March.

90. Minutes of meeting on 24 January 2008

- 90.1 The minutes of the meeting on 24 January 2008 were agreed as a true record.
- 90.2 Ted Johnson asked whether the conservation area designations that had been made at the January meeting (minute item 82) took immediate effect from that date. Lindsay Cornish said that she believed this was the case, but would confirm the information and advise members accordingly.

91. Public Question Time

- 91.1 Colonel Peter Sweet spoke as a commoner, asking that before it designated further Conservation Areas in the West of the Forest the Authority take measures to protect ancient sites such as Waters Green in Brockenhurst, which was especially useful in providing excellent grazing for stock. This land was currently under the management of the Forestry Commission, but nothing had so far been done to prevent the destruction of the grazing through cars parking on the verge of the Old Ringwood Road by Baker and Spencer's garage.
- 91.2 The Chairman responded that others had raised concerns regarding the parking situation; he would ask officers to consider whether anything could be done and to respond to Colonel Sweet in writing.

92. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Sub-Regional Improvement Partnership: National Park representative on Improvement Board

- 92.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 231/02) and explained that Susan Achmatowicz was no longer able to undertake this role. Susan Achmatowicz gave an overview of the Board's purposes and the commitment that would be required, emphasising that the meetings were of real interest and benefit. Tony Gentle, who was currently the Authority's reserve representative, then volunteered to undertake the role.

Resolved: That the Authority appoint Tony Gentle as its representative on the sub-regional Improvement Board for the period until the next Annual Meeting of the Authority in June 2008.

Voting: none voting against

93. Chief Executive's Report

- 93.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 232/08), noting that in addition to the list of members' commitments set out at page 3 of the report, Ted Johnson had also attended a meeting of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association on 25 January and with regard to the list of forthcoming commitments a meeting of the Bournemouth Airport Consultative Committee

would take place on 13 March; it was not clear whether Roger Heape, the Authority's representative on the Panel, would be able to attend this meeting and a volunteer might be sought.

93.2 The Chief Executive said she would report back to members on the following points:

- (a) John Sanger asked for an update on the Living Register project that had been reported to members previously;
- (b) Susan Achmatowicz asked for the names of the new representatives on the New Forest Access Forum;
- (c) Pat Wyeth said that she had requested IT training and access to the Authority's IT facilities, and asked whether members could be given access to the Authority's Intranet as part of the scheme; and
- (d) Ted Johnson asked that officers ensure that the Authority maximised any positive publicity in connection with awards made under the Sustainable Development Fund.

93.3 Members then noted the report.

94. Oral report from the Resources and Performance Committee

94.1 Susan Achmatowicz, Deputy Chairman of the Resources and Performance Committee, updated members on matters dealt with at the last meeting of the Committee on 31 January 2008, the minutes for this meeting having been circulated with the Authority agenda. She explained that the Committee's major project recently had been the draft financial strategy covering the next three years, to be discussed under the next agenda item. She congratulated the Chief Executive and officers on the better than expected Defra funding settlement that had been achieved for the forthcoming three year period.

94.2 Members noted the report.

95. Draft Financial Strategy 2008/09 – 2010/11

95.1 Paul Carey-Kent, the Authority's Chief Finance Officer, introduced the report (NFNPA 233/08), which set out the Authority's proposed financial strategy until 2010/2011. Fulfilment of the Authority's long term ambitions would require approximately £700,000 per year more than its forecast income, and the Committee would continue to look at ways to generate greater income or how efficiencies could be achieved. In response to an earlier query, he explained that the Authority had budgeted for the increasing life expectancy which would affect its ongoing pensions liability.

95.2 It was agreed that officers would consider whether the Authority was in a position to charge a greater amount for processing planning applications. John Sanger said the Committee should look in particular at whether the Authority would generate more income as a result of its increased enforcement activity, and whether the new compliance officer post could pay for itself; and also that where the Authority received a second planning application where an initial one had been rejected for being incorrect or incomplete, the Authority should ensure that all applicable fees had been collected.

Resolved: That the draft Financial Strategy for 2008/09 – 2010/11 be approved.

Voting: none voting against

96. Signage and Animal Accident Reduction Strategies for the New Forest National Park

96.1 Nigel Matthews introduced the report (NFNPA 234/08). Peter Frost congratulated Nigel Matthews and his team on the draft signage strategy, and also Hampshire County Council which had been of assistance in trialling the removal of many redundant signs. He added that it was to be regretted that some other organisations had not yet embraced the strategy wholeheartedly, and much remained to be done.

96.2 Alan Rice said that some of the existing signage was excessively reflective and presented a traffic hazard to motorists. Ted Johnson commended the report and pointed out two minor typographical errors in the references given to particular roads.

96.3 Members debated the option of introducing more fencing of roads to reduce animal accidents but it was emphasised that additional fencing was not Authority policy. John Sanger remarked that he would like to see quantifiable evidence as to the efficacy of animal accident reduction mechanisms, such as speed indication devices and reflective collars, with a clearer picture of which mechanisms actually worked as the basis for the Animal Accident Reduction Strategy and Action Plan. The Action Plan needed a tighter focus, with clear monitoring of outcomes.

Resolved:

1 That the Signage Strategy be approved and its adoption by other organisations be recommended.

2 That the Animal Accident Reduction Strategy be noted.

3 That the two action plans be noted.

4 That the proposed design for a new sign assembly to replace the large shield-shaped signs currently located at the start of routes with high animal accident rates be approved.

Voting: none voting against

97. Arrangements for tourism in the New Forest and EUROPARC, European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

97.1 Chris Gregory introduced the report (NFNPA 235/08). Members questioned the likely costs and benefits to the Authority of joint working with New Forest District Council on sustainable tourism, what it meant in practice and what it had achieved. Chris Gregory explained that the two authorities jointly funded certain projects. Lindsay Cornish said that the Authority's tourism budget was only £25,000 and the Authority was looking at how it could make a contribution to the development of sustainable tourism within the confines of this limited budget, with a clear focus on improved messages about the National Park and the need to sustain its special qualities.

- 97.2 Members debated and then voted on the question of whether the Authority should seek Charter accreditation under the EUROPARC European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, which would cost approximately £3,500. Strong arguments for and against seeking accreditation were raised.

Resolved:

- 1 That the proposed approach to the Authority's work on sustainable tourism be noted and approved.
- 2 That the Authority should seek Charter accreditation under the EUROPARC European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

Voting: 6-5 (1 abstention)

98. Proposed changes to the Sustainable Development Fund Panel

- 98.1 Barry Rickman said that he had thoroughly enjoyed his role in representing the Authority and was happy to continue to do so, or to give advice and assistance to any other member who was interested in undertaking the role. He particularly endorsed the proposal to recruit two youth members to the Panel. Claire Gingell introduced the report (NFNPA 236/08) and explained that the project was coming to the end of the first two year period of primary funding; the paper presented an informal evaluation of the Panel's operation to date and proposed a number of changes.

Resolved:

That the proposed changes to the Sustainable Development Fund Panel be approved.

Voting: none voting against

99. Response to the Forestry Commission's consultation on the Crown Lands Management Plan

- 99.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (NFNPA 237/08). Referring to paragraph 3.15 of the report, Clive Chatters requested that officers follow up the question of the appropriate assessment for the purposes of the Habitats Regulations 1995 with the competent authority, and ensure that that authority was provided with all relevant information.

Resolved:

That the proposed response contained in the submitted report be approved and the Director of Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development be authorised to respond to the Forestry Commission's consultation.

Voting: none voting against

100. Local Development Scheme – New Forest National Park Authority

- 100.1 John Clements introduced the report (NFNPA 238/08), explaining that factors such as changing Government advice and a challenging workload meant that the Authority would now need to revise its timetable for the process of producing local development documents. Officers were very aware of the need to expedite

matters to the fullest extent possible. Alan Rice asked that members be kept up to date with the progress of work undertaken and the eventual submission of a revised Scheme in the Spring.

Resolved:

- 1 That the outline timetable for local development document preparation set out in Annex 1 of paper NFNPA 238/08 be approved.
- 2 That the Director of Strategy and Planning be authorised to:
 - a) make such alterations to the programme as considered appropriate including anything arising from the forthcoming changes in the plan making system; and changes in regulations, policy and advice regarding local development frameworks expected to be brought into effect in the spring; and
 - b) submit to the Government a revised Local Development Scheme for comment.

Voting: none voting against

101. Urgent Items by the Chairman

101.1 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

Resolved: That the public be excluded from the meeting during the following item of business, as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and further that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, namely the need to avoid compromising the position of the Authority in negotiations to secure suitable long term headquarters accommodation on the most cost-effective terms obtainable.

The public and press were accordingly requested to leave the meeting.

102. Accommodation update

102.1 The Monitoring Officer reminded members that, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, information disclosed in private session is confidential. Lindsay Cornish then updated members on the position regarding long term accommodation for the Authority. (This is a summary of a minute which contains exempt information).

102.2 The developments in the search for accommodation were noted by members.

The meeting closed at 11:58 hours.

SignedDate:.....
(Chairman)