

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22 MAY 2008 AT 09.30 HOURS IN THE MEETING ROOM AT SOUTH EFFORD HOUSE, NEAR LYMINGTON

Present:

Members

Clive Chatters (Chairman)
Barry Rickman (Deputy Chairman)

Lee Dunsdon
Peter Frost
Tony Gentle (until minute item 132)
Diana Halford
Kathy Heron
Maureen Holding
Ted Johnson
Mel Kendal

Clive Maton (until minute item 128)
Bob Morris
Vicky Myers
Leo Randall
Alan Rice (until minute item 131)
Stan Wade
Alan Weeks
Pat Wyeth

Officers

Lindsay Cornish, Kevin Gardner (Monitoring Officer), John Ward, Steve Trotter, Barry Holland, Martin O'Neill, Paula Freeland, Mark Stephenson, Claire Gingell, Jim Mitchell, Karen Evans, George Trevelyan, David Stone and Rosalind Alderman.

PART I – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

120. Apologies for absence

120.1 Susan Achmatowicz, Roger Heape and Julian Johnson.

121. Declarations of interest

121.1 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 would have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 126 (Chief Executive's Report) as there were references in the report to partnership working with these bodies, and members who were connected with any organisations in receipt of funding from the Sustainable Development Fund would have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 130 (Annual Progress Report of the Sustainable Development Fund). Members declared their interests in accordance with this guidance.

121.2 In addition, Vicky Myers declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 128 (Mobile Information and Interpretation Unit) as a Forestry Commission Ranger who had been working with Authority officers to arrange the staffing of the Unit.

121.3 Mel Kendal declared a personal and prejudicial interest in minute item 127 (Oral report from the Resources and Performance Committee) as the Leader of New Forest District Council and a Trustee of the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust.

122. Chairman's announcements

- 122.1 The Chairman announced that Susan Achmatowicz had resigned from the Authority as she would be moving to Leeds for employment reasons. The Chairman thanked her for her hard work for the Authority and commended her clear focus on the Authority's purposes. The Authority would have a Secretary of State appointed member vacancy until April 2009.
- 122.2 He welcomed Tony Hams, former Chairman of the Peak District National Park Authority, to the meeting. Tony Hams would spend the rest of the day at the Authority in his capacity as the Board Member assigned by Natural England to the Authority.
- 122.3 The Chairman reminded members of the informal briefing session on the draft Recreation Management Strategy that would take place immediately following the current meeting.

123. Minutes of meeting on 26 March 2008

- 123.1 The minutes of the meeting on 26 March 2008 were agreed as a true record.

124. Public Question Time

- 124.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

125. Amendments to the Authority's Standing Orders and procedures for the local determination of member complaints

- 125.1 Kevin Gardner introduced the report (NFNPA 247/08) and explained that various changes to the Standing Orders were necessary as a result of the new provisions for the local assessment, review, investigation and determination of complaints against local authority members who were alleged to have failed to comply with the Code of Conduct. The revised Standing Orders also contained a number of further changes which were predominantly administrative.
- 125.2 He advised that one further change was proposed to the wording of Part 2 of Schedule 3 to the Standing Orders so that Authority members who were not members of the Planning Development Control Committee should have a separate speaking slot from that provided for members of the public and would not be time limited. However, where a member with a prejudicial interest wished to speak on an item he or she would be obliged to share the three minute slot with members of the public, in accordance with the provision in the new Code of Conduct allowing such a member the same rights to speak as if he or she were a member of the public.
- 125.3 He also explained that some applicants speaking at meetings of the Planning Development Control Committee had asked to be given a right of reply after any objectors had spoken, for which no provision existed in the current speaking procedures, and asked members for their views.
- 125.4 Members discussed speaking procedures at meetings of the Planning Development Control Committee and it was agreed that although the procedure contained in the revised Standing Orders would be adopted, the Authority would conduct a trial period during which public speakers in support of a particular planning application would be given a one minute right of reply. At the end of the trial period, which it was suggested should last for a minimum period of six months, the Authority would assess the practicality and appropriateness of adopting this procedure on a permanent basis. The Monitoring Officer explained that it was important that the Authority had a clear written procedure in place

during the trial period, and said that he would provide a draft procedure for members' consideration.

- 125.5 Members noted that at present the speaking slot at Planning Development Control Committee meetings for Parish Council representatives was not time limited, because when the procedures were adopted it was considered important to reassure Parish Councils that the Authority would fully consider and take into account their views on planning matters. Some members felt that this was unfair to District and County Councillors, who were currently limited to three minutes' speaking time. A proposal to limit Parish Council speakers to three minutes was duly voted on but not approved. A further proposal was made and approved that the speaking slot for District and County Councillors should not be time limited.

Resolved:

1. That Part 2 of Schedule 3 to the Authority's proposed new Standing Orders be amended so that the time allowed for District and County Councillors speaking on particular items at meetings of the Planning Development Control Committee is not limited.

Voting: 8-7

2. That, subject to the amendments agreed at the meeting, the revised version of the Authority's Standing Orders (Annex 1 to NFNPA 247/08) be approved.

Voting: unanimous

3. That Lee Dunsdon, Ted Johnson, Vicky Myers and Leo Randall be appointed as deputy members of the Standards Committee, to deputise as required for Standards Committee members who are Authority members and who are unable to participate in consideration and determination of a complaint due to conflict of interest or for any other reason.

Voting: none voting against

126. Chief Executive's Report

- 126.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 248/08), highlighting the rebranding of the New Forest Centre as a positive indication of the Authority's partnership with the museum.
- 126.2 Bob Morris congratulated officers on the Authority's excellent response to Salisbury District Council's Core Strategy consultation, referred to at the second bullet point on page 11 of the report. Leo Randall said that following a number of unfavourable responses received, Salisbury District Council would redraft the Core Strategy document and restart the entire consultation process, rather than extending the time frame of the consultation as suggested in the report. He congratulated officers on the number of decisions currently being upheld by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal.
- 126.3 Ted Johnson congratulated officers on the great success of the recent Southern National Parks Conference. Members raised concerns with the negative response from the Civil Aviation Authority to the Authority's letter asking to be involved in the operational review of the airspace changes referred to at page 11 of the report. Mel Kendal raised concerns with the Authority's decision to request Judicial Review of Christchurch Borough Council's decision to permit the expansion of Bournemouth Airport.

126.4 Members then noted the report.

127. Oral report from the Resources and Performance Committee

127.1 On behalf of Roger Heape, the Committee Chairman, the Chief Executive read out a short summary of the issues considered at the Resources and Performance Committee meeting on 14 April 2008, including the draft Corporate Plan 2008/09, an update on the New Forest Centre Association and the Mobile Information and Interpretation Unit. She reported the resignations from the Committee of Susan Achmatowicz and Mel Kendal. The Committee's Chairman had sent his thanks to both members for their impressive contributions to Committee matters; their clarity of thinking, wisdom and experience would be missed.

127.2 Referring to the discussion on the Mobile Information and Interpretation Unit, Mel Kendal advised that, following the Committee meeting, he had drafted a detailed e-mail to Authority officers on issues relevant to the alternative option he had proposed at the Committee meeting and requesting additional information on the costs of powering a mobile unit. He expressed concern that this fact had not been reported in the minutes of the Committee meeting nor in the summary report from Roger Heape.

127.3 The Chairman advised that the issue would be addressed during the debate on the following agenda item. He added that concerns regarding the accuracy of the minutes should be taken up with the Committee when the minutes were confirmed.

127.4 Members then noted the report.

128. Mobile Information and Interpretation Unit

128.1 Martin O'Neill introduced the report (Paper NFNPA 249/08). The proposed Unit would be a key element in delivering the National Park's second purpose, and would give the Authority access to people living in and visiting all areas of the Park. Unlike other national park authorities the Authority did not have an extensive ranger service or shops; so a small mobile unit would be low impact but potentially high profile and would allow members and officers to focus on face to face communication with the public. Members confirmed the decision to operate a mobile unit.

128.2 Members discussed the merits of opting for a vehicle and trailer or a small van for the Unit. Bob Morris said that in his experience a trailer was less easy to manoeuvre and required more physical strength than would be required for a van. Tony Gentle pointed out that any vehicle suitable for towing a trailer was unlikely to be very fuel efficient. Mel Kendal expressed disappointment that he had not been provided with the cost information on the hybrid vehicle and trailer option that he had requested following the last meeting of the Resources and Performance Committee. Martin O'Neill responded that the costing information had not been provided because officers had been advised that a hybrid vehicle would not be capable of towing a trailer of the type suggested for the Unit. Following the discussion, members decided that a small van would be the most practical and cost effective option, and its use could be maximised to the full.

128.3 Members then discussed the merits of the various vans that were proposed. It was decided that a diesel Megavan should be purchased for the mobile

information unit; although many members would have preferred an electric vehicle, no suitable vehicle was as yet available and the diesel Megavan was the most practical remaining choice which offered a reasonably sustainable option in terms of its mileage to the gallon.

Resolved:

- 1 That the decision to operate a National Park mobile information unit be confirmed.

Voting: 14 (3 abstentions)

- 2 That the unit should be a small van staffed by a seasonal Authority-employed ranger assisted by Authority members and people from partner organisations.

Voting: 11-1 (5 abstentions)

- 3 That the diesel Megavan be purchased for the mobile information unit.

Voting: 12 (5 abstentions)

129. Corporate Sustainability Update

- 129.1 Claire Gingell introduced the report (NFNPA 250/08) and updated members on the progress made towards developing an Environmental Management System for the Authority. In response to a query she said that officers were in the process of calculating the Authority's carbon footprint, and had a clear picture of business and commuter mileage by members and officers of the Authority.

- 129.2 Members briefly discussed the report which was then noted.

130. Annual progress report of the Sustainable Development Fund

- 130.1 Claire Gingell introduced the report (NFNPA 251/08) which summarised the progress made during the Sustainable Development Fund's second year of operations comprising the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. A list of the Sustainable Development Fund Panel membership was not tabled at the meeting as two positions remained vacant; members would be kept informed when the candidates were selected. Barry Rickman, Chairman of the Panel, thanked those who had been on the Panel to date.

Resolved:

1. That the progress made by the Fund and the projects it has supported during the last year in delivering sustainable development within the New Forest National Park be noted.
2. That the focus of the Sustainable Development Fund for the forthcoming year (2008-2009) be as set out in Item 10 to paper NFNPA 251/08.

Voting: none voting against

131. Final Draft – Corporate Plan 2008-2009

- 131.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 252/08) which presented the final draft of the Authority's 2008-2009 Corporate Plan.

131.2 Maureen Holding drew attention to an inaccuracy in the report and asked that the committee structure chart set out at page 8 of Appendix 2 to the draft Corporate Plan be amended to insert her name in the list of Planning Development Control Committee members, in place of Lee Dunsdon.

Resolved: That, subject to the amendments agreed at the meeting, the draft of the Corporate Plan for 2008-2009 attached as Annex 1 to NFNPA 252/08 be approved and submitted for publication.

Voting: none voting against

132. Conservation Area management proposals

132.1 Mark Stephenson (Building Conservation Officer) introduced the report (NFNPA 253/08) which set out proposals for the management of conservation areas in the National Park and presented a draft management plan for consultation with stakeholders. The Chairman requested that the Court of Verderers be added to the list of consultees at Annex 3 to the report.

132.2 Peter Frost asked at what stage the conservation areas created prior to the designation of the National Park would be re-examined. Mark Stephenson explained that the Authority would be carrying out a review of all its conservation area appraisals over the next year and would also be creating conservation area specific management plans during the five years to 2013.

Resolved: That the draft conservation areas management plan and proposals for consultation, as set out in NFNPA 253/08, be approved.

Voting: none voting against

133. Report on New Forest Consultative Panel (1 May 2008)

133.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (NFNPA 254/08) and updated members on the issues which had been discussed at the New Forest Consultative Panel meeting on 1 May 2008.

Resolved:

- 1. That the issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel on 1 May 2008 be noted;
- 2. That the date of the next New Forest Consultative Panel meeting on Thursday 10 July 2008 be noted.

Voting: none voting against

134. Urgent Items by the Chairman

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

The meeting closed at 12:25 hours.

SignedDate:.....
(Chairman)