

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER 2008 AT 09.30 HOURS IN THE GARDEN ROOM, FOUNTAIN COURT HOTEL, HYTHE

Present:

Members

Clive Chatters (Chairman)
Barry Rickman (Deputy Chairman)

Lee Dunsdon	Bob Morris
Peter Frost	Vicky Myers
Tony Gentle	Leo Randall
Maureen Holding	Alan Rice
Julian Johnson	John Sanger
Ted Johnson	Stan Wade
Mel Kendal	Alan Weeks
Clive Maton	Pat Wyeth

Officers

Lindsay Cornish, Kevin Gardner (Monitoring Officer), Paul Carey-Kent, Richard Lemon, Steve Trotter, Martin O'Neill, Nick Evans, David Stone, Rosalind Alderman and Jo Murphy.

PART I – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

32. Apologies for absence

32.1 Apologies for absence were received from Roger Heape and Kathy Heron.

33. Declarations of interest

33.1 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 New Forest District Council declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute items 39 (Chief Executive's Report), 43 (New Forest Tour: 2008 review and future funding arrangements), 44 (Update on Europarc Charter) and 45 (Response to the New Forest District Council Core Strategy submission document consultation). Members of Hampshire County Council would have a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 43 (New Forest Tour: 2008 review and future funding arrangements). Members declared their interests in accordance with this guidance.

33.2 Members and deputy members of the Authority's Standards Committee declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 37 (Appointment of Deputy Member of Standards Committee).

34. Chairman's announcements

34.1 The Chairman advised that the meeting would be followed by an informal update on responses received so far to the consultation on the draft National Park Plan and Recreation Management Strategy.

35. Minutes of meeting on 16 October 2008

35.1 The minutes of the meeting on 16 October 2008 were agreed as a true record.

36. Public Question Time

36.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

37. Appointment of Deputy Member of Standards Committee

37.1 The Chairman advised members that Stan Wade had volunteered for this role; no other members had come forward.

Resolved: That Stan Wade be appointed as a deputy member of the Standards Committee for the period up to the next Annual meeting of the Authority.

Voting: none voting against

38. Local procedures for the handling and determination of complaints under Local Protocols

38.1 The Chairman introduced the report (NFNPA 273/08). The Authority's approval was sought for the revised procedures for the handling and determination of a complaint that a member of the Authority had failed to comply with the Authority's Local Protocols. The Chairman reminded members that this had been discussed in detail at the Authority meeting on 16 October 2008 and explained that the one minor amendment requested by John Sanger at that meeting had now been made.

38.2 In response to a query from Pat Wyeth, the Monitoring Officer said that he would e-mail to members the Authority's draft response to the Department for Communities and Local Government's consultation on further amendments to the Model Code of Conduct; this was a separate issue from that before members today.

Resolved: That the procedures set out in Annex 1 to report NFNPA 273/08 be adopted and implemented.

Voting: none voting against

39. Chief Executive's Report

39.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 274/08), pointing out that the report gave members an illustration of the number of the Authority's day to day activities that touched on work with partner organisations, stakeholders and local communities within and around the New Forest.

39.2 In response to queries, members were further advised on progress with the appointment of members to fill the two vacancies on the Authority; interviews for the Secretary of State appointee would take place on 8 January 2009 with a view to the formalisation of an appointment by 1 April 2009, whilst the New Forest Association of Local Councils would handle the election of a Parish member to be formally appointed by the Secretary of State in February or March of 2009.

39.3 Bob Morris reported that he and Nick Evans, Senior Planner, had attended a meeting to establish a community area partnership that would cover the whole of that part of Wiltshire within the National Park. It was vital that the Authority took the opportunity to become fully involved at officer level.

39.4 In response to a query as to the probable timescale of the new LEADER programme referred to at paragraph 4 of the report, the Chief Executive

explained that the project would run over five years with an annual cycle of expenditure; officers would focus on committing to some projects in the current financial year.

39.5 Referring to paragraph 7 of the report, Ted Johnson requested that the report on progress with the Agreement with the Ninth Centenary Trust at the New Forest Centre, which had been received by the Resources and Performance Committee, be circulated to all members.

39.6 Members then noted the report.

39.7 Tony Gentle requested that a correction be made to the sustainable development update on page 7 of the report in that the National Trust had not been involved with West Wellow Common and Canada Common.

40. Oral report from the Resources and Performance Committee meeting on 4 December 2008

40.1 Julian Johnson, the Committee's Deputy Chairman, summarised the issues considered at the Resources and Performance Committee meeting on 4 December 2008, with reference to the draft minutes of that meeting that had been tabled at the current meeting. In terms of the Budgetary Control Report, members had noted a £445,000 underspend for the period to 31 October 2008. No issues of significance had arisen from the internal audit process. Committee members had noted a heavy case load in the Human Resources section but it was hoped that this would ease with the return of Cathie Turner-Jones from maternity leave.

40.2 Martin O'Neill, Director of Information and Visitor Services, agreed to send a copy of the report on the agreement with the Ninth Centenary Trust that had been considered by the Committee to Ted Johnson, and explained that a further report would be brought to the Authority. Substantial progress had been made but Committee members considered whether this was sufficient and whether the arrangement represented value for money to the Authority. Further information on alternative uses of the funds had been requested in order to make a valid comparison on this issue.

40.3 Members then noted the report.

41. Financial Strategy and Forward Budget 2009/10 – 2011/12

41.1 The Chief Finance Officer updated members on report NFNPA 275/08 referring to key aspects of the planned timetable for preparation and approval of the three year financial strategy and the budget-setting process for 2009/10. He advised that the budget for 2009/10 represented a 4% increase and that a fundamental review of the long term position would be undertaken in 2009/10. He explained that there might be some minor changes in the underlying assumptions on the financial strategy which could impact on the finalisation of this process, notably the likely levels of Government support in 2011/12.

41.2 Paul Carey-Kent then responded to questions from members on:

- the current expectation that Government grant will reduce in 2011/12 with the end of transitional set-up payments;

- the division within the budget between central costs and expenditure linked to the Authority's purposes; members expressed their satisfaction with the 32%/68% split while recognising that many of the central costs (e.g. ICT) also supported work on national park purposes; and
- the uncertainties at this stage around the timing of the intended move to a new headquarters, although members acknowledged that good progress was currently being made on this project.

Resolved: That

1. the 2009/10 budgets be prepared on the basis of the figures shown in Annex 1 of the submitted report;
2. the Authority moves to a system of funding of programme spending through contributions to a specific reserve;
3. the Financial Strategy 2009 - 2012 as set out in Annex 2 of the submitted report be approved.

Voting: none voting against

42. Treasury Management Performance Report – 1 April 2008 to 31 October 2008

- 42.1 Paul Carey-Kent introduced the report (NFNPA 276/08). Referring to the failure of Heritable Bank, he advised members that the first formal meeting of the Bank's creditors was held on 10 December 2008 to agree a way forward. Although he had not yet received details of the outcome of these discussions, the book value of the Bank's assets appeared sufficient to meet its liabilities and repayment of the Authority's investment was therefore likely, although this process was expected to take some considerable time to complete. Local authorities were accordingly being requested not to discount the balance sheet value of these investments when preparing their 2009/10 budgets. He added that recovery of accrued interest on the investment was less certain but that the Authority's claim had been registered with the Administrators.

Resolved: That the performance of the treasury management function for the period from 1 April 2008 to 31 October 2008 be noted.

Voting: none voting against

43. New Forest Tour: 2008 review and future funding arrangements

- 43.1 Steve Trotter, Director of Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development, presented the report (NFNPA 277/08), stating that 2008 had been the best year to date for the Tour and congratulating the Authority's Transport and Tourism Officer, Chris Gregory, the New Forest Transport Strategy Officer, John Sorrell, and the New Forest District Council and Hampshire County Council teams.
- 43.2 A number of members congratulated officers on the success of the Tour bus. The following points were also raised:
- (a) officers were asked to consider whether arrangements could be made to allow tickets to be purchased that could be used on trains and/or the Tour

bus. This would be helpful in encouraging visitors not to use cars; members agreed that the statistics on car use were still too high; and

- (b) officers were asked to consider whether the route could be adjusted to give greater coverage to the Northern and Western parts of the National Park and to include a route between Lyndhurst, Burley and Ringwood on Wednesdays, to allow people to reach the market in Ringwood.

43.3 In response to a query by John Sanger, officers agreed to clarify why, given that the number of passenger journeys had increased between 2006 and 2008, the revenue from ticket sales had not increased by a commensurate amount; it was important to ensure that the price of tickets was appropriate and the service was not run at a loss.

43.4 Members then noted the report.

44. Update on Europarc Charter

44.1 Martin O'Neill introduced the report (NFNPA 278/08), explaining that insufficient progress had been made in applying for the Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism to meet the deadline of December 2008. Members were asked to consider whether they wished to pursue the application for the next deadline of December 2009, given that the Europarc criteria were more onerous than initially envisaged and New Forest District Council officers were reluctant to devote extra resources to expanding the revised Tourism Strategy to accommodate these points, which they felt were not necessary to the local use of the Strategy. The Council would support ceasing work on the application but would continue supporting the Authority if it resolved to continue with the application process.

44.2 Some members said that there were benefits in working with other European parks. A number of members were not in favour of continuing with the process given the poor exchange rate and the lack of certainty as to what further resources would be required. Mel Kendal proposed that members defer this decision until after January, when he was scheduled to attend a climate change workshop in Brussels at which he hoped to gather further information on European sources of funding for related activities. Following confirmation by Martin O'Neill that this would still allow sufficient time to progress the work on the application if required, members agreed that this was the appropriate course of action.

Resolved: That the decision on whether to continue work on the submission for the Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism be deferred to the February Authority meeting.

Voting: 12:3 (3 abstentions)

45. Response to the New Forest District Council Core Strategy submission document consultation

45.1 Richard Lemon, Director of Strategy and Planning, introduced the report (NFNPA 279/08) and took members through the proposed response to New Forest District Council's Core Strategy Submission Document consultation. The Authority's response was broadly positive, but some areas of concern remained as set out in the report. These needed to be set out clearly as these were the issues the Authority considered should be discussed at the forthcoming Examination, hence

the use of words like 'object'. Richard Lemon then summarised the key points on the four main issues covered in the report, which needed to be considered together:

- consistency with national policy and how national park purposes would be taken forward by the Strategy;
- the level of housing target;
- mitigation measures; and
- employment land allocations.

45.2 A meeting of the Joint Members' Advisory Group had been held on 9 December 2008 and a number of minor amendments would be made to the Authority's response; in particular revisions in relation to employment land.

45.3 The following issues were raised in discussion:

- a) it was understandable that there would inevitably be issues where the Authority and New Forest District might take different views and it would be for the Inspectorate to reach a conclusion on the these issues;
- b) there is a need to ensure adequate housing is available, and in particular affordable housing, the issue is how best to achieve desired targets for affordable housing; further work by officers should be carried out in advance of the Examination;
- c) housing on the perimeter of the National Park would have an impact on its use, traffic volumes and so on so and targets should be limited both in the interests of the Park and to avoid 'over-development' of settlements adjacent to it;
- d) housing allocations needed to be looked at alongside employment land and provision for additional or more highly paid jobs for local people, provided that these would help to reduce inward and outward commuting to and from the Park, and while recognising that it can be difficult to control the nature of job provision on employment land;
- e) the National Park should not become a 'dormitory' and provisions to enable relatively small scale, 'high tech' businesses should be encouraged;
- f) the need for adequate funding for infrastructure to support additional housing and employment should be emphasised;
- g) radical decisions were needed to resolve the impact of traffic in some areas; officers should continue to work with the County prior to the Examination;
- h) provision of 'green infrastructure' should not be misconstrued as an encouragement for new 'attractions' in the National Park nor country parks within the District - which would bring in additional volumes of people and traffic; but mitigation schemes which did not create problems either straddling or beyond the boundary of the National Park would be supported;

- i) the proposals relating to open spaces, sport and recreation were weighted too heavily towards informal recreation without adequate proposals for sports infrastructure; and
- j) Tony Gentle agreed to circulate details of the Test Valley Country Park proposal.

Resolved:

- 1 That paper NFNPA 279/08 be approved as the Authority's response to the New Forest District Council Core Strategy Submission Document consultation.
- 2 That the Director of Strategy and Planning be authorised to make minor amendments to the Report, in advance of submitting it to the District Council by the deadline of 19 December 2008.

Voting: 13:0 (5 abstentions)

46. Report on New Forest Consultative Panel

46.1 The Chairman introduced the report (NFNPA 280/08).

Resolved:

- 1. that issues of interest at the meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel on 6 November 2008 be noted.
- 2. that the date of the next Panel meeting, being Thursday 8 January 2009, be noted.

Voting: Unanimous

47. New Forest Access Forum Report

47.1 The Chairman introduced the report (NFNPA 281/08).

Resolved:

- 1. That issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 1 December 2008 be noted.
- 2. That the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting, to be held on Monday 2 March 2009, be noted.

Voting: Unanimous

48. Urgent Items by the Chairman

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

The meeting closed at 12:24 hours.

SignedDate:.....
(Chairman)