

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 28 MARCH 2007 AT 09.30 HOURS AT BROCKENHURST VILLAGE HALL

Present:

Members

Clive Chatters (Chairman)

Barry Rickman (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Frost

Diana Halford

Roger Heape

Jeremy Heron

Kathy Heron

Julian Johnson

Ted Johnson

Clive Maton

Bob Morris

Vicky Myers

Leo Randall

Alan Rice

John Sanger

Stan Wade

Alan Weeks

Pat Wyeth

Officers

Lindsay Cornish, Kevin Gardner (Monitoring Officer), Barry Holland, Jeff Haynes, Nick Evans, David Illsley, David Stone, Rosalind Alderman and Carolyn Hoole.

Kevin Green (New Forest District Council) was also in attendance.

PART I – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

139. Apologies for absence

139.1 Susan Achmatowicz, Lee Dunsdon, Tony Gentle and Mel Kendal.

140. Declarations of interest

140.1 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. On further advice from the Monitoring Officer, all members declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 150 (agenda item 12) on monitoring members' attendance.

140.2 Peter Frost declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 154 (agenda item 16) as a member of the New Forest Consultative Panel.

140.3 Diana Halford declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 152 (agenda item 14) as a member of Burley Parish Council (which had submitted a response to the consultation document) and in minute item 144 (agenda item 6), also as a member of Burley Parish Council.

- 140.4 Julian Johnson declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 144 (agenda item 6) and minute item 152 (agenda item 14) as the Chairman of both South West Committees dealing with spatial planning and conformity.
- 140.5 Stan Wade declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 151 (agenda item 13) as his daughter in law worked for the New Forest District Council Tourist Office, which occupied the same building as the Trust.
- 140.6 Pat Wyeth declared a personal and prejudicial interest in minute item 151 (agenda item 13) as a Trustee of the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust.

141. Chairman's announcements

- 141.1 The Chairman announced that there would be a confidential item to be discussed during Part II of the Authority meeting. The meeting would be followed by an informal session for members on the working vision and objectives for the National Park Management Plan. The Chairman also reminded members of the Planning Development Control Committee of forthcoming training commitments.

142. Minutes of meeting on 22 February 2007

- 142.1 The minutes of the meeting on 22 February 2007 were agreed as a true record.
- 142.2 In response to a query from John Sanger it was confirmed that a matter arising under paragraph 135.2 of the previous minutes had now been actioned.

143. Public Question Time

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

144. Chief Executive's report

- 144.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 166/07) and said that she was pleased that the Authority's staffing position remained stable and the Authority staff sickness levels remained very low. The Authority had achieved its planning targets. Lindsay Cornish thanked staff and members for their input during the Authority's first fully operational year which had been challenging but successful. The Chairman commented that it had been a year of establishment as well as achievement and Ted Johnson echoed the comments on the high level of staff commitment.
- 144.2 Referring to page 6 of the report, Roger Heape asked that the report of the recent seminar on tackling traffic in national parks be sent to all members, the Chief Executive said she would follow this up.
- 144.3 In response to a query from Alan Rice, Lindsay Cornish said she would check whether the archaeological advice on the gas pipeline between Lockerley and Marchwood (referred to at page 6 of the report) could be

- handled in-house, although it was probably a question of in-house capacity and it might be the case that the archaeological consultant would be paid for by the contractor.
- 144.4 Leo Randall thanked Planning Development Control staff for the high standard of performance that had been achieved.
- 144.5 Referring to page 10 of the report, Peter Frost emphasised that it was essential that Tree Preservation Orders which covered a number of trees should be referred to the Planning Development Control Committee, and on to Natural England if necessary.
- 144.6 Members commended the joint litter picking campaign. Kathy Heron asked members to consider whether the Authority would be prepared to consider putting in funding or entering a partnership with the Forestry Commission to deal with the litter problem, which was especially bad after the summer holidays. Lindsay Cornish confirmed that there were ongoing discussions with the Forestry Commission and others on litter management, although the Commission's remit did not formally cover coastal areas of the Park.
- 144.7 In response to a query from Alan Rice, Lindsay Cornish said she would discuss with tree officers his suggestion that the approved tree works should be monitored.
- 144.8 Members were updated on the timetable for developing boundary markers and road signs. Officers were asked to consult the relevant disability organisations for their input on the proposals.
- 144.9 Members noted the report of the Chief Executive.
- 145. Oral report from Resources and Performance Committee**
- 145.1 Roger Heape, Chairman of the Resources and Performance Committee, gave an oral report on the last meeting of the Committee and explained that most of the items that had been considered at its most recent meeting would be covered by papers later on the Agenda.
- 145.2 Members noted the oral report from the Resources and Performance Committee.
- 146. Budgetary Control Report for the period to 28 February 2007**
- 146.1 Kevin Green, on behalf of Pat Higgins, introduced the report (NFNPA 167/07) and drew members' attention to the proposed carrying forward of the Authority's underspend against profile. Roger Heape explained that the Authority's spending would accelerate over the coming years to exceed its projected income, and the medium term position was unsustainable.
- 146.2 Members noted the current budget forecast.
- 147. General Fund Revenue Budget for the financial year 2007/08**
- 147.1 Roger Heape took members through the report (NFNPA 168/07) pointing out that the Authority's reputation would depend on it being seen to make a difference. Despite previous budget savings achieved by the officers, the

Resources and Performance Committee was concerned that the overall budget was still too high, and that previous savings had impacted on projects related to the twin purposes. It therefore asked officers to make further savings of between £100,000 and £200,000 in expenditure that was not related to the Authority's twin purposes or planning enforcement. The final result is a budget with a significant increase in the proportion of spend on the twin purposes.

Additionally the Resources and Performance Committee would review the medium term financial strategy in light of the joint Defra funding study and budget settlement in an attempt to redress the Authority's unsustainable projected expenditure. In response to a query he explained that a capital assets reserve would not be established for the immediate future as the Authority's equipment did not yet need replacing, and this measure would divert funds away from the twin purposes.

Resolved:

- 1 That the General Fund Budget for 2007/08, with an increased proportion to be spent on the twin purposes, be **approved**.
- 2 That the minimum level for the General Fund Reserve, at £0.5 million, be **re-affirmed**.
- 3 That the establishment of a reserve for a Local Development Framework of £65,000, to be transferred from budget underspend from 2006/07, be **approved**.
- 4 That the Authority not establish a separate reserve in 2007/08 for the replacement of capital equipment.
- 5 That the implications on the General Fund Reserve of the proposed budget for 2007/08 be **noted**.
- 6 That the risk assessment and Section 25 Statement contained in Annex 4 to Paper NFNPA 168/07 be **approved**.
- 7 That the Prudential Indicators for 2007/08 - 2009/10 outlined in Annex 5 to Paper NFNPA 168/07 be **adopted**.

Voting: None voting against

148. Second Corporate Plan: Draft Performance Section

- 148.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (paper NFNPA 169/07) and said that the draft had been discussed by a small group of members the previous week. A working draft of the monitoring report using a traffic light system was tabled at the current meeting. Overall progress in a challenging year was pleasing with half the actions complete or on target. Slippage was mainly due to delays in staff recruitment or events beyond the Authorities control
- 148.2 Members raised concerns with progress on transport issues in the New Forest. The issue had now been referred to an Environment and Transport Policy Review Committee at Hampshire County Council. It was emphasised that the Authority should be involved in the consultation process.

- 148.3 Officers were urged to make progress on securing research needed to inform strategy and policy development, and to pay close attention to activities with a red status.
- 148.4 Members congratulated officers on achievements to date under the Plan.

Resolved:

- 1 That the draft of the performance section of the Corporate Plan in Annex 1 be finalised for inclusion in the full draft Corporate Plan for approval on 24 April.
- 2 That the further work needed and the timetable for the completion of the Corporate Plan be **noted**.

Voting: None voting against

149. Anti-fraud and corruption policy

- 149.1 Kevin Gardner introduced the report (paper NFNPA 170/07) and, following a request by Bob Morris, agreed that the report would also be brought to a meeting of the Standards Committee for information.

Resolved: That the Anti Fraud and Corruption policy in Annex 1 to paper NFNPA 170/07 be **approved**.

Voting: None voting against

150. Monitoring members' attendance

- 150.1 David Stone introduced the report (paper NFNPA 171/07) and explained that the draft forms would show reasons (where these had been notified by members) for members' absences, in order to give a fair picture of the extent of members' commitments. Bob Morris explained that annual reports generated from the forms would be considered by the Standards Committee. Concerns were raised that a log of members' attendance at workshops and training could give the wrong impression to the public as many of these events were voluntary or not relevant to all members and member input to the work of the Authority was not confined solely to attending meetings and workshops. Members agreed that the table relating to attendance at workshops and training events be disclosed only to the Chairman to assist him in the annual drafting of performance assessments for members.

Resolved: That the use of the draft monitoring tables from 1 April 2007 be approved, noting that the information will be reported annually to the Standards Committee with the exception of the table on attendance at workshops and training.

Voting: 12-4 (2 abstentions)

151. Association between the Authority and the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust

- 151.1 Jeff Haynes introduced the report (paper NFNPA 172/07) and recorded his thanks to Susan Achmatowicz for all her work in the negotiations; this was endorsed by a number of members. The executive management group referred to would involve two Authority members, two members from the Trust and one member from New Forest District Council.

151.2 Lindsay Cornish tabled and spoke to a short note provided by Susan Achmatowicz setting out her comments and commendation of the recommendation.

151.3 It was noted that the Trustees had agreed the appointment of a Centre Manager. One member asked that the Authority discuss with the Trust the suggestions that entry to the information centre be free for local people during the low season, in order to encourage them to attend, and also that other rooms at the centre be made available for Authority staff.

Resolved: That the Chief Executive be authorised to enter a legal agreement to establish an Association with the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust along the lines set out in paper NFNPA 172/02 and Annex 1 to that report.

Voting: 11-4 (2 abstentions)

152. Statement of Community Involvement

152.1 David Illsley presented the report (paper NFNPA 173/07). Leo Randall thanked officers for all their work. In response to a request from Vicky Myers, David Illsley said that the photograph on the front cover of the statement could be changed to one that included people.

Resolved: That the Inspector's binding report recommendations be **noted** and the final Statement of Community Involvement incorporating the recommended changes (Annex 2 to paper NFNPA 173/02) be **adopted**.

Voting: None voting against.

153. Report on New Forest Access Forum meeting (5 March)

Resolved:

1 That issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 5 March 2007 be **noted**.

2 That the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting on Monday 4 June 2007 be **noted**.

Voting: None voting against.

154. New Forest Consultative Panel report

Resolved:

1 That issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel on 1 March 2007 be **noted**.

2 That the date of the next New Forest Consultative Panel meeting on Thursday 10 May 2007 be **noted**.

Voting: None voting against.

155. Urgent Items by the Chairman

155.1 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 that 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, for the reasons set out in the report.

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

156. Accommodation update

156.1 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).

Resolved: That developments in the search for accommodation be **noted**.

Voting: None voting against

The meeting closed at 12:05 hrs.

Signed Date:.....
(Chairman)