

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 18 JANUARY 2007 AT 09.30 HOURS AT THORNEY HILL COMMUNITY CENTRE

Present:

Members

Clive Chatters (Chairman)
Barry Rickman (Deputy Chairman)

Susan Achmatowicz	Clive Maton
Roger Heape	Bob Morris
Jeremy Heron	Vicky Myers
Kathy Heron	Leo Randall
Julian Johnson	John Sanger
Ted Johnson	Alan Weeks
Mel Kendal	

Officers

Lindsay Cornish, Kevin Gardner (Monitoring Officer), Jeff Haynes, Steve Trotter, Barry Holland, Martin O'Neill, George Trevelyan, Ian Barker, Kathryn Boler, Julia Mutlow, Nigel Matthews, David Stone, Rosalind Alderman, Carolyn Hoole and Susan Barnes.

Jerry Giltrow, an independent member of the Standards Committee (and Chairman of that Committee), was also in attendance for part of the meeting.

PART I – OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

106. Apologies for absence

106.1 Lee Dunsdon, Peter Frost, Diana Halford, Alan Rice, Stan Wade and Pat Wyeth.

107. Declarations of interest

107.1 On advice from the Monitoring Officer, Local Authority members accepted and declared a personal but not prejudicial interest on agenda items which related to their role as County, District or Parish members. In addition, on advice from the Monitoring Officer, all members declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute item 113 (agenda item 8) on the review of the Authority's Scheme of Members' Allowances.

107.2 Mel Kendal declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in minute items 111, 112, 113, 115, 117, 118, 119 and 120 (agenda items 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15) as Leader of New Forest District Council and Executive Member for the Environment at Hampshire County Council. Mel Kendal also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in minute item 114 (agenda item 9), the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust: Potential Association update, as a Trustee of the Ninth Centenary Trust and accordingly left the meeting during the discussion and voting on that item.

108. Chairman's announcements

108.1 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 lunch and a meeting of the Resources and Performance Committee.

- 108.2 The meeting was adjourned between approximately 10:20 and 10:35 owing to a power failure.

109. Minutes of meeting on 16 November 2006

- 109.1 Susan Achmatowicz expressed concern with paragraph 100.2(a), which concluded "... and that the New Forest was not yet equipped to handle the impact of more tourism". She felt this was not an appropriate message for the Authority to give, and did not recall the point being made. Members agreed that the record of the meeting should be checked. *It was subsequently established that the minutes were an accurate reflection of comments made by members.*

- 109.2 Alan Weeks pointed out that there was a numbering error on page 5 of the minutes in that the second paragraph appearing under minute item 101 should be numbered 101.2 rather than 102.2.

- 109.3 Subject to the point regarding numbering made at paragraph 109.2 above, the minutes of the meeting on 16 November 2006 were agreed as a true record.

110. Public Question Time

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

111. Chief Executive's report

- 111.1 Lindsay Cornish introduced the report (NFNPA 147/07) and said that, further to the last meeting of the Authority at which she had been asked to progress the appointment of a member to represent the Authority on the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association, Ted Johnson had now been appointed to that role.

- 111.2 Members congratulated officers on achieving the Development Control targets, on the Enforcement team's first Temporary Stop Order in respect of a landfill operation, and on useful presentations to Parish Councils on planning matters.

Resolved: That the report of the Chief Executive be **noted**.

112. Oral report from Resources and Performance Committee

- 112.1 Roger Heape, Chairman of the Resources and Performance Committee, gave an oral report on the last meeting of the Committee and said that the Committee had decided to receive monthly "balanced scorecard" performance reports from officers. Ten Authority members had attended a workshop at the beginning of January on setting performance indicators and amending the risk register (a final version of which would be brought to the meeting of Resources and Performance Committee scheduled to follow the Authority meeting). The three largest perceived risks to the Authority were insufficient funding, failure to find suitable accommodation and failure to recruit and retain suitable staff. There was a lesser risk of computer systems failure, but contingency plans were in place.

- 112.2 Officers would take forward members' input on local performance indicators and proposals would be brought to the Resources and Performance Committee meeting in March.
- 112.3 The Committee had noted that the joint funding study with Defra had commenced, scheduled for completion in early February. With reference to the Authority's grant, Defra had agreed an inflation increase for 2007/08 which would result in the Authority receiving an extra £90,000 per year, compared with 2006/07. The Minister Barry Gardiner's efforts in supporting national parks in retaining an inflation-proofed settlement should be welcomed. Pending the results of the funding study, it was still possible the Authority would also receive some or all of the £200,000 Partnership Grant in 2007/08. The medium term financial strategy would be presented to the Committee meeting that afternoon.

Resolved: That the oral report on the Resources and Performance Committee be noted.

113. Review of Members' Allowance Scheme

- 113.1 Jerry Giltrow introduced the report (paper NFNPA 148/07) and reminded members that the Authority had established an Independent Remuneration Panel to review members' allowances. He explained the process of assessment by the Panel and the Standards Committee and the formula the Panel had used to calculate the recommended levels of allowances. The Monitoring Officer explained that members must have regard to the recommendations of the Panel, but were not obliged to adopt them if they had clear reasons not to do so.
- 113.2 Members made the following observations:
- (a) In adopting a "light touch" system of accountability for members as proposed by the Panel, officers should bear in mind the fact that some members had other responsibilities, and whilst this brought greater expertise to Authority meetings there would be times when members were unavoidably committed elsewhere.
 - (b) The Chairman of the Resources and Performance Committee said he did not agree with the principle of the retrospective payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance for that role, as had been recommended by the Panel. It was pointed out that he was entitled to waive receipt of the allowance or any part of it, if he so wished.
 - (c) Although the recommended increase to the basic allowance amounted to approximately 20% of the existing allowance, which appeared to be a high proportion, members were reminded that no increase had been adopted in the current year, and in addition the amounts recommended by the Panel were logical and transparent.

Resolved:

- 1 That the changes to the Scheme of Allowances recommended in the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and set out on page one of their report be approved.
- 2 That the Authority notes that the Standards Committee is, reflecting the Panel's suggestion, investigating a light weight system of accountability for members based around recording members' attendance at meetings and other events with a view to submitting proposals to the Authority for approval by April 2007.
- 3 That the Authority take cognisance of the requirement to make the Panel's recommendations available for public inspection.

114. New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust: Potential Association update

- 114.1 Jeff Haynes introduced the report (paper NFNPA 149/07) and explained that officers were seeking guidance on whether the Authority should open discussions on developing an association with the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust. The consultants' report set out a model which could form the starting point for discussions; the model would take up a significant proportion of the second purpose budget.
- 114.2 One area which needed to be resolved with the Trust related to the consultants' proposal that a Centre Manager be appointed to manage the proposed New Forest Centre. The Authority thought this appointment would be very important and would assist the Authority in ensuring its purposes continued to be met by an association.
- 114.3 During subsequent discussion members made the following points:
 - (a) The potential association with the Trust represented an opportunity to work with an existing attraction in a location with one of the highest footfalls in the Forest, with a good reputation and dedicated staff. The resources of the Trust, including the library, would potentially be of great benefit to the Authority in achieving its statutory purposes, through working in partnership with New Forest organisations. However, there were a number of risks associated with the proposed association, in particular because the Trust had not demonstrated adequate income streams.
 - (b) Members were concerned at the high proportion of the Understanding and Enjoyment Directorate's budget which could be spent on an association with the Trust, although it was recognised that there was no obvious alternative that would deliver the equivalent result for the Authority, and the proposed association should impact favourably on the Directorate's budget in other areas. The Authority needed to be certain that its purposes would be delivered by the proposed association, as far as possible. Ideally an Authority member would be appointed as a Trustee.
 - (c) Members considered whether, once the Authority had found permanent accommodation, it might be in a position to create its own visitor centre, although the start-up costs of such an enterprise would be high and any such centre would have to be complementary to the existing

New Forest information sites rather than duplicative. It was suggested that the Authority should ensure there was a break clause after three years of any association with the Trust. Alternatively, it was suggested that the Authority and the Trust could commit to a number of smaller projects over, for example, a three month period, to ascertain whether the project would work and what the benefits would be.

Resolved:

- 1 That the findings of the Consultants' Report be **noted**.
- 2 That the potential financial implications of the Consultants' proposals be **noted**.
- 3 That the principle of an Association be pursued and officers be authorised to open discussions with the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust, subject to any guidance from members and in consultation with the Chairman and Susan Achmatowicz, and to report back to the Authority's March meeting.

115. Corporate Plan Review

- 115.1 Barry Holland introduced the report (paper NFNPA 150/07) and explained that the Authority had two options in taking forward the Corporate Plan: either a full review and redraft of the Plan, or the existing two year plan could simply be rolled forward and refreshed for 2007/08. Barry Holland explained that the time scale would be very tight to conduct a full review and redraft.

Resolved:

- 1 That the current Corporate Plan should be rolled forward and refreshed for its second year.
- 2 That the timetable for the completion of the Corporate Plan be **noted**.

116. Communications Strategy update

- 116.1 Martin O'Neill introduced the report (paper NFNPA 151/07) and explained that it set out a high level strategy rather than a detailed plan. In response to members' questions, he explained how the Communications section liaised with other sections of the Authority and took items from the Management Board to ensure National Park messages were delivered to the world, as well as taking a corporate steer from Authority meetings and members. Officers recognised that further work was needed on the Authority's website, and this need was identified in the draft strategy. The section produced a regular residents' newsletter, and the Authority would also take steps to contribute to newsletters and communications produced by other New Forest organisations. Members commended the communications achievements thus far.

Resolved: That the Communications Strategy be **approved**.

117. Climate Change update

- 117.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (paper NFNPA 152/07) and emphasised the importance of recognising and responding to issues raised by climate change.
- 117.2 Members welcomed the paper and emphasised the important educational role of the Authority with regard to climate change. The Authority should give guidance on green energy sources such as solar panels and wind turbines, and on other measures people could take to reduce environmental damage. Steve Trotter acknowledged this role and said that officers would look in particular at developing the Authority's website to deliver this educational role.
- 117.3 Members raised the following further points during discussion:
- (a) The proposed strategy and action plan were vital elements of sustainable development that could be used to inform the drafting of the Local Development Framework planning policies and the National Park Management Plan;
 - (b) Climate change issues were of regional, national and international significance and it was crucial that the Authority should be locked into discussions at each of these levels. Steve Trotter responded that the Authority was part of the South East Protected Landscape Forum and the Europarc initiative, and was in negotiations to join the South East Climate Change Partnership;
 - (c) the Authority should consider whether it was in a position to make some form of "green award"; and
 - (d) some members felt that mitigating the effects of climate change should be of the highest priority. It was vital that young people should be encouraged to experience and feel a connection with and interest in the natural environment, to ensure they were motivated to conserve it.

Resolved:

- 1 That the report be **noted**.
- 2 That the proposed content, process and timetable for the development of an adaptation strategy and action plan for the National Park be **approved**.

118. New Forest Access Forum report

- 118.1 Jeff Haynes introduced the report (paper NFNPA 153/07).

Resolved:

- 1 That issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Access Forum on 4 December 2006 be **noted**.
- 2 That the date of the next New Forest Access Forum meeting on Monday 5 March 2007 be **noted**.

119. New Forest Consultative Panel report

- 119.1 Steve Trotter introduced the report (paper NFNPA 154/07). Clive Chatters mentioned the discussion that had been held at the meeting of the Consultative Panel on the proposal for a Southampton Laser Gateway.

Resolved:

- 1 That issues of interest discussed at the meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel on 4 January 2007 be **noted**.
- 2 That the date of the next New Forest Consultative Panel meeting on Thursday 1 March 2007 be **noted**.

120. Local Development Scheme update

- 120.1 John Ward introduced the report (paper NFNPA 155/07) and explained that the draft of the Local Development Scheme approved for submission to the Government Office for the South East by the Authority in June 2006 had been revised following comments received from them, ready for a final submission by the Authority if members approved the draft Scheme. The changes were in structure, not content. Initial feedback on the revised draft from the Government Office was that it would like to see a longer time lapse (two months) between the Core Strategy and the Development Control Policies/ Site Allocations.

- 120.2 Members commented that it would be important to ensure the public and our stakeholders were advised of our timetable for consultation exercises.

Resolved: That the revised Local Development Scheme attached at Annex 1 to paper NFNPA 155/07 be **approved**.

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, press and staff of the Authority were accordingly requested to leave the meeting.

121. Phase 3 Accommodation

121.1 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**.

The meeting closed at 11:55 hrs.

Signed Date:.....
(Chairman)