

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 26 JUNE 2008

NATIONAL PARK PLAN – DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Report by: Nick Evans, Senior Planning Officer

Summary:

This report presents the consultation draft of the National Park Plan. It describes the work that has been carried out in preparing the Plan to date, and seeks members' approval of the draft for public consultation.

Recommendations:

To:

1. **Subject to any comments, approve the draft of the National Park Plan in Annex 1 for publication as a consultation document.**
2. **Approve the proposed scope of the consultation and consultation questions.**

Resources and Corporate Plan:

Continuing staff involvement in overseeing the consultation process, developing the actions and targets with partner organisations and producing the final document. The production of the draft plan and related publicity is covered by agreed Authority budgets.

Corporate Plan objective A3 – Provide a clear, up-to-date framework for the management of the New Forest National Park by working with partners to review and replace the interim Management Plan

Corporate Plan objective A4 – Develop spatial planning policies to support the delivery of the National Park's purposes and duties, working jointly with constituent and adjacent authorities

Other major considerations:

None.

Papers:

NFNPA 261/08:	Cover paper
NFNPA 261/08 Annex 1:	Draft National Park Plan
NFNPA 261/08 Annex 2:	Sustainability Appraisal
NFNPA 261/08 Annex 3:	Habitats Regulations Assessment

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The draft National Park Plan combines the two most important statutory documents for the National Park into a single integrated plan. These are the National Park Management Plan and the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, including Development Control policies. This is the first time a national park authority has brought these two policy documents together.
- 1.2 The draft Plan is attached as **Annex 1**. It has been prepared as a public consultation document to gain the formal views of a wide range of organisations and individuals both within the National Park and regionally and nationally. It is not meant to be a finished or complete work at this stage.

2 Structure of the draft Plan

- 2.1 The Plan includes:
- the long-term Vision and objectives for the National Park
 - a summary of the current state of the Park and likely trends which will affect it in the future
 - the overall strategic policy approach for the area
 - a framework of policies and actions to guide the work of the Authority and all partner organisations over the next five years and beyond
 - detailed development control policies relevant to the Authority's planning function.
- 2.2 The public consultation will also include consideration of possible alternative policies, included as Appendix 1 of the draft Plan. A full Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment will be available as supporting documents. Summaries of these assessments are attached as **Annexes 2 and 3** of this paper.

3 Stakeholder involvement in producing the draft

- 3.1 An exhaustive series of workshops and meetings have enabled interested organisations to contribute directly to the content of the Plan over past 12 months. This consultation included the well-received ‘New Forest, New Chapter’ stakeholder events, involving 71 different organisations, as well as separate discussions with the statutory bodies, specialist Authority officers and Authority members.
- 3.2 Members attending the Park Plan workshop on 16 May were broadly happy with the draft. Their comments have been incorporated into the current version. The Key Partners Steering Group (comprising the Forestry Commission, Natural England and the Verderers) are happy to support the Plan at a senior level as a consultation document.

4 Design considerations

- 4.1 Following approval of the Park Plan text, design work will be required to produce an accessible and attractive consultation document, including relevant maps and illustrative material.
- 4.2 The main purpose of the design will be to make the document easy to follow and to gain a high level of response from consultees. It is suggested that an ‘over-finished’ consultation document would be counter-productive and that the design should clearly signal that this is an interim stage in the production of the final Plan.

5 The consultation arrangements and next stages

- 5.1 Consultation will be for a period of ten weeks to allow sufficient time for responses from all organisations, including the community sector, during the summer holiday period.
- 5.2 The document will be promoted widely to the general public, including formal notices. Copies will also be sent directly to a wide range of statutory consultees, organisations that are involved in work relevant to the document, those that have participated in the consultation to date and all who have expressed an interest in viewing the draft Plan. An on-line version will be available on the Authority’s website.
- 5.3 A user-friendly means of responding to the document will be carefully designed as part of the draft Plan (both as paper and on-line versions). Consultation questions will enable an assessment of public comments on:
- the overall structure and readability of the document
 - the level of support for the Vision and strategic policy approach
 - the level of support for the objectives and policies under each of the four policy chapters (priority objectives, conserving and enhancing, understanding and enjoying and living and working)
 - the actions, targets and indicators, including any amendments and new suggestions

- the level of support for development control policies
 - the policy options, including the level of support for alternative policies
 - the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment.
- 5.4 Results of the consultation will be reported to members in due course and a revised National Park Plan will be produced in early 2009. The Plan will then be finalised and adopted formally as the National Park Management Plan. At the same time the Plan will be submitted to the Government Office for the South East as the Local Development Framework Core Strategy for the National Park.

Recommendation:

To:

- 1. Subject to any comments, approve the draft of the National Park Plan in Annex 1 for publication as a consultation document.**
- 2. Approve the proposed scope of the consultation and consultation questions.**