

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 26 JUNE 2008

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS TO THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Report by: Lindsay Cornish, Chief Executive

Summary:

This report outlines the issues arising from the creation of a unitary council for Wiltshire and seeks members' confirmation that Wiltshire County should continue to be represented by two members on the National Park Authority.

Recommendation:

To authorise the Chief Executive to instruct officials in Defra and Department for Communities and Local Government to make provision in the relevant Order for Wiltshire Council to appoint two members to the New Forest National Park Authority.

Paper:

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Contact:

Lindsay Cornish

Tel: 01590 646633

Email: lindsay.cornish@newforestnpa.gov.uk

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Introduction

- 1 On 5 December 2007 the Government announced its intention to proceed with the creation of a new unitary authority for Wiltshire County, combining the former four district and county authorities into a single authority.
- 2 Currently Wiltshire's interests in the New Forest National Park Authority are represented through single appointments from each of Wiltshire County Council and Salisbury District Council.
- 3 The boundaries for the new divisions within Wiltshire Council have yet to be confirmed and the Authority will be advised of the new boundaries later in the year.
- 4 Both Defra and DCLG officials have sought the views of the Authority and Wiltshire County Council on the future representation of the latter on the New Forest National Park Authority. The decision would then need to be inserted in relevant Orders which are in the process of preparation by DCLG lawyers. Current appointees from Wiltshire have had discussions with both the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive and on 29 May the two Chief Executives met to discuss the principle and various practical issues.

Next steps

- 5 Wiltshire Council has confirmed that it is seeking to maintain the current position of two representatives on the National Park Authority.
- 6 There are a number of reasons for maintaining the status quo including:
 - the importance of ensuring that the 'northern extremities' of the National Park are well represented within the Authority given the risks associated with geographic separation, distance and the somewhat different characteristics of the area in question;

- the representation from beyond the districts and counties of the South East region adds to the diversity of Authority membership, extends the knowledge and experience on which the Authority can draw and helps to bring a different perspective to the Authority's deliberations;
 - the alternative, of reducing representation to one, would reduce Authority numbers overall to 21 and would inevitably extend the burden of existing work across a slightly smaller number of members, many of whom are already actively engaged and give up a considerable amount of their time to Authority business.
- 7 Members are therefore asked to confirm that they would wish to maintain the current position of two appointments to the Authority from the new Wiltshire Council unitary authority.

Recommendation

To authorise the Chief Executive to instruct officials in Defra and Department for Communities and Local Government to make provision in the relevant Order for Wiltshire Council to appoint two members to the New Forest National Park Authority.