

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 18 OCTOBER 2007

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Report by: Lindsay Cornish, Chief Executive

Summary:

This report covers the period since the last Authority meeting on 13 September 2007 for all work except planning development control and enforcement which covers activity in September.

Recommendation:

To note the report.

Resources:

Routine

Paper:

NFNPA 211/07: Cover paper

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- 1 This report covers the period since the last Authority meeting on 13 September 2007 for all work except planning development control and enforcement which covers activity in September.

Members

- 2 Some members were involved in some or all of the following meetings and events:

- Planning Development Control Committee meeting, 18 September
- ANPA UK Conference 2007, 19 - 21 September
- Resources and Performance Committee meeting, 25 September
- Chairman's informal briefing session, 5 October
- North Solent Shoreline Management Plan Elected Member Group meeting, 11 October
- Joint workshop on Management Plan, Recreation Management Strategy and Local Development Framework Core Strategy, 12 October
- Planning Development Control Committee meeting, 16 October

- 3 Forthcoming activities include:

- Standards Committee meeting, following the Authority meeting on 18 October
- Conservation Area Consultation meetings, 24 and 25 October
- Human Resources Case Review Panel meeting, 6 November
- Resources and Performance Committee meeting, 6 November
- "New Forest, New Chapter" - Recreation Management Strategy workshop, 7 November
- "New Forest, New Chapter" – Conservation and Enhancement Topic Group, 13 November
- "New Forest, New Chapter" – Living and Working Topic Group, 14 November
- Consultative Panel meeting, 15 November
- Planning Development Control Committee meeting, 20 November
- Council for National Parks meeting, 20 November
- "New Forest, New Chapter" – Understanding and Enjoyment Topic Group, 27 November
- New Forest Access Forum meeting, 3 December.

DELIVERY OF NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development

4 Partnership Working

Funding

LEADER

- Further work to prepare the New Forest Leader application is underway including discussions with New Forest District Council about how the project might be managed. In order to develop the full application stakeholder workshops will be held in October to look at each of the themes within the bid.

New Forest: Life in Common

- The Life in Common project website is now online: www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/lifeincommon. Material will be added to these pages regularly. Summaries of current project proposals have been posted and members are invited to contact Libby Holmes if they have further ideas.
- Projects are gradually being submitted in a more detailed format, and the push to identify and secure match-funding for all projects now begins. The aim of securing *at least* 50% match-funding over the entire scheme should increase the chances of a competitive application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- The Project Officer continues to visit various groups and fora to stimulate further project ideas and is setting out frameworks for the supporting documents. Christina Dixon (consultant) has begun making contact with stakeholders and the wider New Forest community in order to identify audiences and strengthen relations with targeted groups.

5 Corporate Plan

Commoning Review (C1)

- The report from the commoning review has now been published and is the subject of a separate report to the Authority.

Nature Conservation (C3)

- A very useful conference on the biodiversity of the New Forest was held at Balmer Lawn Hotel on 25 and 26 September. The meeting was organised by Bournemouth University and the British Ecological Society with support from the New Forest National Park Authority. Proceedings will be published in due course.
- A programme of meetings has been organised for the New Forest Biodiversity Action Plan working group and a workshop for key stakeholders is planned for 22 November.

Information and Visitor Services

6 Corporate Plan

- Work continued on the fourth edition of the Authority's newsletter, *Park Life*. Copy was approved and design is under way for the publication which is due out at the end of October. **(A1, U3)**
- Clips from the short introductory film about the National Park, *A Special Place*, were added to the Authority's website. **(A1, U3, U4)**
- The education Fun Zone was launched and publicised. **(U4)**
- The first four (of 16) education factsheets were published (copies will be provided for members at the meeting). **(U4)**
- Production of the first boundary markers is now well under way at the Forestry Commission's Burley workshop for installation in the coming weeks. **(U3)**
- Proofs of the four Awareness Panels have been approved prior to delivery in October. **(U3)**
- Work is under way to plan next year's National Park events programme of walks and talks. **(U3)**
- Research has started into projects in the next phase of the Interpretation Strategy including a mobile display unit, standard exhibition, village information points and innovative walks leaflets. **(U3)**

7 Partnership working

- The Learning Outside the Classroom guide, produced in partnership with other members of the Educators' Forum, was published in time for the Hampshire Outdoor Fair in early October (copies will be provided for members at the meeting). **(U3)**
- Joint work continued with the Forestry Commission to feature the National Park extensively in the 2008 edition of their visitor and resident newspaper *Forest Focus* and with New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission to produce material for the joint magazine *New Forest Today* due out in October 2007. **(A1, C2, U3)**

- To raise awareness of the danger of animal accidents, we are soon to provide the Agisters with portable temporary signs informing motorists that a casualty has occurred at that location in the last week. An Animal Emergency Hotlines card will be sent out with the next *Park Life*. **(U3)**
- Progress was made on detailed design and planning work with the New Forest Centre for re-branding the exterior and updating displays inside as part of the partnership arrangements between the Ninth Centenary Trust and the National Park Authority. **(U3)**

8 Other activities

- Regular work was carried out answering media queries, writing news releases, producing *The Update*, responding to talks requests and answering queries via the enquiries e-mail address. **(A1, U3)**
- The Information and Visitor Services team was heavily involved in organisation for two visits from Dutch countryside organisations.

Planning Policy

9 Corporate Plan

Spatial Planning Policies (A4)

- The Minerals and Waste Project Panel met in Southampton during September. This meeting involved officers from the four minerals and waste planning authorities in Hampshire and focused on the adoption of the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy, and the emerging minerals and waste sites documents.
- The Authority was represented at the Dorset and South Wiltshire Planning and Transportation Liaison Committee which met in Poole in late September to discuss the provision of gypsy and travellers sites in the South West region.
- John Clements (deputising for John Ward) attended the National Parks' Heads of Planning meeting in Birmingham on the 18 September. The meeting included discussion of affordable housing issues; the various National Park Authorities' experiences of the emerging Local Development Framework system; procedures for joint consultation responses and liaison with the English National Park Authorities' Association (ENPAA); and issues and arrangements for a forthcoming meeting with the Planning Inspectorate.
- Preparations are continuing for the stakeholder event on 12 October to inform the National Park Management Plan, the Recreation Management Strategy and the Core Strategy. It is anticipated that up to 100 individuals will attend the launch event, which is to be followed in the Autumn by a number of workshops focusing on the National Park purposes and duty.

- Joint work with New Forest District Council continues on the various assessments required to inform the development of both the Authority's and the Council's Core Strategies and the National Park Management Plan. This includes the final report for the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, and continuing work on Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment.

10 Other Work

- Nick Evans provided a briefing for new members of the New Forest Consultative Panel.
- The Authority was represented at:
 - a housing liaison meeting with New Forest District Council, the Rural Housing Enabler and Registered Social Landlords;
 - 'Joining Up the Processes' Meeting with the Chairman of the Local Strategic Partnership and staff from the District Council;
 - Local Strategic Partnership 'Community Action Network' Leads meeting;
 - (Hampshire) Gypsy and Travellers Sub-Group.

11 Development Control

During September the Development Control unit carried out the following work:

Planning applications: received 82. Applications were registered within two to three working days following receipt.

Planning decisions: 102 issued, of which 92 were approved (91%) and nine were refused (9%). One application was withdrawn. Six (6%) of these decisions were made by the Planning Committee at the meeting held on 18 September.

88% of householder applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 80%); and 74% of minor applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 65%).

Live planning applications: 350 at 30 September, compared with 364 at 31 August.

Appeals: Six new appeals received this month. Of the four appeal decisions in September, two were allowed and two were dismissed.

Enforcement: 48 new enforcement cases were registered in September and 59 cases were closed. There were 280 outstanding enforcement cases at the end of the month.

One temporary stop notice was served in respect of a developer's failure to comply with a tree protection condition. The tree protection measures have now been put in place.

12 Environmental Design

A normal reactive service continues to be provided in respect of general enquiries and planning, listed building consent and tree work applications, providing advice on trees and listed buildings and building design.

The team was consulted by Development Control on 43 applications during September, 21 consultations were returned within the 14 day target, 2 were outside the target date and 20 are still live (**Corporate Plan Objective A5, C7**).

Consultants are progressing well in the review of conservation areas in the National Park as set out in **Corporate Plan at C7**. The first area to be surveyed, Forest South East, around parishes of Boldre, East Boldre and surrounding area, has been completed and a boundary proposed. Public consultation will take place during October.

Twenty three tree work applications were registered during September and 11 determined, 75% of which within the 8 week target. The delay in issuing some decisions was partly due to changes in the computer system and partly to diversion of resources to host a conference of National Park tree and woodland officers.

No new Tree Preservation Orders were made in September.

The Authority hosted a National Parks' Tree and Woodland Officer Group Meeting over three days at the end of September. Lindsay Cornish welcomed 20 delegates from National Parks in England, Wales and Scotland as well as Paul Hamblin, the Director of the English National Parks Authorities Association. The meeting combined a series of presentations on relevant topical issues as well as a tour of the Forest with representatives from the Forestry Commission and The National Trust.

13 Member Services

The Member Services section has been involved in facilitating preparations for Authority and committee meetings, providing committee and member support and following up on actions arising from meetings (including arranging an informal Chairman's briefing session). Preparations are in hand for the 2008 Southern Parks Conference, which will be hosted by the Authority on 7 – 8 May 2008.

Member Services also worked on implementing action points identified in the Equality and Diversity Strategy.

Other work undertaken by the section included monitoring complaints and Freedom of Information requests received by the Authority. Member Services researched the complaints procedures of other national parks and presented a report to the Resources and Performance Committee meeting.

The section also provides support to the New Forest Consultative Panel and, in addition to arranging and supporting meetings of the Panel and a training event for new Panel members, has finalised the new Panel handbook, leaflet and welcome letter.

Member Services updated the Authority yearbook and arranged for its printing, and liaised with members of the ICT team and others to streamline the production of planning papers.

Corporate services

14 Human Resources

- Officers met Unison on 20 September to discuss a number of draft HR Policies. Both parties have agreed to review the proposed changes pending final versions being agreed and signed off. The next meeting is planned for 16 October.
- Following the approval of the Diversity and Equality Strategy at the Authority Meeting on 13 September the Equality Champions are now working on the action plan targets for Year One.
- Caroline Russell ARRC, Senior Occupational Health Adviser from Occupational Health Ltd has given staff an overview of what services and support she and her team can provide. Our first priority will be to maintain the very low sickness absence figures by looking at the wellbeing aspect of the health of our staff.
- As at the end of September the Authority had 65 permanent members of staff of whom 11 are part time, 9 are on fixed term contracts and 1 post is externally funded. There are four vacancies currently in the Authority, one Compliance Officer Planning (2 year fixed term contract), one part time Web Developer, two Senior Administration Assistants Planning (one permanent and one on a fixed term contract). The Authority is also recruiting to provide maternity cover for one year from January for the HR Manager.

- This month Robert Riding, Planning Officer, left to take up a new post with Winchester City Council. Claire Hallett joined as a Planning Officer on 4 October, Mark Stephenson joined on 8 October as the new Building Conservation Officer and Deborah Slade will join us on the 3 December from Cambridgeshire County Council as the second new Planning Officer.

15 ICT

- The overall spam count as a proportion of all email sent to the Authority is still high but reducing from last month's high. The Authority's Messagelabs spam filter has now been set to try and trap suspected spam email besides known spam email. ICT Services will monitor the effectiveness of this during October.
- The Authority is now making use of Google Analytics to monitor its web service delivery. This is proving to have been a good choice and ANPA and the Lakes District National Park are now using this Google service too.
- There have been two meetings with National Park Portal technical staff this past month, one hosted at the Authority for the first time and the other with the Wales and West ICT Officers hosted at Dartmoor. The Authority is in a good position and slightly ahead of the more established parks in most areas of Portal use.

16 Finance and Performance

- The external auditors presented the draft Annual Governance Report to the Resources and Performance Committee on 25 September. For the second year running the report gives an unqualified audit opinion on the Authority's financial management, and approves the statement of internal control.
- The auditors gave a 'qualified by exception' conclusion on the Authority's value for money arrangements. Areas identified for further development included data quality, risk strategy, probity and propriety.
- The Management Board received the consultant's initial report on the future options for the Authority's financial management system, analysing five options. Her recommendations are being followed up with the aim of presenting conclusions to the Resources and Performance Committee in November.
- Minister Jonathan Shaw MP has responded positively to a request from the Chairman to visit the Authority to discuss, amongst other things, its funding. Defra has confirmed that it will restore two years' worth of support for planning, totalling £260,000 which it had omitted from the Authority's core grant.

- The Authority has submitted a bid for £200,000 for partnership work in 2007/08 consistent with the offer in Jim Knight's letter of April 2006.

17 Accommodation

- The Authority has submitted planning applications to New Forest District Council to extend its occupancy at South Efford for a further three years and negotiations on renewing the lease of the buildings/land are nearing completion.

Recommendation

To note the report.