



# NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK PLAN

## Notes from the south-west Parish and Town Councils meeting, held on 16 April 2009

This paper provides a summary of the main points made at the meeting of the Parish and Town Councils in the south west of the National Park, held on Thursday 16 April 2009 at Brockenhurst Parish Hall.

The event was attended by 10 councillors representing 7 parishes and towns. These are listed in Annex 1.

The session was introduced and chaired by Jeremy Heron, member of the New Forest National Park Authority and Ringwood Town Councillor. The Chairman explained that the purpose of the meeting was for those present to emphasise any major points they wished the National Park Authority to take into account, and to make suggestions for changes to the National Park Plan on some of the key issues raised by their Councils. He noted that all the comments made during the consultation had been looked at carefully.

Tony Spence of the National Park Authority summarised the major topics of concern or interest arising from the consultation, with particular reference to the comments made by the local councils in the south west of the Park, together with suggestions made by the topic working groups. The meeting discussion was broadly structured around these topics. A summary of the main points made during the discussion is given below.

### Zoning

- There was little support for the proposed Zoning approach. However, there was recognition of the principle that there are more sensitive and tranquil areas in the Forest (including the coastal areas in Zone 2) and they do need protection. It was considered that current legislation (such as for the European nature conservation sites eg. SAC, SPA) already provides some protection without the designation of 'zones'.
- There was concern that Zone 3 will be 'downgraded' and would become a 'dumping' zone for all the activities and development that were not wanted in Zone 1 and Zone 2.
- It was noted that it would be difficult to combine both recreational activities and economic development in the zoning concept. There was some support for the idea that zoning should only involve recreational activities.
- There was concern that restrictive zoning within the National Park could lead to development pressures in a 'fourth zone' in the countryside immediately outside the Park. This appears inappropriate as land immediately outside the Park often shares many similar characteristics to the countryside within the Park.
- It was suggested that the New Forest has remained 'special' over history, and, therefore, there is no need for further 'legislation' to control certain areas.

- It was questioned whether the 'zoning' approach would add weight to development control decisions.
- The word 'zoning' is emotive and raises concerns that it could lead to similar relocation as in the post World War Two clearances.
- There was concern that excursion tours / coach parties and day-trips can affect the 'sensitive' areas – it was questioned where these visitors would be directed to in this zoning approach?

### **Service villages and affordable housing**

- There was support for the view that affordable housing should be for those who work in the local community (many Forest workers are priced out of the housing market). Some would like to see affordable housing for key workers and others that provide services in village communities (eg. Doctors / teachers / the fire service etc)
- There were concerns about the approach of providing a high percentage of affordable housing for new dwellings. There was a concern that a lack of market housing could push up the price of market houses.
- It was suggested that affordable housing should be for families and local people
- It was questioned whether planning gain could be important in the provision of affordable housing.
- There was recognition that the draft South East Plan currently states that there should be 11 houses built in the National Park per year. Whilst the NPA believes this should be regarded purely as an estimate, one view questioned whether this level could be exceeded and whether all new dwellings could be located in one place.
- There was agreement that not all development should be directed to the Service Villages, with none elsewhere. It was recognised that the draft Plan makes proposals for development outside the Service Villages through 'exception' sites for affordable housing, and in existing buildings and home working for employment. Some considered that modest 'natural' development would be appropriate for Service Villages and elsewhere in the Park.
- There was concern that both Brockenhurst and Sway are already 'full', and there is no infrastructure capacity for further population growth eg. schools and doctors have no further capacity.
- The term 'Service' Village was strongly opposed and it was suggested that it should be dropped, as these villages should not be seen as repositories.
- It was noted that Brockenhurst and (to a lesser extent) Sway act as 'gateways' for visitors to the Park due to their train connections. This ensures that these villages benefit from tourism and thus retain a wider range of services and shops.
- There was support for development in commoning and forestry outside the Service Villages.
- There were mixed views about the settlement hierarchy. There was a suggestion that the Park could adopt four tiers of settlements, as proposed in the New Forest District Council's Core Strategy. A view was expressed that the four 'Service Villages' had little in common and should not be grouped together.
- It was suggested that the NPA should lobby for essential utilities and infrastructure for all Park communities.
- There was a request for policies not to be overly prescriptive.

## Traffic and transport

- The majority did not support the concept of road pricing, even though the validity in certain situations was discussed. Most agreed that the need for managing traffic was important, particularly given the likely growth of visitors and cross-traffic from planned growth in surrounding towns and cities. There was general agreement that the Plan should consider ways to manage the cross-Forest through traffic.
- There was general support for the 'Cango' bus service and a request that a wider service should be considered.
- There was a general view that signage is intrusive and should be minimised.
- It was suggested that the NPA should promote the use of cycle tracks and paths.
- A participant thought that there should be fewer caravans.
- There was a view that car travel could be reduced if more shops/facilities were established in some of the smaller villages.

## Socio-economic issues

- The majority would like all villages in the Park to be sustainable, and the Forest to remain a place where people live and work.
- There was general concern about second homes as they are considered detrimental for local communities. It was noted, however, that the recent national debate had not provided many solutions.
- Various views were expressed about the type of business that would be appropriate for the National Park.
  - Some thought that businesses in the Park should be related to the Forest (such as commoning or forestry) or local communities (such as providers of local services eg. plumbers).
  - Others thought that employment and business development should mostly create jobs for local people.
  - It was also suggested that year round businesses should be promoted, rather than seasonal tourist ones. More 'value-added' tourism should be considered, particularly as some campsites were now more self-contained and added less to the local economy.
  - There was a view that farm diversification should be encouraged, but concern that if farmers sold off some of their land and buildings this could be detrimental to the character of the Park.
- There was concern about the loss of farm and village shops, which provide an important service to local communities. However, it was noted that it was hard for these to compete against large supermarkets in surrounding towns. It was also noted that a farm shop had recently closed because of the rules surrounding the amount of local produce being sold.
- There was a suggestion that the Park should avoid turning into a 'theme park', and that the focus of activity should be on benefitting the local economy. This view suggested that policies were too restrictive and schemes funded by Defra are sometimes not pursued because of strict planning rules.
- It was considered that sustainable land management is not always economically viable, and, therefore, ways need to be found to support commoning (including the possibility of subsidies) to help protect the Forest.

## Recreational horse keeping

- Various views were expressed about the proposed horse keeping policies.
  - One view was that the problems with the policies were the technical issues and not the concept itself. It was suggested that there were examples of where horse keeping was visually detrimental to the landscape.
  - It was suggested that welfare concerns could be considered by the RSPCA.
  - It was noted that horse keeping requires the provision of water, and adds to traffic. There may be simple solutions to some of the visual issues including the use of 'green' fencing and plastic covers to better blend in with the landscape.
  - It was noted that if any policy is not enforceable then it is unlikely to work.
  - It was suggested that advice should be sought from the horse owning community, but it was also suggested that no one group should dominate the influence on the NPA to the detriment of others.
  - There was concern that restrictive policies force farmers to sell off land to be used by horse keepers. This should be avoided by allowing less restrictive policies for farmers.

## Other key issues raised

- There was a suggestion that the NPA should 'join up' cycle tracks and paths that exist in the Forest and extend them through some of the villages.
- It was noted that it is not clear to what extent the proposed Development Control policies carry forward the existing New Forest District Council Local Plan policies.
- It was suggested that the Authority should have a stronger commitment to using Parish Plans and Village Design Statements. It was noted that these were rarely referred to during Planning Committee discussions of planning applications. It was also noted that New Forest District Council had a specific policy for Parish Plans and that it had a Community Development Officer that encourages Parishes to produce Plans (the Authority confirmed that this Officer also covered Parishes in the National Park).
- It was noted that Parish Plans can be a gateway to funding sources, particularly relating to low level schemes for community support.
- It was suggested that a rise in sea level could affect Keyhaven, and it should be included in any coastal protection schemes. It was noted that a Shoreline Management Plan will cover this part of the coast.
- There was a suggestion that the Authority should champion the protection of the Forest against a number of varied issues including; light pollution, aircraft noise, and large ferries.

## 3. Next steps

These notes will be circulated to all participants – please let us know as soon as possible if you feel these do not reflect the main points raised at the meeting.

The notes will then be published on the National Park Authority website, together with the notes from the other meetings with parishes and towns, and the main outcomes of the working group meetings.

All these views will be fully considered by the National Park Authority when deciding on revisions to the National Park Plan.

## **ANNEX 1**

### **South West Parishes Meeting 16 April 2009**

#### **Participants:**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Representative</b>
Brockenhurst Parish Council	Cllr J.T. Masefield
	Cllr Gordon Taylor
Burley Parish Council	Cllr Veronica Johnstone
	Cllr Bridget Taylor
Hordle Parish Council	Cllr Peter Smith
	Cllr Ken Wells
Milford Parish Council	Cllr Sophie Beeton
Ringwood Town Council	Cllr Angela Wiseman
Sopley Parish Council	Cllr Lewis
Sway Parish Council	Cllr Ian Straw
NPA Member	Cllr Jeremy Heron (Chair)
NPA Member	Vicky Myers
NPA Officer	Lindsay Cornish
NPA Officer	Richard Lemon
NPA Officer	Tony Spence
NPA Officer	Jeff Clarke