

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
AUTHORITY MEETING – 11 DECEMBER 2008**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

**Report by:** Lindsay Cornish, Chief Executive

**Summary:**

This report covers the period since the last Authority meeting on 16 October except planning development control and enforcement which covers activity in October and November.

**Recommendation:**

**To note the report**

**Paper:**

**NFNPA 274/08:** Cover paper

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- 1 This report covers the period since the last Authority meeting on 16 October except planning development control and enforcement which covers activity in October and November.

**Members**

- 2 Some members were involved in some or all of the following meetings and events:
  - SEERA Assembly Plenary meeting, 17 October
  - National Park Societies Conference, 17-19 October
  - Planning Development Control Committee, 21 October
  - Code of Conduct briefing for members, 21 October
  - Visit by Danish representatives from the Board of Naturturisme I/S, local District Councils, and Mayors of the South Funen Archipelago, 23 October
  - New Forest Consultative Panel, 6 November
  - Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing meeting, 11 November
  - Sift of applications for Secretary of State member appointment, 13 November
  - Planning Development Control Committee, 18 November
  - Campaign for National Parks Council meeting, 18 November
  - New Forest Centre, Executive Management Group, 20 November
  - Beaulieu Estate dinner, 21 November
  - Standards Committee, 24 November
  - Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association meeting, 28 November
  - South East Protected Landscapes Autumn Chairman's meeting, 28 November
  - Defra Chairs meeting, 1 December
  - New Forest Access Forum, 1 December
  - Resources and Performance Committee, 4 December
  - Chairman's informal briefing session, 4 December
  - Local Strategic Partnership, 5 December
  - Meeting with Leader of Hampshire County Council, 5 December
  - Core Strategy Joint Member Advisory Group, 9 December

3 Forthcoming activities include:

- Planning Development Control Committee meeting, 16 December
- New Forest Consultative Panel, 8 January
- Resources and Performance Committee, 19 January (tbc)
- Planning Development Control Committee, 20 January

## **DELIVERY OF NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS**

### **Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development**

4 **Partnership working**

#### **Funding**

- Officers from the Authority and New Forest District Council met a SEEDA representative to discuss eligibility issues arising from a number of the initial LEADER expressions of interest. Officers attended the Local Action Group meeting to discuss and provide advice on the first major batch of expressions of interest that were submitted to the new LEADER programme for approval.
- Work has continued with the New Forest Livestock Society to progress several funding applications for the proposed improvements to Beaulieu Road Sales Yard.
- The External funding Officer attended the Funding Fayre at Lyndhurst Community Centre organised by Community Action New Forest, to provide details of the Sustainable Development Fund, Small Grants Scheme and LEADER funding. The Authority has also provided follow-up funding advice for a number of the community groups who attended the Fayre.

5 **Corporate Plan**

#### **Landscape (C1)**

- The Landscape Officer has been working with Network Rail to review their management of trees beside the main railway line between Beaulieu Road and Woodfidley. Existing trees, which effectively screen the railway, may be under threat of removal by Network Rail as part of their maintenance regimes.

#### **Nature Conservation (C3)**

- The Authority's Ecologist attended the Steering group for the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan and chaired the Local Authority sub-group for the Action Plan. The Biodiversity Partnership has reviewed progress over the last two years against objectives within the county plan and reported conclusions to the national monitoring

system. Local authority ecologists have agreed to monitor the effectiveness of the 1-APP biodiversity checklist which is now being used by authorities in Hampshire. The group identified the need for further guidance for applicants and work is underway in partnership with Hampshire County Council Environment group to try to produce something that meets everyone's needs.

- The Authority's Ecologist attended the Open Forest Advisory Committee where the Forestry Commission reviews management operations and outlines their plans for future works on the Open Forest to consult stakeholders such as the Commoners' Defence Association. The burning programme for the coming winter season was agreed and a further programme of SSSI restoration works (e.g. mire restoration) is proposed this winter. Whilst the issue of ragwort control was discussed, those present accepted it had been a difficult year and that the Forestry Commission had devoted considerable resources to control the plant. It was suggested that more could be done to coordinate action of various landowners including the Highways Agency and that this could be a role for the National Park Authority in future.

### **Conservation of cultural heritage (C6)**

- Work has progressed with the National Mapping Programme, The National Monuments Record and the Aerial Survey teams at English Heritage to progress the New Forest Coast Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment (the recently approved Heritage Lottery Funded project) and to secure funding from the Heritage Environment Enabling Programme for this project.
- The Historic mapping project has progressed after discussions with the Geo-data unit at Southampton University to obtain and geo-rectify the Tithe and Enclosure award maps held in the National Archive.
- It is also now expected that a full set of Luftwaffe aerial views of the Park can be obtained. These photographs would provide the first complete national aerial photographic coverage and could be analysed to the National Mapping Programme standards increasing the available knowledge of the Forest in the 1940s.
- Discussions have taken place in respect of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 'D' day in 2009 and it is hoped that research in the National Archive will uncover new material such as maps and other 'top secret' war time documents for the New Forest that have not been seen previously.

### **Climate Change work (C8)**

- The Sustainable Development Fund Officer has participated in several meetings of the New Forest Transition Group

(a community based group looking to promote more sustainable communities in the New Forest) to help them prepare for the Heat Exchange event which took place in Brockenhurst and to help with planning for future sustainable energy work.

- The Authority has joined the Public Sector Sustainable Development Group which is coordinating action for Authorities in Hampshire to meet the carbon emissions targets in the Hampshire Local Area Agreement.
- Discussions have taken place with New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission about setting up a Community Action Network Group on climate change and environmental issues as part of the Local Strategic Partnership.

### **Recreation (U5)**

- The Recreation Officer and Head of Visitor Services have attended a number of commoners' drifts as part of a trial to see if the Authority could help the Verderers and Agisters with visitor management. Early indications are that this has been helpful and an evaluation of the Authority's presence is being prepared in advance of potential future involvement next year.
- The Authority and Forestry Commission will be piloting a fully integrated training programme for Seasonal Rangers from several organisations in the National Park next March. The training will run over a two week period and include guidance on a range of New Forest related issues.
- A Ranger Forum for the National Park has now been established following a successful meeting at the end of September. The Forum will meet twice annually; it comprises of eight different organisations, has over 20 members, aims to provide a co-ordinated approach to resources, training, delivery of key messages, good practice guides and have it's own web page. This Forum also links directly to the existing Educators' Forum.

### **Traffic, transport and tourism (U2)**

- The Transport Officer attended the launch of the Dorset Rural Roads Protocol; an innovative partnership between the Dorset AONB and Dorset County Council. The outcome of the protocol is that all decisions affecting the highway environment in Dorset will promote the conservation and enhancement of its landscape, whilst delivering a safe a convenient network for all modes of travel. The Authority is arranging for the Dorset AONB to brief Hampshire County Council on the Rural Roads Protocol in an effort to create a similar protocol in the New Forest/Hampshire.

## **Access (U6)**

- The Authority assisted the Access Forum in organising and running a meeting and their annual Workshop. The Workshop was very successful with over 60 delegates attending who represented Parish Councils, recreational user groups and land managers. Some interesting ideas and suggestions were proposed as to how recreational access within the central part of the Forum's area could be improved. All suggestions will be considered at the December meeting of the Forum, and those agreed by Forum members will be passed on as formal advice to appropriate organisations.
- In a joint initiative with Hampshire County Council and the two local access forums, a Parish Conference was organised for representatives from all Hampshire Parish Councils. Delegates were informed about the help that is available to Parish Councils and the ways that Parish Councils can improve their own rights of way and other countryside access. Information about the Sustainable Development Fund, LEADER, and other possible sources of funding was also made available via a 'marketplace' stand.

## **Sustainable development (SE1)**

- Extensive site visits were carried out with the National Trust to look at Bramshaw, Hightown, Rockford, Ibsley, Plaitford, West Wellow, Canada, Half Moon and Cadnam Commons which are to be included in an application for Higher Level Stewardship Grant Scheme. The entire National Trust landholding within the Park is involved and Farm Environment Plans have now been prepared for these land holdings (including details of 126 known archaeological monuments). Completed reports on their Historic Landscape Character have been submitted.
- Work has continued with directors of New Forest Produce Ltd to support and develop an application for LEADER funding for the next phase of the New Forest Marque scheme.
- Meetings have taken place with applicants to the Commoners Dwelling Scheme to discuss the design and location of proposed new dwellings.
- Officers also attended a Hampshire County Council Workshop to discuss their Rural Delivery Strategy.

### *Sustainable Development Fund*

The Sustainable Development Fund Officer has:

- continued to work with Lyndhurst Community Centre Committee to help them progress their renewable energy project
- attended the opening of the new Beaulieu bus shelter and viewpoint
- given a presentation about the Sustainable Development Fund to the board of New Forest Business Partnership.

The Sustainable Development Fund Panel have recently approved funding from the Sustainable Development Fund for the following projects:

- installation of utilities at Beaulieu Road Sales Yard
- New Forest Sustainable Schools Outreach (working with local schools to increase their environmental sustainability)
- feasibility study for a biomass district heating system at Foxlease
- development of volunteers eco house at Avon Tyrrell
- the development of two eco-bedrooms at a local bed and breakfast establishment.

## **Information and Visitor Services**

### **6 Corporate Plan**

- All 46 timber boundary markers remain in good shape. Negotiations for trunk road boundary signs (for the A36, A31 and M27) continue. **(U3)**
- A summary of publicised events for 2008 has been completed and the 2009 programme is being planned to ensure timely liaison with partners and inclusion in advance publicity. **(U3)**
- The mobile information and interpretation unit (the National Park Explorer) provided the Authority with an excellent 'platform' from which to engage with local people and visitors. Feedback has been very positive and the unit will operate for a longer season in 2009. Various developments are planned, including additional training for the Mobile Unit Ranger, themed weeks, more work with schools and self-led or guided walks. **(U3)**
- All three Local Information Points are working well. Exterior signage is being arranged. **(U3)**
- Sets of 16 education factsheets are packaged ready to send out to about 80 local schools. **(U4)**
- The leaflet, poster and postcard specifically to promote the Park's special qualities continue to be popular. The special qualities will be promoted in next year's official tourism publications produced by New Forest District Council. **(A1, U3)**

- Improvements to the look, feel and content of the website continue on a regular basis. Work is being undertaken on the Visiting pages and the aim is to add more information on wildlife and rangers. **(A1)**
- A 'forest trumps' game is being developed for the Funzone on the website. This will highlight the special qualities of various iconic New Forest animals, buildings, sites etc. **(U4)**
- Early discussions have started about the Authority's presence at the New Forest Show in 2009, including agreement to share ideas about emerging themes with New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission. **(A1, U3)**

## 7 Partnership working

- Officers wait to hear from Hampshire Highways officers about progressing the pilot sign rationalisation programme on the B3054 Lymington to Dibden Purlieu road. This will include new animal accidents warning signs. **(U3)**
- The consultation responses received about the draft Recreation Management Strategy are being analysed to help the process of drawing up options for revisions and improvements. **(U1)**
- The pilot Coastal Ranger post (joint with Hampshire County Council) has played a fundamental role in engaging with local people and visitors along the coastline of the National Park this year. Opportunities to continue this important work next year and expand the role to add to the number of events and activities, and include more community outreach and school support work are being assessed. **(U5)**
- A report on progress in the Agreement with the Ninth Centenary Trust at the New Forest Centre, including an assessment of value for money, was prepared for the December meeting of the Resources and Performance Committee as requested by members. **(U3)**
- A tour, with partners, of sites where the feeding of ponies is a particular issue has resulted in a range of proposals to reduce the problem. This is being discussed by the Verderers in December. **(U3)**
- Plans are in hand to repeat the joint RSPB, Forestry Commission, Carnyx Films and National Park 'Aren't Birds Brilliant! *in the New Forest*' project in 2009. Developments should include higher quality images, and more use of the awning. **(U3)**
- Initial discussions about offering some teacher training and student sessions jointly with New Forest Centre and Forestry Commission education staff have been held. **(U4)**

- Plans for the 2009 Spring Clean are in hand with New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission, including new work with schools. Officers are also looking at litter bins in forest villages to see if these could be made more forest-friendly and pony-proof. **(U3)**
- The autumn edition of *New Forest Today* magazine has been published jointly with New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission and work is under way on the 2009 edition of *Forest Focus* jointly with the Forestry Commission. **(A1, U3)**
- Work to support a funding bid to SEEDA for a sustainable tourism project is progressing. If successful the project will promote sustainable tourism across nine South East Protected Landscapes, linked to the special qualities of each. The bid has the support of New Forest District Council Tourism Service and the New Forest Tourism Association. **(SE1)**

## 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. Issues arising from the draft National Park Plan and the draft Recreation Management Strategy continued to prompt many media enquiries. **(A1, U3)**
- Work started to investigate income generation ideas under the guidance of an Income Generation working group including members from the Resources and Performance Committee. **(A1)**

## Planning Policy

### 9 Corporate Plan

#### **Corporate Plan Objective A3: Management Plan and Objective A4: Spatial Planning Policies**

- The team's work in October and November continued to focus on the on-going consultation for the draft National Park Plan, which closed on 14 November. To date 2,250 copies of the National Park Plan have been printed, with the majority sent out. During the last two months the Policy and Plans team have continued to log and acknowledge the comments received (including those submitted via the on-line consultation system) as well as dealing with queries. Staff and some members have also attended a number of meetings on the draft National Park Plan including Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst, Ashurst and Sway Parish Councils, East Boldre Parish Council, the New Forest Drivers' Association, Natural England, Bramshaw Parish Council, the New Forest Consultative Panel, Netley Marsh Parish Council, Godshill Parish Council,

Woodgreen Parish Council, Hightown Hill Residents' Association and the New Forest Access Forum.

## 10 Other work

- The Authority attended the public exhibition in early October on initial proposals for local needs affordable housing in Tiptoe with housing officers at New Forest District Council and the Rural Housing Enabler. There is no planning application for the site and the Authority attended to hear local views on initial proposals by Hyde Martlet Housing Association.
- The Policy and Plans team attended the Local Strategic Partnership meeting at Appletree Court in early October where the Sustainable Communities Strategy was discussed, and the Local Strategic Partnership's response to the draft National Park Plan.
- Sarah Applegate attended the Wiltshire County Council Waste Core Strategy hearings in Trowbridge on 7 – 8 October which included debate on the potential transport impacts on the New Forest National Park from waste developments in Wiltshire. The hearing into the Wiltshire County Council Minerals Core Strategy takes place on 5 – 7 November, and includes discussion on environmental protection.
- Nick Evans and Claire Gingell attended the Community Planning Surgery held at Lyndhurst Community Centre. Discussion focussed on the various Parish / Town Plan actions across the National Park.
- The Policy and Plans team have also responded to three important consultation documents in the last month:
  - i the Government's Proposed Changes to the South East Plan;
  - ii the Government's Proposed Changes to the South West Plan; and
  - iii the Salisbury District Council Core Strategy.
- The Authority's response to the South East Plan welcomes the additional protection afforded to the setting of the National Park in the Government's proposed changes, but raises serious concerns about the proposed annual housing requirement for the National Park. The Authority has also repeated its objection to Salisbury District Council referring to settlements within the National Park within their Core Strategy.

## 11 Development Control

During **October** the Development Control unit carried out the following work:

**Planning applications: received 75.** Applications were registered within three working days following receipt.

**Planning decisions: 113 issued**, of which 88 were approved (78%) and 25 were refused (22%). Five applications were withdrawn. Nine (8%) of these decisions were made by the Planning Committee at the meeting held on 21 October 2008.

76% of householder applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 80%); and 59% of minor applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 65%).

**Live planning applications: 315 at 31 October**, compared with 359 at 30 September.

**Appeals: Twelve new appeals** received this month. There were nine appeal decisions in October of which three were dismissed, five allowed and one was withdrawn.

**Enforcement: 57 new enforcement cases** were registered in October and 32 cases were closed. There were 301 outstanding enforcement cases at the end of the month. No Notices were served during October.

During **November** the Development Control unit carried out the following work:

- **Planning applications: received 65.** Applications were registered within three working days following receipt.
- **Planning decisions: 72 issued**, of which 59 were approved (82%) and 13 were refused (18%). Five applications were withdrawn. Eight (11%) of these decisions were made by the Planning Committee at the meeting held on 18 November 2008.
- 80% of householder applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 80%); and 79% of minor applications were determined within eight weeks (the target is 65%).
- **Live planning applications: 304 at 30 November**, compared with 315 at 31 October.
- **Appeals: Four new appeals** received this month. There were eight appeal decisions in November of which six were dismissed, two allowed and one was withdrawn.

- **Enforcement: 36 new enforcement cases** were registered in November and 46 cases were closed. There were 288 outstanding enforcement cases at the end of the month. One Enforcement Notice, one Breach of Condition Notice and one Untidy Site Notice were served during November.
- The tree team was consulted on 13 planning applications during November, 10 of which were returned within the 21 day target. There are 3 still live, in time. **(Corporate Plan Objective A5, C7)**
- Forty six tree work applications were registered during November and 25 determined. The target for determining applications is 80% within 8 weeks of registration. 96% were determined within the 8 week target date. One Tree Preservation Order was made.

## 12 Environmental Design

- The team was consulted by Development Control on 49 applications during October, 27 of which were returned within the 21 day target. **(Corporate Plan Objective A5, C7)**
- Forty five tree work applications were registered during October and 45 determined, 100% of which within the eight week target date. Six Tree Preservation Orders were made.
- The review of conservation areas in the National Park as set out in **Corporate Plan Objective C7** is continuing. Following the designation of four new conservation areas the review has moved on to look at the boundaries of the existing conservation areas. A review of the three conservation areas, Beaulieu, Bucklers Hard and Exbury took place with a public display on 8 October. As a result further amendments are proposed to the boundary of Beaulieu conservation area and a further consultation period is in place until 12 December. At the same time the review continues with the conservation areas of Burley and Fritham and details of proposed boundary changes will be on display and copies of character appraisals will be available at Fritham Free Church on 10 December from 14:00 to 17:30 and at Burley Village Hall on 11 December from 14:00 to 20:30. Survey work has commenced in Brockenhurst.
- The Authority's Conservation Areas Management Plan, approved at the October meeting of the National Park Authority, will be published and work will start on conservation area management plans for individual areas.
- Work is continuing on the preparation of a draft Building Design Guide, for consultation later in the year/early next year. **(Corporate Plan Objective A4)**

- Work is continuing on a project to identify the ancient/veteran tree resource in the Park to formulate methods for future strategic management of the resource and engagement with stakeholders. A pilot survey is planned for completion by the end of December for a limited number of sites and this will be undertaken using volunteer rangers co-ordinated by the Forestry Commission. The data gathered will be submitted to the Ancient Tree Hunt and copied to the Authority for distribution as required to other key stakeholders.
- The Authority was represented at the National Park Historic Environment Group annual autumn meeting.
- A meeting was attended with Beaulieu Estate and their agents on the repair of Beaulieu Mill. A first phase of this project is now planned for the new year. An application for listed building consent for various elements of work will be made in due course. This is an important historic building in the park.

### 13 Member Services

- The Member Services section has been involved in facilitating preparations for Authority and committee meetings including arrangements for the large number of speakers at the last Authority meeting, providing committee and member support and following up on actions arising from meetings. The Section has also assisted the Monitoring Officer in drafting several reports to the Authority and its committees. Member Services also provided support to the New Forest Consultative Panel meeting on 6 November 2008.
- The Section has been involved in monitoring complaints and Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests received by the Authority, has facilitated responses on a number of detailed requests received on the Authority's National Park Plan and Recreation Management Strategy and has taken over responsibility for Data Protection for a trial period with a view to assessing the potential of taking on this function on a permanent basis. Members of the team have recently undertaken training in Freedom of Information and Data Protection and will shortly attend a course on the Environmental Information Regulations.
- The team has completed updating the members' 2009 yearbook and diary pages – this publication contains useful information and the dates of the Authority and committee meetings for the coming year. Copies have been distributed to all members and relevant officers.
- The team was involved in organising several member events including the quarterly Chairman's informal briefing for Authority members on 4 December 2008.

## Corporate Services

### 14 Business Support

- Richard Lemon has temporarily taken over responsibility for Health and Safety following the departure of Barry Holland.
- In the second quarter 97.13% of suppliers invoices were paid within 30 days (target: 95%).

### 15 Human resources

As of 30 November 2008 there are 68 members of staff or 63.22 full time equivalents, of whom 12 are part time and eight are on a fixed term contract.

- Claire Hallett, Planning Officer in Development Control left the Authority on 17 October. We wish her well in her future career.
- Barry Holland, Director of Corporate Services, left the Authority on 12 November at the end of his two year contract. We wish him every success in his future ventures.
- Andy Brennan, Seasonal Mobile Unit Ranger, left the Authority at the end of his contract following a very successful short season operating the new Mobile Unit. We hope he enjoys his winter season job in the French ski resorts.
- Recruitment began for a Planning Officer in Development Control, maternity cover for the Receptionist post and for the re-shaped role of Head of Performance and Administration.
- Fiaz Shah started permanent employment with the Authority on 27 October as a Systems Support Administrator.
- Chris Harvey started permanent employment with the Authority on 10 November as Senior Administration Assistant.

### 16 ICT

- The electronic document management pilot project is underway with four key areas (consultation, complaints, HR and photo library) to determine the suitability of Microsoft SharePoint as a solution for the Authority's needs. **(A1)**
- Testing and further development of the Contact Management System is underway, with data from the existing corporate Access database being migrated into the new system. **(A1)**

## **17 Finance and performance**

- An oral update of issues considered by the Resources and Performance Committee on 4 December is a separate agenda item.
- Defra has recently confirmed the National Park grant for the second year of the three year settlement 2008/9 – 2010/11 as set out in December 2006. The Authority's Financial Strategy and Budget forecast for 2009/10 – 2011/12 is a separate agenda item. A budget for 2009/10 will be presented for Authority consideration at the February 2009 meeting.

### **Recommendation**

**To note the report.**