



NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK PLAN

Notes from the north-east Parish and Town Councils meeting, held on 5 May 2009

This paper provides a summary of the main points made at the meeting of the Parish and Town Councils in the north east of the National Park, held at Bramshaw Village Hall, Bramshaw on Tuesday 5 May 2009.

The event was attended by 13 councillors representing 7 parishes, as listed in Annex 1, as well as 4 National Park Authority members.

The session was introduced and chaired by Mr Bob Morris, member of the New Forest National Park Authority and a Landford parish 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.

David Illsley 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 north east of the Park, together with suggestions made by the topic working groups where relevant. 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 a strong plea to make the definition of the zoning on the maps much clearer.
- There was a general concern that Zone 3 appeared to be 'opened-up to development'. The Zoning Policy was thought to create pressures for: a ring of new development around the edge of the Park; the re-use of redundant farm buildings for employment uses in Zone 1 in the north of the Park (where the road system is inadequate) and for additional tourism in Zone 3.
- The relocation of facilities to Zone 3 was discussed. There was support for the views that villages in Zone 3 have similar characteristics to villages elsewhere in the Park and that land throughout the National Park should be viewed as being of a similar status.
- Strategically, why have zoning? Many felt that Zones are not needed – existing planning policies would suffice. An explanation of how the Zoning Policy would be used was given. Zoning could help to emphasise the different qualities of different parts of the Park. In the long term the policy may help with the planned relocation of some of the high level impact activities.
- There was a general feeling that there should not be a 4th Zone to allow for socio-

economic development (as suggested by some consultees). This would make the Policy even more complicated. Some felt that a Zoning approach was better suited as an approach to the Recreation Management Strategy.

- The difficulties of Parishes being 'part-within' and 'part-without' the National Park area were discussed. Some felt that the policies were 'Hampshire based' and did not reflect concerns in Wiltshire where villages did not want development 'pushed' their way. There was concern about the amount of leverage the Park Authority would have on neighbouring authorities contemplating development (recent experiences concerning minerals and waste proposals in Wiltshire were cited).
- Overall there was a feeling that the Zoning policy complicates the planning policy situation and this makes it more difficult for Parishes to understand. Existing planning policies will suffice.

Service villages and affordable housing

- Concern that the 4 identified Service villages would become 'dumping grounds for development'. There should be a 'Park-wide' approach to new development. The proposed Service Villages experience traffic problems and infrastructure problems. They can accommodate some development but not all of it. Could they not be called 'Conservation Villages' or 'Defined Villages? New development should be spread across the National Park.
- The terminology is not sensitive enough. There is too much concern about the role of Service Villages and housing. Nominating villages that provide services may have some merit. The established character of the proposed Service Villages should be captured and recognised and used to underpin the policy approach.
- Parish Plans have a role to play – they should be considered as Community Plans. Parish Plans promote good levels of community spirit. Issues about over-development can be tackled through Village Design Statements. Community Partnerships can be developed to deliver actions identified in Parish Plans.
- Many found that the affordable housing process leads to mistrust. Some parish efforts to bring forward exception sites have met with difficult, unforeseen problems and subsequently failed. Local people do not always qualify for affordable housing when it is built in their village. Allocation is on a point-scoring basis and there is no guarantee that local people will be successful. There is a need to combine local housing registers with those for Commoners' housing needs.
- Affordable housing schemes are often not small scale. They need to be a certain size to be economic from the Housing Association point of view. Some Parish communities have no more appetite for more affordable houses in their village because of their experiences. They might prefer schemes for shared ownership or small open market housing. There were cautious messages about initial promises made by Housing Association that did not materialise.

Traffic and transport

- There was some agreement with the summary of progress on these aspects.
- The impacts of 30mph schemes and the impact of extra signing were discussed

together with the issues resulting from the variation of speed limits from 30 to 40 to 30 and so on. It was suggested that the whole Park should be a 30mph zone.

- The benefits of closing access points to the A31 through the Park were appreciated the disadvantage would be that specific villages could see increased traffic flows as a result.
- There was concern that there was a co-ordinated approach to traffic and traffic proposals between the Park Authority, key delivery partners and all interested parties.
- The levels of provision of public transport in the Park area were thought to be inadequate. The A31 effectively cuts the Park in half and there was little provision for public transport to cross it. There was a lack of services after 8pm making it difficult for people wanting to travel for evening entertainment.

Socio-economic issues

- Small-scale businesses (internet-based) and home-based working (reducing commuting and the impact of delivery traffic) are needed to stop villages becoming dormitory settlements for surrounding larger towns.
- Forest cottage industries must be encouraged to keep villages alive. The sensitive use of outbuildings and redundant agricultural buildings was supported although the problem with them becoming future 'brownfield' sites (with development potential) was raised. Re-used redundant farms complexes can become stud farms with associated barns which then progress to light industry requiring more barns for horses. It was agreed that some buildings could be brought back, removing local eyesores and replacing them with well-designed developments. Section 106 agreements can be used to control the use of such buildings. There is a need to balance between being pro-active and avoiding schemes that have the potential to create problems.
- It was agreed that the best way to prevent farms from failing is to tackle the 'living on the edge' existence of some farmers. This would assist with the preservation of the countryside, its wide pastures and hedgerows.
- People wishing to return land for farming need help and support. Land can cost around £30,000 per acre. The role of 'hobby' farms and cottage farms was also discussed as these trends can cause problems.
- Maintaining the viability of village shops, stores, bakeries and post offices was a major concern. One Parish met with opposition when trying to publicise village facilities with signs on the highway. While the key message was 'if you don't use them you'll lose them', the essential role of the village Post Office as the community focus of a village was emphasised.
- The problem of people living in the village but working away was raised. A possible solution was publishing a Business Directory for the village (available on-line). There is a need to match skills locally to avoid the need for people having to come in from outside the Forest.

Recreational horse keeping

- Concern about defining what was animal grazing and what was a recreational horse – how do you decide?
- Land can be sold off in 1 acre plots at £35,000. This will never be returned into one ownership. This is an unwanted trend in the Park. The minority are upsetting it for the majority. When land has horses on and they are wormed can it be returned to agriculture?
- Horses are gregarious, so it is preferable to have two or even three together. Are there advantages in mixed grazing as on Exmoor?
- In parts of the Park where there is a shortage of grazing land and some recreational horse owners let their riding horses run on the Forest.
- Redundant farm buildings can convert well into livery stables – this prevents the subdivision of land. There is a need for more livery yards and the use of barns. The economic downturn is hitting horse keeping. Both horses and land are being lost because of the difficult economics. It should be just ‘horse keeping’ – lose the ‘recreational’ tag.
- Enforcement action should be retrospective although many people did not realise policies already existed and that they needed planning permission. It came as a huge shock to some of them.
- Larger stabling should be encouraged to overcome existing problems. Everyone should not have to deal with their own needs.

Other issues

- The views of Commoners are lost in the debate. It is a special way of life.
- Support for the Forest Marque and the Forest Breakfast – initiatives like these should be enhanced. Keep things local.
- The original document was well written but misread. NFNPA must take it on board – don’t twist or change it.
- Zoning is the burning issue.
- Recreational use of the Forest must be protected. The car parks are in an appalling state.
- Car parking and the tourist base. Where will the cars go in 10 years time?
- Viability/sustainability of local villages. They need more support.
- NFNPA needs to reconsider the terms ‘zoning’ and ‘service villages’
- Affordable Housing – get a good deal and make the Housing Association stick to their word. Affordable housing for local people.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ There has been much consensus around the table tonight. |
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Comments from Participants:

Zoning:

- The fourth bullet point is key and should be re-phrased to “*Most were strongly against any zoning at all.*” This should be the first bullet point as this is the most important.
Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council
- Zoning and Service Villages could be very well handled under NPA planning policies.
Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council

Service Villages and Affordable Housing:

- Bullet point 3 must be re-worded to emphasise the problems many parishes have with parish plans. It is essential that the elected Council is the first point of call for any issues raised by the NPA or indeed any other body. The current tendency to bypass the elected bodies must be repelled. The Community Plan people are welcome but only working within the remit provided by the elected Council.
Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council
- Bullet Point 4 and 5: It is essential that the elected Council decide on the type of affordable housing to be built, and that local people have absolute precedence in the allocation of those properties.
Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council

Traffic and Transport:

- The fourth bullet point is most important. The NPA cannot try to do these things on their own as it will lead to waste, confusion and chaos.
Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council
- Although the final bullet point does not greatly affect us insofar as the A31 is concerned, the final sentence is a critical point if car journeys in the Forest are to be reduced.
Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council

Other Issues:

- Bullet point 7 is a key statement.
Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council

Annex 1 Parish and Town Councils meeting – north east area, 5 May 2009

Participants:

Organisation	Representative
Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council	Mrs R S Arnold
Bramshaw Parish Council	Mr Ian Sandbrook Cllr Sue Bennison
Copythorne Parish Council	Mr Geraint James Mr Michael Moriarty
Landford Parish Council	Mr John Martin Mr Tony Reynolds
Minstead Parish Council	Mr William Andrews Mr Steve Cattell
Netley Marsh Parish Council	Cllr Ken Bowley Cllr Alan Brown
Wellow Parish Council	Ashley Browning Wendy Simpson
NPA Member	Bob Morris (Chairman)
NPA Member	Leo Randall
NPA Member	Tony Gentle
NPA Member	Kathy Heron