The New Forest Consultative Panel is a long-established forum of more than 75 representatives which meets every 2 months at Appletree Court. Its role since the early 1970’s has been to act as a sounding board for the statutory bodies of the Forest, but also to raise issues of concern or interest to the long-term conservation of the area.

Following the demise of the New Forest Committee, the New Forest National Park Authority is continuing to facilitate the running of Panel meetings, and to provide administrative and technical support. The intention is for this arrangement to continue until the National Park Authority takes a wider look at the structures and processes it needs to ensure a close relationship with its stakeholders.

Past practice has been for the parent body to exchange feedback with the Panel at alternate meetings. The draft minutes of the Panel meeting on 11 May 2005 are therefore attached at Annex A. Susan Carter provided an update on the inaugural meeting of the New Forest National Park Authority and also advised on progress with recruiting the Chief Executive. She alerted Panel Members to National Parks’ week with the theme of “Access and Outreach” to take place at the end of July. She then answered several questions from Panel Members about how the National Park Authority intended to pursue its planning function.

The following items were also discussed:

- Draft SE Plan.
- Ashurst-Lyndhurst cycle route.
- Avon Causeway works.
- Ragwort.
- Leader+ project update.
- Forestry Commission proposals to revise the Crown Lands Management Plan
- Forestry Commission communications.
- Tracks in the Forest - a presentation by the New Forest Equestrian Association (copies available from Laura Melonie at the NPA office).
- Litter bins in car-parks.
- Presentation by Mr Nelson of Sunnyfields Organic on an outline idea for a food, farming and environment centre.

Recommendation:

Members to note issues of interest at the meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel on Wednesday 11 May 2005, and that the date of the next Panel meeting is on 7 July.

Resources: n/a

Other major considerations: none
NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 194th Meeting, held in the Council Chamber, New Forest District Council offices, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, on WEDNESDAY, 11TH MAY 2005

Those present: Mr. Ted Johnson (Chairman)
Mr. Nick Evans (Panel Technical Officer)
Mrs. Linda Ryan (Panel Clerk/Secretary)

Members as shown on the Official List, with the exception of the following, for whom apologies were received.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr. Wood Brangsgore Parish Council
Cllr. Korbey Brockenhurst Parish Council
Cllr. Halford Burley Parish Council
Lord Montagu English Heritage
Mr. Lawton Hampshire County Council - Highways
Mr. Mason-Smith Hampshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services
Cllr. Dow Hyde Parish Council
Prof. Evans Institute of Chartered Foresters
Cllr. Morris Landford Parish Council
Cllr. Whitlock/Mr. Metcalf Milford-on-Sea Parish Council
* Mr. Olorenshaw New Forest Business Partnership
Mrs. Ludlow New Forest Dog Owners’ Group
Mr. Dovey New Forest Pony Breeding & Cattle Society
* Mrs. Ames New Forest Tourism
Mrs. Collins New Forest Village Shops’ Association
Mr. Thackray/Totterdell Ramblers’ Association
Cllr. Coundley Redlynch Parish Council
Cllr. Clarke Ringwood Town Council
Insp. Roberts RSPCA
Cllr. Leo Salisbury District Council
Cllr. Hill Sopley Parish Council
Cllr. Belfitt Totton & Eling Town Council
Cllr. Twiddy Whiteparish Parish Council

Substitution

Mr. Oram on behalf of Brockenhurst Parish Council
Mrs. Wilson on behalf of the Ramblers’ Association
Cllr. Womersley on behalf of Redlynch Parish Council

The Chairman noted that many absences were due to the change in the Panel meeting date (owing to the General Election), which unfortunately clashed with some local parish/town council meetings.
SPECIAL NOTE & WELCOME

i) The Chairman informed members that Mr. Clive Chatters (Hampshire and IOW Wildlife Trust (HWT) had resigned from the Panel after 16 years. As a member of the New Forest National Park Authority he felt it would be difficult to both champion the interests of HWT and be a member of the NPA at the same meeting. He would however still attend, and listen to the debate in the ‘public gallery’.

NB The Chairman noted that there were other members of the National Park Authority who were representatives for organisations on the Panel. In his view, and also that of Susan Carter, the National Park’s Interim Chief Executive, they could remain Panel members if their organisation so wished.

ii) The Chairman welcomed Mr. John Durnell who would be taking Mr. Chatters place. Mr. Durnell heads up a substantial part of the Trust’s conservation work in the Forest – and will bring a wealth of experience to the Panel.

iii) The Chairman informed the Panel that Mr. Tim Lawton would be temporarily representing Hampshire County Council Highways – until a permanent replacement was found for Richard Chinn (who left the Panel at the last meeting).

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (3rd March 2005)

a) Ref. Min 7b. Heathfield Caravan Park. Mr. Tony Barnett of the Caravan Club asked the Panel to note that the site is inside the National Park boundary, although outside the Perambulation.

3. MATTERS ARISING

a) Draft South East Plan (Min 3, para. 3)

The Chairman informed the Panel that the National Park Authority’s Interim Chief Executive had made response to the above Plan. NPA members would be asked to endorse this at their meeting on 17th May.

Once endorsed by the NPA, the response would be available on the National Park website hopefully from Tuesday 17th May. A copy would be circulated to Panel members with these minutes.

Cllr. Mrs. Humber (Lymington & Pennington TC) asked if future National Park Authority meetings would be held in public. The Chairman confirmed they would.

Cllr. Abbott (Lyndhurst PC) asked if people would have to book a seat for future meetings. Susan Carter replied that the meetings would be held in a similar way to local authorities, and no booking was required.

b) Ashurst – Lyndhurst Cycle Route (Min. 7a)

Mr. Nick Evans (Panel Technical Officer) reminded the Panel that concerns had been raised by Hampshire Wildlife Trust about the consultation on the design of the cycle way and whether or not planning permission was required.
He referred to an update received from Simon Found, Development Control, Hampshire County Council, as follows:-

- Formal consent by English Nature was still required for the scheme. If this was given, the proposals would not require planning permission;
- The main issue was ensuring open land lost to the cycle route was regained elsewhere – so there was no overall loss of habitat area;
- Signage would be kept to a minimum and designed as sensitively as possible, within highway safety requirements.

Cllr. Sopowski (Ashurst & Colbury PC) said that signs for end of speed limits had increased in size, and were not in keeping with this New Forest location.

Cllr. Shotter (Marchwood PC) asked if the cycle route would be classed as a bridleway on the definitive map. Mr. Tickle (Head of Countryside - Hampshire County Council (HCC) said he would investigate and report back to the Panel.

Mr. Frost (Countryside Agency) asked if English Nature preferred a particular side of the road for the cycle route. Ms. Craig (English Nature) said they had asked HCC to pick the north side as it was less sensitive in nature conservation terms.

Mr. Durnell (Hampshire Wildlife Trust) asked Ms. Craig if there was a timescale set from HCC for when consent was required. Ms. Craig replied that no further papers were expected and it was unlikely that appropriate assessment was needed.

c) Avon Causeway Works (Min 7c)

The Chairman said a letter had been sent by the National Park Authority Officers to Dorset County Council, reinforcing concerns raised by the New Forest Consultative Panel, New Forest Local Access Forum, New Forest District Council and Hampshire Count Council and urging them to make sure the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are taken into account in the bridge design – as it was an important route into the National Park from SE Dorset.

OTHER MATTERS ARISING:-

d) Post Election Government Appointments

Susan Carter was asked if she knew who would be taking over Alun Michael, MP’s role in the post Election Government re-shuffle. She replied that currently there was no information.

e) Dedication

The Chairman referred to Item 5, Pg 6 of the Minutes. The official closure of the New Forest Committee had been partly a wake, partly celebration and partly reminiscence. There had been a great number of individuals who had contributed to the work of the Committee and the Forest. Their work was crucial in setting up and taking forward the visions. He particularly referred to the late Colin Tubbs’ work and the books he had written on the history and conservation of the Forest, which were essential reading. He said that Colin was owed an enormous debt of gratitude.

f) Panel Constitution

Mr. Maltby (Camping & Caravanning Club) asked when the Panel Constitution would be updated. The Chairman replied that there would be a review by the NPA of how
it best related to stakeholders and forums, which included the Consultative Panel. There was no clear timescale, as the NPA currently had a massive work load and few staff, but it would probably be later in the year. He hoped the Panel would consider how it could best relate to the NPA.

g) Forestry Commission – updates (Min 6)

i) Mr. Frost said the Forestry Commission, due to time constraints, had not been able to report fully at the last meeting – he requested that the topic of restoration be brought back to the next Panel meeting, as members should be informed as much as possible. The Deputy Surveyor said he was happy to bring items back onto the agenda. Mr. Evans said that Hampshire County Council had suggested they give an update on the LIFE 3 project at the next meeting.

ii) Giddings Sawmill (Min. 6a)

Cllr. Holtham (Fawley PC) referred to the debris dams in Beaulieu River, and asked if the FC had available assistance to clear them. The Deputy Surveyor said that the FC had re-programmed its work for the coming year following the Giddings Sawmill fire. The FC chainsaws would be working on other projects, until the Sawmill was up and running again.

iii) Heavy Horse Logging (Min 6b)

Dr. Willard (Solent Protection Society) said he had attended the FC’s Heavy Horse Logging event on 5th March. It had been a very interesting and enjoyable morning, and he hoped this would become a regular event.

h) A326 Crossing Points (Min. 7d)

Mr. Aldhous (New Forest Equestrian Assoc.) referred to the A326 cutting off the Forest from the Waterside. The crossing points were still being used. A recently held public meeting, looked at various crossings and came up with some very positive suggestions. These would be passed on to the Chief Engineer at Hampshire County Council – Highways.

4. FORESTRY COMMISSION (FC) – UPDATE

a) Crown Land Management Plans

Mr. Seddon (Deputy Surveyor) referred to the paper which had been previously circulated to Panel members, on the Crown Land Management Plans. He also referred to the previous Management Plans which covered different topics. A number of the actions in those plans had time expired – there was also a 5 year life on some.

The Minister’s Mandate and SAC Management Plan gave the basic direction to the FC’s work. The revised Crown Lands Management Plan would integrate within the more strategic National Park Management Plan when produced, and take into account Forestry Commission actions in the Strategy for the New Forest. It would be a simplified document, setting out policies, but focusing on implementation, including a 5 year rolling work programme to fit in with the FC’s Business Plan. The paper had also been sent to the key statutory bodies in the Forest.

The Deputy Surveyor asked for Panel members’ views on the FC’s intention to restructure the Plans. The Chairman suggested they take the paper to their respective organisations to consider and then give their views.
Mr. Aldhous asked if there would be an agreed framework, but one which allowed a flexible way of working. The Deputy Surveyor confirmed they would be doing this.

The timescale for response was as soon as possible. The Deputy Surveyor offered to talk to any organisation if they required clarity. The FC were already starting on the Inclosure Plans & Deer Plan. The Chairman reminded Panel members that the earlier they returned their comments to the FC, the easier it would be for the FC to include them.

In answer to a question the Deputy Surveyor did not know who the Forestry Minister would be following the post Election Government re-shuffle.

b) Communications

Mr. Rothnie (FC Recreation Manager) said the FC had been looking at communications and reviewing how best to get information and messages across to the many visitors to the Forest. Local people also may not be aware of what is available to them. He mentioned the Forestry Commission newspaper “New Forest Focus”. This newspaper was distributed at points such as campsites, visitor centres, also hotels and B&B’s where it was placed in ‘welcome packs’ in the rooms. “New Forest Focus” incorporated articles and items on ‘what to do’, ‘where to go’, ‘what to see’, a map of the Forest, details of events and articles of interest etc.

Copies of the paper were available to Panel members at the meeting – further copies were available from the Forestry Commission offices.

Mrs. Tubbs (New Forest Friends of the Earth) asked when the recreation “Codes of Practice” would be available from the Progress Project. Mr. Rothnie confirmed that they would be launched on 31st May 2005 and available for distribution.

Mr. Rothnie also referred to the “Welcome Pack” which had been produced jointly with the New Forest District Council and others. This pack was produced for estate agents to give to new home owners. It included a map of the National Park Boundary and also loose, updated information leaflets in a folder. In answer to a question, Mr. Rothnie said that any updated information would be compiled and when current stocks had been distributed, a revised pack would be produced. The Chairman asked that National Park Authority information be incorporated.

Mrs. Cooper (Minstead PC) suggested that if a copy of the “Forest Focus” was sent to each Parish & Town Council, via the New Forest Association, or local shops it could get it to more people. Mr. Rothnie said it was originally targeted at visitors, but local people may be interested – and he welcomed any ideas to extend the distribution.

The Deputy Surveyor suggested that he send a portfolio of published FC information to parish/town councils – and perhaps they could indicate if they would like more copies.

5. NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK UPDATE & REPORT OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Susan Carter (Interim Chief Executive for the New Forest National Park) reported on the following:-

a) Inaugural National Park Authority (NPA) Meeting
There was a favourable response from the 1st meeting of the National Park Authority – and thanked those who came along. Following the formal meeting there was good work from those attending on the Mission Statement and also the logo.

b) **2nd National Park Authority Meeting**

Preparation was in hand for the next NPA meeting on 17th May at the Balmer Lawn Hotel. Copies of the papers for the meeting were on the National Park website. If anyone required ‘hard’ paper copies – please let the NPA office know.

At 17th May meeting they would be asking the NPA to:-
- Consider the revised Mission Statement
- Endorse the South East Plan response
- Consider the logo branding
- Consider the terms and conditions for the Staff – in order to start recruitment
- “Closed session” would consider the NFNPA’s Accommodation.

c) **Chief Executive Post**

Work had started on interviewing potential candidates for the permanent Chief Executive post. 73 people had applied and there were several rounds of interviews and tests.

d) **New Forest Show**

The New Forest Show this year coincided with the National Parks Week – which would give good publicity for the New Forest as the latest National Park. The National Parks Week theme was “Access and Outreach”, and thanks were given to those Forest organizations/New Forest Access Forum who would be involved with events during that week.

e) **Setting up the National Park Authority**

Susan Carter thanked everyone for their patience and understanding whilst the National Park Authority was being set up.

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that the Panel got a specific mention in the report of the inaugural National Park Authority meeting which was circulated with the Panel papers.

Mr. Chilcott (Campaign to Protect Rural England) referred to the NFNPA meeting papers and asked if the decision on the delivery of planning functions be brought to the June meeting. Did the NFNPA intend to consult on this?

Susan Carter replied that if the standard National Park Planning model was used, then consultation was not appropriate. If anything unusual proposed, then she would advise NPA members that there should be wide consultation. Planning was a key statutory function of the body. The Chairman reminded the Panel that the NPA was driven by the need to be functioning as the planning authority within the NP by 1st April 2006.

Cllr. Sopowski said some mechanism was needed for input from the parish and town councils on planning applications – which was similar to the present situation. Susan Carter replied with reassurance that consultation with parishes would be taken into account.

Cllr. Shotter asked how much the NFNPA was spending on its Corporate Identity. He suggested that a competition run by Brockenhurst College would have produced some fine examples. Susan Carter replied that she would include costings in the
next Panel Minutes if it was permitted to make this known. The costs of the contract were £2,160. This included work to prepare and refine a range of different concepts and designs and to present them at the inaugural meeting of New Forest NPA.

Cllr. Gentle (Test Valley Borough Council) was heartened to hear that villages consulted on planning.

6. **TRACKS IN THE FOREST**

Mr. Chris Aldhous (New Forest Equestrian Association) gave a presentation on the historical and present issues of tracks on the Forest.

Mr. Rothnie said that this very useful information should be fed into the PROGRESS Project, which was surveying tracks and their use on the Open Forest. The presentation would help show long-term impacts to stakeholder groups involved in the project. There was also perhaps a need to close some tracks and open others where appropriate.

Mr. Aldhous said he had found that on stone tracks, when rain went through, it eroded the soil beneath; Heather broken on its woody part would not regenerate, and heather only regenerated from seed. Grass took over where the heather was eroded.

It was also found that however much damage or unsightly, tracks often created useful new habitats. English Nature agreed with this.

Mr. Frost was particularly interested that a lot of tracks were initiated by vehicles. He said the Forest must try not to have an imbalance of erosion. It was important that more data was gathered. If erosion was increasing it would have a detrimental and damaging effect on the Forest – therefore it was important that this sort of investigative work was being carried out.

Mr. Alhous said that it had been the perception that all tracks were caused by horses. He hoped the presentation showed otherwise. The presentation had shown that riding establishments had dramatically reduced over the years.

Mr. Frost mentioned that New Forest District Council had policies which prevented a large increase in commercial horse-keeping, which had helped reduce impacts on the Forest. Mr. Aldhous said that certain riding establishments such as Decoy Pond Farm had many schooling facilities on site.

Mr. Aldhous said was happy to give the presentation to other interested organisations. They were asked to contact him direct.

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

a) **Litter Bins in Car Parks**

Mr. Aldhous brought the Panel’s attention to the lack of litter bins in car parks around the Forest.

The Deputy Surveyor said there were litter bins in a number of Forestry Commission (FC) car parks. Some bins had been placed for historic reasons, but were now not valid and they wanted to locate them according to need. The FC’s policy was not to create new or replace bins, as they felt it created more litter.

On Monday mornings their contractors regularly find household waste on the ground next to the bins, left by members of the public. Whilst litter bins were useful, they
could also create more problems and visual intrusion. Litter clearance cost the FC approximately £40,000 a year.

The Deputy Surveyor gave an example at Moors Valley Country Park where there were no litter bins and virtually no litter. 800,000 people passed through the Country Park a year. If there was any litter this was picked up by the Wardens at the end of the day.

Mr. Aldhous drew attention to the area of Moonhills car park where plastic bags hang from trees and get blown on to the Forest. He asked if the FC could consider placing a bin there.

Mr. Durnell (Hampshire Wildlife Trust) agreed with the FC. Bins attracted wildlife such as foxes and also dogs. The Chairman felt the NPA had a role in educating the public and could promote the message that ‘litter should be taken home with you’.

Cllr. French (Boldre PC) mentioned the litter containers at Norley Wood which regularly attracted donkeys.

Mr. Frost agreed with the last speakers. There was too much urban clutter.

Mrs. Cooper referred to fly-tipping. It was easy for people to drive down the A31, dump rubbish and then get away. The rubbish was dangerous to animals. She mentioned that trailer loads of grass cuttings had been dumped – and asked if anything could be done to prevent this situation before animals died.

b) LEADER+ Project

Mr. Sturgess (Panel representative on the LEADER+ Local Advisory Group (LAG)) gave a brief update on the work funded by LEADER+ between May 04 and April 05. (Mr. Sturgess’ paper is attached to these minutes).

He gave examples of the funding and wide variety of work which has been carried out through this programme to assist Forest businesses and promote local opportunities.

In answer to a question, Mr. Sturgess said that the European money under LEADER+ has to be matched by those people requesting assistance for themselves or their businesses.

c) Ragwort

The Chairman reminded Panel members that it was the time of year for them to bring the need for ragwort control to the attention of their organisations and communities.

d) Food, Farming & Environment Centre

Mr. Nelson from Sunnyfields Organic gave a brief presentation on an outline brief for a proposed Food, Farming and Environment Centre, possibly at a site located on land managed by Longdown Management Ltd, which was part of the Barker Mill Estate. The Centre would be run through a Charitable Trust.

The proposed site is a 200 acre gravel pit nearing the end of its extraction phase, which originally would go back to grazing, but there was now an opportunity to create a Centre which could encompass the following three main strands:-
• **Commercial** (e.g. attracting a range of social benefits and Local & Regional producers, horticultural units)

• **Social** (e.g. Farmers markets; education centre including training courses & network events; school, agricultural, & public visits, outdoor theatre etc.)

• **Environmental** – both locally and globally (e.g. local & regional food; energy conservation; recycling; water usage; general health (including short walks/nature trails) enclosed cycleway

The New Forest communities would have a key role in the scheme. The Project could promote:

- The continued enjoyment of the Forest, whilst maintaining its integrity
- Issue of transport
- Improved local understanding of the issues facing the Forest
- Increasing support for farming in the Forest.

Mr. Nelson wished to bring this proposed project to the Panel to show how conservation, enjoyment, and a commercial venture could link and work together, both locally and nationally.

The Chairman said this raised a number of interesting issues. e.g. It was outside the National Park, therefore could act as a ‘gateway’ for visitors before entering the New Forest; it had direct local community and educational dimensions. He was sure there were many pitfalls, which would need to be considered.

Cllr. Shotter (Marchwood PC) said he had also heard the presentation at Marchwood. The parish council liked the idea of the project, but was not convinced it was the right location. They had not opposed it, but asked for further dialogue over the next few months.

Mr. Nelson made a brief outline document available at the meeting, for those who wished to take a copy. It was also understood that a website had been created on the subject.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Consultative Panel meeting will be held at **7.30 pm on THURSDAY, 7th JULY 2005** in the Council Chamber, New Forest District Council offices, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm

Any agenda items from members for the meeting on **1st September 2005** are to be submitted to Linda Ryan, New Forest National Park Authority, Queen’s House, 4 High Street, Lyndhurst, Hants. S043 7DB by **4th August 2005**