NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 14 MARCH 2006

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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Summary:

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and associated guidance aim to strengthen community involvement in the planning system. A statement of community involvement is to be produced by all planning authorities setting out how the authority intends to consult the public and other stakeholders on future plans, planning documents and planning applications. The statement is not an end in itself, but ensures that local planning authorities consider how to involve communities and benefit from their knowledge and expertise. This paper sets out the general format of the statement of community involvement and the stages of production of the New Forest National Park Statement of Community Involvement.

Recommendation:

To note the contents of the report and authorise the commencement of work on the New Forest National Park Authority's Statement of Community Involvement

Resources: Not significant

Other major considerations: None
1 Introduction

1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires each local planning authority to prepare a statement of community involvement (referred to in the remainder of this paper as 'the Statement'), setting out how communities will be engaged in the preparation of local development documents and consideration of planning applications.

1.2 During 2006 the New Forest National Park Authority will prepare a Statement indicating how it intends to engage local communities and stakeholders in the new planning system within the National Park. This paper describes the basic requirements for producing the Statement and proposes a timetable for the work. Until the National Park Authority’s Statement is ready for adoption the Authority will rely on the statement of community involvement already prepared by New Forest District Council which is in the final stages of examination and adoption.

2 Guidance on Producing a Statement of Community Involvement


2.2 The Companion Guide to Planning Policy Statement 12 states that authorities should address the following questions in their Statements:

- **What are they seeking community involvement in?** This should include the processes of development control and preparation of planning policies including the range of documents identified in the Local Development Scheme.
- **How and when will community involvement be sought?** Possible forms of involvement include receiving and disseminating information, participating in the development of policies, proposals
or options for an area, responding to consultation and receiving feedback.

- **Who will be involved?** Authorities should ensure they involve the widest possible range of interests and, in particular, ‘hard to reach’ groups who do not usually participate in the planning process.

2.3 Government guidance is clear that there is no ‘right answer’ to these questions, and that statements should reflect local circumstances. Paragraph 7.4.1 of Planning Policy Statement 12: Creating Local Development Frameworks states that statements of community involvement must set out a pragmatic approach that does not raise stakeholder expectations unrealistically but does encourage innovation. Statements must set out the minimum requirements for community involvement as set out in The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

2.4 The format for statements should be concise and not overly prescriptive, setting out in broad terms how and when authorities will involve local communities, together with a general description of the types of involvement. An effective statement should:

- Set out the Authority’s vision and standards for community involvement;
- Recognise and express the need for front-loading;
- Reflect community needs, identifying the range of local groups who need to be involved;
- Show that the Authority understand how communities can be involved in a timely and accessible way;
- Identify suitable involvement techniques that are appropriate to the level of planning;
- Be clear about the different stages of involvement and demonstrate that these will be done in different ways at different stages and for particular communities;
- Show how the Authority can resource and effectively manage the process;
- Show how the results of community involvement will feed into the preparation of local development documents;
- Set out the Authority’s policy for community involvement in planning applications;
- Set out how the Authority will learn from the experience and improve its arrangements where necessary.

2.5 In terms of the proposed format, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published Statements of Community Involvement and Planning Applications in December 2004. This guidance stated that the statement of community involvement should contain:
1. An **introduction** including an overview of the Statement, its purpose, and a brief introduction. Clarity and simplicity are essential.

2. A summary of the **main principles** behind the authority’s approach, focussing on what the authority is trying to achieve through community involvement.

3. A brief factual summary of **types of planning applications** for which the authority will seek community involvement.

4. A discussion of the **types of community involvement**, both formal and informal, that the authority intends to undertake. Authorities should prepare a few paragraphs on the benefits, method and resource implications of each type. The Statement should also describe how the chosen methods will be applied. It should be remembered that the quality of involvement will not necessarily be proportional to the number of opportunities to be involved.

5. A discussion of the relevant **communities and stakeholder groups**, their skills and interests and how the authority will identify them. The statement should also include a ‘long-list’ of the types of groups the authority proposes to involve.

6. Commitment to **reporting back**. Authorities should clearly state how they will deal with representations received.

7. An estimate of the likely **resource implications**.

### 2.6 The New Forest National Park Authority

The New Forest National Park Authority has the benefit of starting the process some months after the majority of local authorities and national park authorities. Consequently there are examples of good practice from which the Authority can benefit. The Authority has also commented on and reviewed the statements of community involvement prepared by neighbouring authorities.

### 3 The Next Stages

3.1 Paragraph 3.10 of Planning Policy Statement 12 sets out 9 tests of ‘soundness’ which must be satisfied as part of the examination process into the statement of community involvement before it can be adopted. Part of this includes the requirement that the Authority must at least consult with the specific consultation bodies (the Regional Assembly, the Highways Agency, any adjoining or overlapping planning authorities, County Councils and Parish Councils) before preparing their consultation draft Statement, as required by Regulation 25 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.
3.2 The informal pre-submission consultation required by Regulation 25 is the first stage in the process of producing the statement of community involvement. The following diagram (Figure 7.1 taken from the Companion Guide to Planning Policy Statement 12) outlines the main stages in the process, which typically takes 12 months to adoption. Once the statement of community involvement is adopted, the Authority will need to ensure that all documents are prepared, and planning applications are considered, in accordance with its requirements.

Figure 7.1 – Preparing a Statement of Community Involvement

3.3 The Authority will have to submit a *Statement of Compliance* with each submitted development plan document, setting out in detail exactly how the Authority has met its community involvement requirements. The statement of community involvement will also need to cover the requirements for consultation and publicity for planning applications.

3.4 Regulation 25 requires the Authority to consult with The South East of England Regional Assembly, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire County Council, Dorset County Council, New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Salisbury District Council, East Dorset District Council, Christchurch Borough Council, Southampton City Council, the Isle of Wight Council, and the parish councils within or immediately adjoining the National Park at the pre-submission consultation stage.

3.5 Following this informal pre-production consultation, the Authority will then produce a draft statement of community involvement and invite
representations over a period of six weeks in accordance with Regulation 26.

4 Proposed Timetable

4.1 The suggested programme for preparing the National Park Statement is set out in the box below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Production</td>
<td>Scoping</td>
<td>April 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Consultation and participation on Regs. 25 and 26</td>
<td>May 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representations on proposals</td>
<td>July 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparation and submission of Statement</td>
<td>September 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examination (if required)</td>
<td>Representations on submission</td>
<td>October 2006</td>
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<td>Pre-examination meeting if required</td>
<td>Early December 2006</td>
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<td>Independent examination</td>
<td>January 2007</td>
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<td>Binding Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adoption</td>
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Recommendation:

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