NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 9.30 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, LYMINGTON

Present:
Members
Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre (Chairman)
Edward Heron (Deputy Chairman)

Sally Arnold
David Harrison
Maureen Holding
Penny Jackman
Chris Lagdon
Keith Mans (present during Part I)
Phil Marshall
Clive Maton

Alex Neill
John Pemberton
Leo Randall
Barry Rickman
John Sanger
Marian Spain
Ken Thomber
Judith Webb

Officers
Alison Barnes Chief Executive Officer
Julia Mutlow Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Bob Jackson Chief Finance Officer
David Stone Corporate Services Manager
Rosalind Alderman Member Services Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer

PART I

22. Apologies for absence.
22.1 Apologies for absence were received from Richard Frampton, Ian Hibberd, Julian Johnson and Pat Wyeth.

23. Declarations of interest.
23.1 No declarations of interest were made.

24. Chairman’s announcements.
24.1 The Chairman explained that, in accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, Part I of the meeting could be audio recorded or filmed for live or subsequent broadcast by members of the public.

25. Minutes of meeting on 26 June 2014 and 19 August 2014.
25.1 The minutes of 26 June 2014 and 19 August 2014 were agreed as a true record, subject to one amendment to the voting numbers on minute item 1.1 of 26 June 2014 (the record showed one more vote cast than the numbers of members who were present in the room). Officers agreed to check the recording and notes to see whether the correct number of votes could be ascertained, failing which it was agreed that the vote would be amended to state ‘elected by a majority’.

26. Public Question Time
26.1 There were no questions or statements from members of the public on this occasion.
27. **Chief Executive’s Report** *(NPNRA 464/14)*

27.1 Alison Barnes presented her report, drawing attention to some highlights over the quarter since the annual Authority meeting. Under the ‘Protect’ programme, she emphasised the successful work of the Land Advice Service, in conjunction with New Milton Town Council, on Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), which were important areas for wildlife. Other progress in the NPA’s ‘Protect’ work had included the introduction of cattle to graze Ballard Water Meadows and Barton Common, and work with communities to improve the environmental value of these public spaces. She also explained that, as set out at p.4 of her report, the NPA’s Ecologist had been providing advice and assistance to New Forest District Council under a Service Level Agreement on over 40 requests for advice in the period, and had also contributed to work to develop the District and Authority’s understanding of the impact of Navitus Bay offshore and associated onshore works. In addition the ecology service had been working towards species surveys of birds in order to establish baseline numbers, as part of the New Forest HLS scheme. The New Forest was also abundant in reptiles and an ongoing monitoring project for reptiles was likely to be implemented. The Tree Officers had launched a new interactive map for conservation areas, which had already been accessed by members of the public in excess of 1000 times. Also under the ‘Protect’ programme, the Planning Policy team had been very busy preparing for the implementation of forthcoming changes to the planning regime, and had issued a position statement on the Government’s proposals for ‘fracking’.

27.2 Under the ‘Enjoy’ programme, Alison Barnes drew members’ attention to the first ‘Our Forest, Our Future’ Conference in July, supported by Hampshire County Council, New Forest Association and members of the Educators’ Forum. The NFNPA had also participated in the Perilous Picnics anti-litter campaign with NFDC, which this year reached 4,800 children, ended with a display of the winning posters displayed in the foyer of Lymington Town Hall. The New Forest Show had also been very successful, and the Chief Executive congratulated staff on an excellent stand, focussing on car-free travel and caring for the Forest, which had achieved second prize in the best local trade stand category. Environment Minister Lord de Mauley had attended a reception at the NPA’s New Forest Show stand to thank existing corporate sponsors for their support and to encourage new companies to get involved in the NPA’s work, and the stand had also hosted visits by the Chair and Chief Executive of VisitEngland, and from Hampshire County Council’s Chairman. The New Forest Marque had also been well represented at the Show. Other highlights included a new seasonal ranger working at four campsites as part of a partnership with Camping in the Forest and the Forestry Commission; the ranger had engaged with over 1,500 people through a programme of 39 educational events. The Sustainable Communities Fund had awarded almost £68,000 to seven projects, bringing in approximately £77,000 of match funding. The New Forest Tour also continued to be successful, and the travel concierge had assisted about 4,000 visitors. The NPA was working on a design guide with Hampshire County Council to look at how transport infrastructure could be more sensitively designed and managed in the future.

27.3 Members thanked Alison Barnes and noted her report.

28. **Oral report from the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 8 September 2014**

28.1 John Pemberton, the Chairman of the Committee, took members through the draft minutes that had been circulated. Members requested that on future occasions the minutes be circulated before the meeting, but it was explained that this would not be possible on every occasion; for example, in circumstances in which, as on the present occasion, there was a period of only a few days between the RAPC meeting and the circulation of the NPA agenda in which to draft the minutes and to seek input from the Committee Chairman and officers. Members then noted the report.
29. **Audit Results Report** (NFNPA 465/14)

29.1 Mr Malcolm Haines, Ernst & Young, introduced the audit results report, explaining that the auditors had given the NPA an unqualified audit opinion in terms of the financial statements, value for money, and the whole of government accounts submission, and would accordingly issue the audit certificate. Members noted his report.


30.1 Bob Jackson presented the report, thanking Nigel Stone, the NPA’s Performance and Finance Officer, for all his work on the report, and thanking Ernst & Young for their audit assurance. Members then approved the financial report.

**Resolved**, that the Financial Report, the Annual Governance Statement contained therein and the Letter of Representation be approved.

**Voting**: None voting against

31. **Our Past, Our Future Landscape Partnership Scheme** (NFNPA 467/14)

31.1 Rachel Gallagher, the NPA's Our Past, Our Future Development Manager, presented the report, explaining that the Heritage Lottery funded Scheme involved 10 partner organisations and a range of 19 projects to restore habitats, discover forest heritage and develop forest skills alongside volunteering and measures to connect people to the landscape. It was intended that these projects would form a step-change towards the overall purpose of the Scheme to ensure that the distinctive landscape of the New Forest would survive through future changes and modern day pressures. Many of the Scheme’s projects could be linked back to the NPA’s purposes and socio-economic duty. The three key themes of the Scheme were ‘Restoring Lost Landscapes’, ‘Developing Forest Skills’, and ‘Discovering Forest Heritage & Inspiring a New Generation’.

31.2 Rachel Gallagher explained that after a successful first stage application a development grant had been awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to work with the partners to develop detailed plans and costings for each of the 19 projects in the scheme, and the partners intended to submit the stage 2 application in May 2015. A stakeholder drop-in day would be held on 10 December at Lyndhurst Community Centre between 12-8 pm and there would also be a members’ briefing session that morning.

31.3 A number of Members expressed their support for the Scheme and emphasised the importance of public engagement. One member said he would like to see how the Scheme could be linked to other initiatives in place in the New Forest, including the Management Plan and Landscape Action Plan. Members discussed how best they could be involved, which would be further considered at the briefing on 10 December. Members then noted the report.

32. **Any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent**

32.1 Mark Holroyd updated Members on progress with the family cycling experiences task and finish group, as per the report that had been tabled. Members then discussed some of the individual projects listed in the report, and noted that it was important that there should be no road widening at the ornamental drive in Rhinefield.

**Resolved**, that the report be noted, and the Task and Finish Group’s recommendation that Officers progress projects listed in sections 3.1 and Annex 1 and seek DfT approval for them to be funded through the New Forest Family Cycling Experiences programme (subject to any necessary legal permission) be endorsed.

**Voting**: 17:1
Resolved, that the public be excluded from the meeting during the following item of business, as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and further that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, namely the need to avoid disclosing sensitive information relating to the Authority’s financial affairs.

33. Members’ Task & Finish Group to look at future financial implications for the Authority – Progress Update (NFPNA 468/14)

33.1 Members received a progress report on the work of the Task and Finish Group (this is a summary of a minute that contains exempt information).

The meeting closed at 12.15 hours.

Signed: ....................................................... Date: ....................... (Chairman)