

## NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 19 JANUARY 2017 AT 10.00 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, LYMINGTON

#### **Present:**

##### *Members*

Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre (Chairman)

Edward Heron (Deputy Chairman)

Sally Arnold

George Bisson

Gordon Bailey

Richard Frampton

David Harrison

Penny Jackman

Julian Johnson

Keith Mans

Harry Oram

John Pemberton

Leo Randall

Barry Rickman

John Sanger

Marian Spain

Ken Thornber

Pat Wyeth

##### *Officers*

Alison Barnes

Steve Avery

Julia Mutlow

Paul Walton

Nigel Matthews

Nigel Stone

Mark Holroyd

David Stone

Vicki Gibbon

Frances Connolly

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Director, Strategy and Planning

Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Head of Environment and Rural Economy

Head of Recreation Management and Learning

Chief Finance Officer

Transport and Tourism Manager

Corporate Services Manager

Member Services Administrator

Executive Assistant

#### **30. Apologies for absence.**

- 30.1 Apologies for absence were received from Andy Moore, Phil Marshall, and Russell Wynn.

#### **31. Declarations of interest.**

- 31.1 Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre declared an interest in agenda item 12 as a Member of the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust, Board of Trustees.

Penny Jackman declared an interest in agenda item 12 as a Member of the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust, Board of Trustees.

Pat Wyeth declared an interest in agenda item 12 as a Member of the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust, Board of Trustees.

John Pemberton declared an interest in agenda item 12 as a Member of the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust, Board of Trustees.

Harry Oram declared an interest in agenda item 12 as he operates New Forest Mini Bus Tours.

#### **32. Chairman's announcements.**

- 32.1 There were no Chairman announcements on this occasion.

**33. Minutes of meeting on 22 September 2016.**

33.1 The minutes of 22 September 2016 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**34. Public Question Time**

Mr Fothergill advised that he was the owner of Daphne Cottage in Exbury and would like to establish why the New Forest NPA could request a Call for Sites from landowners but did not verify the information submitted. He felt that this was contrary to the National Planning Policy Guidance guidelines.

Commenting on the Freedom of Information section of the Chief Executive's report, he advised that the ICO case referred to was in connection with his matter. The Authority had undertaken an internal review of his case as it had chosen to term his solicitor's letter a complaint although the letter had asked questions regarding his private land being included in another property owners' Call for Sites application. He felt that this allowed the NPA to avoid answering his solicitor's direct questions written in May 2016. These still remained unanswered.

He said that the Authority had advised him to submit his comments under the public question time, a local drop-in centre or by a comment form in October-November 2016 and asked why the Authority had not proposed an immediate route to report wrongdoing.

He said that in December 2015, a gap had been made in his boundary by the agent's contractor undertaking drainage work and left open for over 2 months. There were also existing septic tank outfall pipes crossing the proposed development site. Following the release of the questionnaire in October 2016 after what he termed a protracted ICO investigation, he had been able to ascertain the following with regard to ownership issues: 'No constraints, have discussed proposal with adjoining residents without conflict over ownership' and Infrastructure constraints: 'Nil'. He said that the Authority had held this information for over 11 months and asked for an explanation as to how this information was recorded under the NPPG guidelines

He then set out the following requests:

- The Authority to give a valid reason for the black line connecting the site boundary to his foul drain on his land and the arrow annotated on the map and why his annexe was highlighted electronically by Promap.
- The Authority to provide the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment report which records whether the site was immediately available in line with other National Parks countrywide.
- Whether the Authority had a duty of care to ensure neighbours were not affected by what he termed a secretive Call for Sites process.

He said that his boundary wire has been moved on the main road to claim his tree and a triangle of land and believed that this was an attempt to create a visibility splay for an access road for the landowner. He had shown his solicitor, and separately the Policy Manager, this issue in his garden.

Referring to the questionnaire he said that this stated under Access difficulties: 'No constraints, three access points to the site, two from the north...' and asked the Authority to explain how this information was recorded under NPPG guidelines and to answer the following further requests:

- Can the Authority answer where the two access points to the site to the north were located and indicate these two access points on the site map?
- Can the Authority confirm that there is only one existing single vehicle gravel access track to the north of the proposed site and this access point would not provide a safe vehicular access onto the main road to meet new development standards?

He said that the questionnaire stated that the site outlined in red should include all land necessary for the proposed development (e.g. visibility splays, access...) and advised that this was clearly not the case.

In conclusion he asked that:

- the Authority demonstrate that the proposed development site could work without using his land for drainage and access.
- Can the Authority be seen to condone such wrongdoing?
- Can the Authority have a more robust, transparent Call for Site process?

The Chairman thanked Mr Fothergill for his presentation a summary of which would be included in the minutes of the meeting.

### **35. Chief Executive's Report (NFNPA 506/16)**

35.1 Alison Barnes wished Members a Happy New Year and introduced her report which covered the period from 22 September 2016. She reported that there had been some excellent achievements for the Our Past, Our Future project over the last quarter including around 200 people taking part in a wide range of training courses, 10,000 people attending recent exhibitions and regular monitoring of water quality in around 60 sites on the Beaulieu River catchment area by 35 volunteers.

The recent autumn walking festival had attracted nearly 2,000 people which was a 77% increase on last year, this would be built on for 2017.

Ms Barnes commented that the Local Plan Review had finished its eight week consultation just before Christmas, more than 800 people had attended drop in sessions and over 400 consultation responses had been received. These would now be considered by the policy team in preparation for the submission draft Local Plan later in 2017.

35.2 Alison Barnes expressed her regret at the increase in animal deaths during the recent dark evenings, with November and December seeing a sharp increase over those recorded during the same period in 2015. Posters are being distributed saying '40 is too fast in the dark' and a new campaign is being developed with local employers. New Forest District Council had also assisted by distributing animal accident cards along with their parking clocks; this was an example of 'team New Forest' working together.

35.3 Under the 'Enjoy' programme the Chief Executive commented on an exceptional quarter for the education team who taught nearly 1,000 children during the autumn term with the majority of these sessions taking part outside in the Forest. Two new

apprentice Rangers had recently joined the team and would be working with officers for a year, also gaining experience with HCC, the Forestry Commission, the National Trust and Hampshire Wildlife Trust.

Volunteering had excelled recently with over 250 active volunteers now registered with the Authority, the next Volunteer Fair would be held on 29 January.

During December the second family trees event took place in Ashurst, this had been attended by 300 people who planted a tree to celebrate a birth, marriage or life. The next event would take place in Brockenhurst.

- 35.4 Under the 'Prosper' programme Alison Barnes drew Members' attention to the New Forest Business Partnership's Brilliance in Business Awards ceremony at Carey's Manor in November. The Authority sponsored the Sustainable Business award category which this year was won by the Cottage Lodge in Brockenhurst for their sustainability in using only local products and upcycling furniture.
- 35.5 Under the 'Excellence' programme Ms Barnes commented that the Authority would be looking at the work programme and budget for 2017. Following the referendum, 2017 would prove to be an important year for National Parks which Ms Barnes felt very positive about as the New Forest had an excellent store of passion and creativity.
- 35.6 Members commented on the report particularly with regard to the high incidence of animal accidents and the need for a multi-agency approach to measures to address this problem, Nigel Matthews noted these comments for further investigation.

The report was then noted.

### **36. Oral report from the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 5 September 2016**

- 36.1 David Harrison gave an oral update to Members' on the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 21 November 2016 commenting that 'a clean bill of health' was received from Ernst and Young the Authority's External Auditors and no weaknesses had been identified.
- 36.2 He summarised the other items considered by the Committee and briefly mentioned the Latchmore Brook Wetland Restoration application informing members that a Members' Day was to be organised to consider lessons learnt.

Members then noted the oral report

### **37. Future Audit Arrangements – Update (NFNPA 513/17)**

- 37.1 The Chief Finance officer updated members about the scheme established by the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA). He informed the Committee that he had spoken to the other National Parks and a number of other local authorities (including the New Forest District Council) who had indicated that they intended to opt-in to the LGA/PSAA scheme. The deadline for opting-in was now 9 March 2017 and it was accordingly not necessary to use the delegation to the Chief Executive which had been agreed at the Authority meeting on 22 September 2016 and the Authority was asked to formally opt-in to the scheme.

- 37.2 Nigel Stone informed members that a third of Authorities had already signed up and it was anticipated that over 90% would join the scheme. The tender would be split between the north and south of the country and then into geographic regions. Mr Stone stated that the Audit fee would be proportionate to the size of the Authority, and contracts would be awarded in June.

Mr Stone responded to questions from members following which the recommendation was adopted.

**Resolved**, that the Authority formally 'opt-in' to the scheme established by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd to secure external auditors for the Authority 2018/19 – 2022/23

*Voting: unanimous*

### **38. Update on the New Forest Cycle Event Organisers Charter (NFNPA 514/17)**

- 38.1 Nigel Matthews introduced his report which provided a second update of the Cycle Event Organisers' Charter and the associated Safety Advisory Group system which had helped to manage the impacts of cycle events in the New Forest.

Mr Matthews commented that the Forest was widely regarded as a good place for cycling and cycle events and that most events took place without any problems. Although compliance with the Charter by both participants and event organisers was not universal there had been significant improvements which demonstrated how far things had progressed within the last few years.

- 38.2 Members agreed to the recommendations in the report.

**Resolved**, that

1. the Authority confirms its support for the ongoing work proposed to seek compliance with the Charter by cycle event organisers, safer and more considerate cycling by participants and greater tolerance and positivity by those not involved in the events and;
2. a review for the effectiveness of the Charter takes place in January 2018.

*Voting: unanimous*

### **39. Love the Forest Visitor Giving Scheme (NFNPA 515/17)**

- 39.1 Paul Walton presented his report commenting that in 2016 the Authority was approached by the New Forest Trust asking for assistance in developing the New Forest Visitor Gift Scheme, which raised funds for conservation and education projects in the National Park.

Mr Walton explained that external advice was sought to determine if this would be appropriate and further discussion took place during the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 21 November where it was agreed that, subject to Authority approval, the Memorandum of Understanding between the NPA and NFT could be pursued.

Since the document was sent to Members with the agenda papers, some amendments had been made in the Memorandum of Understanding which Mr Walton clarified.

**Resolved**, that the Authority approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the Authority and the New Forest Trust in respect of the Love the Forest Visitor Giving Scheme.

*Voting: unanimous*

**40. England Coast Path – establishment and maintenance plans (NFNPA 516/17)**

40.1 Mark Holroyd introduced his report advising Members that as the Access Authority for the National Park, Natural England had asked the NPA to agree to carry out establishment works to create new infrastructure for the coastal path route once it had been determined.

**Resolved**, that the Authority agree to establish the England Coast Path within the New Forest National Park on behalf of Natural England.

*Voting: unanimous*

**41. Engagement with Visitors in the New Forest Centre (NFNPA 517/17)**

41.1 Nigel Matthews introduced the report which proposed how the Authority could work with the Ninth Centenary Trust to provide a visitor interface following the decision by the New Forest District Council to close the Visitor Information Centre within the New Forest Centre at the end of January 2017.

41.2 He advised that the Authority was currently commitment to providing a grant of £40,000 to the Trust and also had £15,000 in reserves set aside to part fund initiatives that would enhance the financial viability of the Centre. The proposal to extend the Concierge service during the 2017 summer season to provide a visitor interface at the Centre would address some of the short term issues resulting from the closure of the Visitor Information Centre and ensure the continuity of sales of the tickets for the New Forest Tour. There would be a net cost to the Authority of between £7,000 and £10,000 but this would be covered by the £15,000 in reserves.

41.3 He said that the proposal also provided a new opportunity for face to face engagement within the Centre and help inform future plans. The Ninth Centenary Trust intended to submit a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a revamp of the Centre and by working closely with the Trust, the Authority would be in a much better position to contribute to the development of the plans as they progressed.

41.4 Following brief discussion, members supported the recommendation and noted that a further report would be submitted for members' consideration following the end of the summer season.

**Resolved**, that the Authority support the proposal to extend the Brockenhurst Travel Concierge into Lyndhurst for the 2017 summer season.

*Voting: unanimous*

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

**PART II – ITEMS THAT MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ON THE GROUNDS THAT EXEMPTED INFORMATION MAY BE DISCLOSED**

***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*

**Affordable Housing Update**

42.1 Members considered an oral update on affordable housing update (this is a summary of a minute that contains exempt information).

The meeting closed at 11.45 am.

Signed: .....  
(Chairman)

Date: .....