

## NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 14 JULY 2016 AT 10.30 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, LYMINGTON

#### **Present:**

##### *Members*

Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre (Chairman)

Edward Heron (Deputy Chairman)

Sally Arnold

Gordon Bailey

George Bisson

Richard Frampton

David Harrison

Penny Jackman

Keith Mans

Phil Marshall

Harry Oram

John Pemberton

Leo Randall

Barry Rickman

John Sanger

Marian Spain

Ken Thornber

Russell Wynn

Pat Wyeth

##### *Officers*

Alison Barnes

Chief Executive Officer

Bob Jackson

Chief Finance Officer

Steve Avery

Executive Director, Strategy and Planning

Julia Mutlow

Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

David Stone

Corporate Services Manager

Hilary Makin

Communications Manager

Nigel Stone

Finance and Performance Manager

Jim Mitchell

Interpretation Officer

Jo Murphy

Information and Data Protection Officer

Rosalind Alderman

Member Services Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer

##### *In attendance*

Justine Thorpe

Ernst & Young LLP

## **PART I**

### **1. Election of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the New Forest National Park Authority**

- 1.1 The Chief Executive facilitated the election of Pat Wyeth as Interim Chairman to oversee the appointment of the Chairman. Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre was nominated and duly seconded as Chairman of the New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) for the ensuing year. There being no further nominations, the nomination was put to the vote and carried by show of hands. Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre was accordingly elected as Chairman.

**Resolved**, that Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre be appointed as Chairman of the Authority for the period up to the next Annual meeting of the Authority in 2017.

*Voting: Unanimous*

- 1.2 Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre thanked members for their confidence in appointing him as Chairman. He then oversaw the appointment of the Deputy Chairman. Edward

Heron was proposed and seconded and elected by show of hands as Deputy Chairman of the NPA for the ensuing year.

**Resolved**, that Edward Heron be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Authority for the period up to the next Annual meeting of the Authority in 2017.

*Voting: Unanimous*

**2. Apologies for absence.**

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Julian Johnson and Andy Moore.

**3. Declarations of interest.**

3.1 Declarations of interest were made by Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre, Phil Marshall, Leo Randall and Russell Wynn as members of the New Forest Association (NFA) with regard to the presentation by the NFA minuted at item 6 below. Declarations of interest were also made by Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre, David Harrison, Penny Jackman, John Pemberton and Pat Wyeth in item 12 as Trustees of the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust. Pat Wyeth declared an interest in one of the statements made under item 6 as she had a personal connection with a related party, and accordingly left the meeting during this item of business. Marian Spain declared an interest in item 9 as a Trustee of the Campaign for National Parks. David Harrison declared an interest in minute item 11 as a Trustee of PEDALL, the inclusive cycling organisation.

**4. Chairman's announcements.**

4.1 The Chairman thanked Bob Jackson who was attending his last meeting as the Chief Finance Officer of the NPA. Members echoed the Chairman's thanks and wished Mr Jackson well in his new role as the Chief Executive Officer of New Forest District Council.

**5. Minutes of meeting on 24 March 2016.**

5.1 The minutes of 24 March 2016 were agreed as a true record.

**6. Public Question Time**

6.1 Martin Lander spoke on the membership of the Commoners' Dwelling Scheme Panel and expressed the view that there should be a clear separation between stage 1 and 2 of the application process, namely that members of the Panel that considered the application at stage 1 should not also be members of the planning committee that considers the application at stage 2 and takes advice from the Panel before reaching a decision. He said that he was not suggesting that members acted improperly and noted that the Local Government Ombudsman found that the current membership of the Panel was acceptable; however he felt that there was no rigour in the process if planning committee members also sat on the Commoners Dwelling Scheme Panel.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lander for his statement and noted the points raised.

- 6.2 Sir John de Trafford advised that there were three reasons for his presentation to the Authority meeting: the first was to bring the matter of the Local Government Ombudsman's report and decision in the case concerning the building of a Commoners dwelling in Brockishill Road to members' attention; secondly he sought clarification from the Authority as to how it intended to review the need for Commoners' dwellings and queried whether the Authority would ensure that the Local Plan review produced fresh proposals that helped those most in need; and thirdly he requested a proper apology from the Authority to the residents' association, particularly those whose homes had been affected.

The Chairman responded that the Chief Executive had written directly to Sir John de Trafford in March 2016 apologising to him for his time and trouble in taking up this matter on behalf of the residents in Brockishill Road. The Authority therefore felt that there was nothing more that could and should be done in this case.

- 6.3 Brian Tarnoff of the New Forest Association referred to the 'New Forest Inclosures – Forest Design Plan 2016 Forestry Commission Consultation draft' by the Forestry Commission which, in the view of the NFA, was commendable in terms of the delivery of habitat restoration but flawed at the detailed level. He asked the NPA to join the NFA in urging the Forestry Commission to pause, take stock and accept the expertise and resources of both the NFA and NPA to revise the detail of the Plan before it was submitted to the next stage.

Referring to campsites and recreation, he said that consistent with the SAC (Special Area of Conservation) Management Plan, the NFA campaigns for the removal or relocation of campsites situated in Ancient and Ornamental Woodland and other important sites which in the opinion of the NFA were managed to the detriment of both biodiversity and landscape, had less than half the canopy of comparable woodland sites and were sometimes subject to unguided felling and inappropriate investment in new road priorities at site entrances. He said that the NPA needed to implement a comprehensive review of recreation infrastructure in the Forest which was currently arbitrary, outdated and had no strategic relationship between Forest users and the habitats whose condition they may affect. He said that concerned habitat campaigners including the NFA were looking to all levels of government for reassurance that the existing habitat protections, policies and funding would continue at current or better standards, positive engagement on these issues would be very welcome.

In reply, the Chairman advised that progress on recreation management was currently being made by Forest organisations, both statutory and non-statutory, working together on this issue.

## **7. Appointments of Committees (NFNPA 500/16)**

- 7.1 The Chairman presented the report, and listed the local authority and Secretary of State appointed Members on the Planning Development Control Committee, Resources, Audit and Performance Committee and Standards Committee. He drew Members' attention to the number of local authority volunteers for membership of the Standards Committee which would necessitate a ballot being held; however, Richard Frampton withdrew his expression of interest leaving that Committee with the correct number of local authority members. Members then endorsed the committee appointments which are summarised in **Annex 1** to these minutes.

**Resolved, That:**

1. appointments be made to the Planning Development Control Committee as set out in Annex 1 to these minutes for the period until the next annual meeting of the NPA in 2017 or until such earlier time as the NPA wishes to amend the membership;
2. appointments be made to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee as set out in Annex 1 to these minutes for the period until the next annual meeting of the NPA in 2017 or until such earlier time as the NPA wishes to amend the membership; and
3. appointments be made to Standards Committee as set out in Annex 1 to these minutes for the period until the next annual meeting of the NPA in 2017 or until such earlier time as the NPA wishes to amend the membership.

*Voting: Unanimous*

**8. Election of Committee Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the New Forest National Park Authority**

- 8.1 Consideration was given to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman positions in respect of the nominations made at the meeting for the three Committees whose membership had now been determined.

**Resolved, that:**

1. Pat Wyeth be appointed as Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee for the period until the annual meeting of the NPA in 2017 or until such earlier time as the NPA wishes to review the position;
2. Leo Randall be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee for the period until the annual meeting of the NPA in 2017 or until such earlier time as the NPA wishes to review the position;
3. David Harrison be appointed as Chairman of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee for the period until the annual meeting of the NPA in 2017 or until such earlier time as the NPA wishes to review the position;
4. Marian Spain be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee for the period until the annual meeting of the NPA in 2017 or until such earlier time as the NPA wishes to review the position;
5. Phil Marshall be appointed as Chairman of the Standards Committee for the period until the annual meeting of the NPA in 2017 or until such earlier time as the NPA wishes to review the position; and
6. George Bisson be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Standards Committee for the period until the annual meeting of the NPA in 2017 or until such earlier time as the NPA wishes to review the position.

*Voting: the above positions were voted on by only the membership of each committee with none voting against and no abstentions.*

## 9. Appointment of Representatives to External Organisations (NFNPA 501/16)

- 9.1 Members resolved to re-appoint Members to all those appointments for which there was no change or the correct number of volunteers had expressed an interest. Accommodations were also reached on all those appointments in respect of paragraphs 7 and 8 of the report. The final representation agreed is summarised in **Annex 2** to these minutes.

**Resolved**, that the appointments to external organisations for the period up to the Annual meeting of the Authority in 2017, as listed in Annex 2 to these minutes, be approved.

*Voting: Unanimous*

## 10. Chief Executive's Report (NFNPA 502/16)

- 10.1 Alison Barnes presented her report, drawing attention to some key highlights over the previous year, as set out in the draft annual report, and in particular also over the last quarter since the meeting in March 2016. She was pleased to report that over the course of the year many of the key partnerships the NPA had achieved were beginning to deliver significant benefits; the Our Past, Our Future HLF scheme, which was six months into delivery, was already a particular success.
- 10.2 Under the 'Protect' programme, Alison Barnes reminded Members of the ongoing review of the Local Plan, a draft of which would become available for public consultation in October 2016. Work had also been carried out with central Government to draft an eight-point National Parks Plan, which linked the benefits of National Parks with the wider Government agenda to promote areas such as health and education. The planning development control training that had been offered to Parish Councillors had been well attended.
- 10.3 Under the 'Enjoy' programme, the 'New Forest Remembers' WWI exhibition at the New Forest Centre had been a great success, receiving very positive feedback. The Education team had reached nearly 5,500 children in the first quarter and more than 10,000 over the foregoing year, encouraging younger people to learn about the New Forest. The NPA had hosted a visit by David Evennett MP, Minister for Tourism, Sport & Heritage, in May at the Balmer Lawn Hotel, who had been impressed with the efforts of the organisations involved to ensure sustainable tourism within the New Forest. An event had been held on 13 July as part of the wider aim to develop a shared vision for a New Forest 'Green Halo', reaching beyond the boundary of the National Park.
- 10.4 Under the 'Prosper' programme, work had progressed well on the two new affordable homes in Bransgore, and another particular highlight was the success of the various sustainable transport initiatives detailed in the report, including the Forest Bus and Forest Bus Baby. Under the 'Excellence' programme, Alison Barnes informed Members that the NPA had hosted many visitors over the year, including Sonia Phippard, Director General of Defra, the Environment Minister Rory Stewart MP, and representatives from Natural England, Public Health England, and National Parks UK.
- 10.5 In response to a query as to how the NPA could better engage with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the Chief Executive agreed that this was important; she explained that the NPA was represented on the Rural Action Bid with the M3 LEP, and Deborah Wyatt of the M3 LEP had been the facilitator at the 'Green Halo' event the previous day. It was also important to further this type of work with other LEPs.

- 10.6 Members supported a suggestion that the Chairman, with assistance from Keith Mans, should write to David Davis MP, Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, regarding concerns over the recent referendum and how the likelihood that the UK would end its membership of the European Union would affect National Parks. One Member noted that a particular risk arising from the UK leaving the EU would be the loss of the SAC (Special Area of Conservation) designation. Members then noted the report.

Action: The Chairman to write to David Davis, with assistance from Keith Mans.

## **11. Oral Report from the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee Meeting on 6 June 2016**

- 11.1 David Harrison, Chairman of the Committee, reminded Members that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2016 had been circulated with the agenda and gave Members an overview of the main items that had been considered. In particular, he noted that the annual internal audit process had been completed, with all audit reviews resulting in an opinion of 'Reasonable' or 'Substantial' assurance, and explained that the fact that three categories (Treasury Management, Human Resources, and Information Governance) had received a 'Substantial' assurance was an excellent achievement. The majority of Key Performance Indicators for the four work programmes were also 'green'.
- 11.2 The Committee had discussed how the NPA was preparing the first part of a two stage application to the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund to support PEDALL, the new inclusive cycling organisation. Whilst Committee Members had been supportive of the bid they had also discussed how, at the second stage of the application process, the NPA must ensure any funds were administered in accordance with its preferred outcomes and would also need to satisfy itself as to value for money, risk and accountability.

## **12. New Forest Centre Annual Report (NFNPA 503/16)**

- 12.1 Jim Mitchell presented the New Forest Centre annual report, explaining that visitor numbers to the museum had increased and it was anticipated that the income lost through the free entry trial would be more than offset by the combination of increased donations and increased sales in the shop.
- 12.2 The Chairman thanked Jim Mitchell and commended the report, particularly its clear layout that demonstrated how the achievements of the museum and visitor centre connected with the NPA's purposes and duty. One Member, whilst echoing the Chairman's remarks, suggested that in future reports it would be helpful to have clear measures of success included in the report. Members then endorsed the report.

## **13. Audit Results Report (NFNPA 504/16)**

- 13.1 Justine Thorpe, Ernst & Young LLP, presented the audit results report which, following brief discussion, was noted by Members. The auditors expected to issue an unqualified opinion, and agreed that appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure value for money. Ms Thorpe congratulated Nigel Stone on his excellent work on the Accounts.

**14. Draft Financial Report 2015/16 (NFNPA 505/16)**

14. Bob Jackson presented the draft Financial Report for 2015/16, commenting that it had been subjected to external scrutiny receiving an unqualified opinion and the financial outturn figures had been considered and recommended for approval by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee. Mr Jackson felt that the overall financial position presented in the accounts was positive, especially in view of the 40% budget reduction in recent years. He thanked Ernst & Young and the NPA's Members and Officers, in particular Nigel Stone, for their help and support during Mr Jackson's time as Chief Financial Officer of the Authority.

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

*Voting: Unanimous*

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

15.1 Referring to the later start time of the current meeting, some Members suggested that consideration be given to future NPA meetings starting at 10.00 am instead of 9.30 am. In response to a query regarding potential clashes of NPA meetings with those of appointing authorities, David Stone advised that every effort was made to ensure that clashes did not occur. He mentioned that Corporate Services would canvass members on the possibility of a later start time of NPA meetings as well as further possible measures to avoid meetings clashes.

**16. Date of next meeting**

16.1 Members noted the next meeting would be held on Thursday 22 September 2016 at 9.30 am in the Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 12 pm.

Signed: .....  
(Chairman)

Date: .....