

## NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 23 MARCH 2017 AT 12:30 HOURS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON

#### **Present:**

##### *Members:*

David Harrison (Chairman)  
Marian Spain (Deputy Chairman)  
Gordon Bailey  
Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre  
Edward Heron  
John Sanger  
Ken Thornber

##### *Officers:*

Alison Barnes	Chief Executive Officer
Julia Mutlow	Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Steve Avery	Executive Director Strategy and Planning
Nigel Matthews	Head of Recreation Management and Learning
Mark Holroyd	Transport, Access and Sustainable Tourism Manager
Nigel Stone	Chief Finance Officer
Jo Murphy	Information and Data Protection Officer

#### **131. Apologies for absence**

131.1 Apologies for absence were received from Richard Frampton and John Pemberton.

#### **132. Declarations of Interest**

132.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **133. Chairman's announcements**

133.1 There were no announcements on this occasion.

#### **134. Minutes**

134.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

**Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.**

*Voting: none voting against*

#### **135. Public Question Time**

135.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

### 136. Discover England Fund

- 136.1 Mark Holroyd introduced the report (NFNPA RAPC 331/17) and explained that since the last meeting of the Committee, there had been more opportunity to better understand the emerging bid and talk with the national steering group about the New Forest's special circumstances. He confirmed that there were some significant changes and that details were still evolving.
- 136.2 Mr Holroyd indicated that although the Discover England Fund was still aimed at international visitors it was essentially about developing high-quality experiences that are distinctive and different and about promoting sustainable tourism. He suggested that the experience element would complement some of the other initiatives already established, such as the New Forest Tour, New Forest Activities, and the Walking Festival etc. and would engage visitors with the qualities which make the area special.
- 136.3 There were currently three key elements to the developing bid:
- Training and business support programme for experience providers to shift their offer to more valuable and meaningful experiences;
  - Small grant scheme to support local providers and to overcome initial financial barriers; and
  - Matching experiences to overseas tour operators to incorporate more immersive experiences in the package holidays offered.
- 136.4 Mr Holroyd pointed out that there were a number of potential risks which needed to be acknowledged. If the New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) supported the bid they would need to manage the perception that it could lead to increased visitor pressure, however if the bid was not supported, local businesses may feel disadvantaged and the impact on relationships with the other English National Parks involved in the bid and Government would need to be considered.
- 136.5 Mr Holroyd reassured Members that the NPA could be the 'gatekeeper' to their individual programmes and that there would be some local control in order that projects could be tailored to local circumstances. He also suggested that a local steering group would be set up to manage local delivery of the project which would run in parallel to the national steering group.
- 136.6 Nigel Matthews stated that Members were prudent to be wary but said that he was heartened by the gatekeeper concept and that he felt that the reservations expressed by the Committee previously had helped influence how the bid was now being formed.
- 136.7 Members noted the new detail, in particular that the NPA would act as the local gatekeeper and the emphasis on added value and not increased volume, and appreciated that the proposal was quite different to the previous one. In response to questions, Alison Barnes explained that the concerns raised by the NPA had helped the other parties involved to consider the opportunity to develop a value rather than a volume focussed offer and to support local businesses.
- 136.8 One Member proposed that a further extraordinary Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting be called once the final details of the bid were known and before

its submission on 12 April 2017. This proposal was seconded and voted upon but was not carried.

136.9 Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre informed Members that despite the additional details provided, he remained wary of the bid and that Members should be aware of his position prior to voting on the proposal. A number of members expressed the view that if the two Chairmen felt that the final bid was not considered to be in the best interests of the New Forest they should withdraw from the bid.

**Resolved, that officers be authorised to take whatever action is necessary in conjunction with the Peak District National Park to prepare a bid to the Discover England Fund and that authority be delegated to the Chairman of the Authority and the Chairman of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee to approve the New Forest National Park Authority’s inclusion in the final bid, if deemed appropriate.**

*Voting: 5:1(1 abstention)*

**137. Date of next meeting**

137.1 Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday 5 June 2017 at 10.00 hours at Lymington Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 13.35 hours

**Signed .....** **Date.....**  
**(Chairman)**