

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 256th Meeting held in the Pine Room, Lyndhurst Community Centre on THURSDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2017

Those present: Clive Chatters (Chairman)
David Stone (Panel Secretariat)
Debbie Copping (Panel Secretariat)

Members as shown on the Official List, with the exception of those listed below for whom apologies were received

Also in attendance: Jonathan Cox, Jonathan Cox Associates (for item 27 below)

21 Apologies for absence

21.1 Apologies for absence were received from:

Hale Parish Council
Pete Brown (Camping and Caravanning Club)
Cllr Ted Fleat (Sway Parish Council)
Cllr Lynne Aggas (Breamore Parish Council)
Melissa Sheppard (Bransgore Parish Council)
Dylan Everett (National Trust)
Alison Potts (Natural England)

21.2 Substitutes:

Steve Avery substituted for Alison Barnes on behalf of the New Forest NPA.
Heather Gould substituted for Jo Florance on behalf of the New Forest Dog Owners Group.
Phillip Daubeney substituted for Robert Clarke on behalf of Burley Parish Council.
Cllr Anji Hill substituted for Gerald Lewis on behalf of Sopley Parish Council.

22 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2017

22.1 The minutes from the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

23 Matters Arising

23.1 Members were advised that the issues arising from the previous meeting would be covered in the presentations and agenda items at the current meeting.

23.2 The Chairman changed the order of the agenda to accommodate an earlier presentation on the coastal path by Jonathon Cox (Agenda item 6).

24 New Forest National Park Authority Update – Steve Avery

- 24.1 Steve Avery updated the Panel on the NPA's Local Plan Review and said that the draft Plan would be reported to the Authority at its meeting on 14 December. This would be followed by a final six week round of public consultation from January 2018 whereupon the Plan would be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in April 2018. Hearing sessions would take place in the Summer 2018 and it was anticipated that the Plan would be adopted in late 2018. He added that the main changes to the existing local plan were to the housing policies where the focus was on meeting local housing needs in the amount of 40 new homes a year. These would be limited to a maximum of 100m² with a target of 50% affordable housing on allocated sites in areas such as Ashurst and Lyndhurst. The draft Local Plan and associated papers are available on the New Forest National Park Authority website http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/info/20040/planning_policy/361/local_plan.
- 24.2 Mr Avery then elaborated on the status of the local plans of neighbouring local authorities namely Test Valley Borough Council, Southampton Wiltshire, Christchurch and East Dorset.
- 24.3 Referring to the Green Halo Partnership, Mr Avery advised that this brought together organisations from across the wider area to protect and enhance the natural environment. There were four key themes to this initiative – supporting the local economy, improving health and wellbeing, encouraging sustainable living and enhancing the natural environment.
- 24.4 He drew members' attention to the recent presentation by Alison Barnes at the Verderers' Court where she had explained the Authority's role regarding tourism in the New Forest and referred to the work of the multi-organisation New Forest Recreation Management Steering Group in working with other bodies to preserve the Forest and come up with meaningful proposals following the recent recreation management consultation. A report on the RMS will be presented at the Authority meeting in January 2018.

25 Waterside Developments

- 25.1 With regard to the developments along the Waterside, Steve Avery advised that a new Commissioning Group initiated by NFDC had tasked Deloitte with producing an economic prospectus for the area which would aim to ensure that land and new developments were brought forward in a coordinated manner. On how development would affect transport routes in the area, he said that an interim transport position had been agreed by Hampshire County Council on 14 November 2017. The A326 to J2 of the M27 was the preferred route to the strategic road network from the Waterside and the junctions along the A326 would need to be improved to accommodate future growth. There would be more focus on making bus services quicker and more reliable connecting waterside settlements and the National Park. He also referred briefly to the various presentations made at the recent Waterside Conference by ABP and

Fawley Waterside which can be found on the NFDC website <http://www.newforest.gov.uk/watersideconference>.

- 25.2 Cllr Glass of Fawley Parish Council requested that the Parish Council be consulted further on proposed allocations at Fawley, including the proposed reallocation of the cemetery site.
- 25.3 In response to a query, Steve Avery advised that the National Park Authority was seeking to allocate part of Tom Tiddlers Ground at Fawley for housing in association with the redevelopment of land outside the National Park.

Following discussion, the report was noted by the Panel (the full presentation can be found on the website).

26 Forestry Commission Update – Bruce Rothnie

- 26.1 Forest Design Plan Update – it has now been confirmed that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be required to cover the parts of the plan that involve permanent loss of trees where conifer plantations are being removed to restore heathland. The next stage is to call what is known as, within the EIA regulations, a “scoping meeting” and this will be arranged for January 2018. Anyone previously involved with earlier consultations can be invited. The purpose of the meeting is simply to agree the factors that need to be considered within the EIA. The Forestry Commission will then have to prepare an EIA to assess whether these factors are significant and how they could be mitigated. The EIA report will be subject to a statutory period of consultation, probably later in the summer of 2018. In the meantime, the existing plan has been rolled over for a further 6 months.
- 26.2 Mr Rothnie also updated members on a number of activities occurring on the Forest over the autumn/winter period:
- programmes of rhododendron removal have restarted;
 - Further programmes of restoring “lost lawns” will continue over the coming months. These “lawns” which are valuable for grazing have reduced in size over the years due to tree and scrub encroachment;
 - In some areas where conifer plantations have already been removed to restore heathland (as seen on the Panel Tour last May) the original ridge and furrow created when the trees were planted still remain. This uneven surface can make stock management and drifting more difficult, so programmes of “levelling” of these areas is being undertaken in certain areas;
 - There has been some ride edge vegetation management within certain inclosures over the late summer and early autumn to enhance the habitats for Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterflies. The Forestry Commission is working closely with Butterfly Conservation to agree the work which is financially supported through funding from Biffa the waste company. The Panel watched a short video on this subject just prior to the conclusion of the meeting;

- hardwood thinning – once the bird nesting season has passed some thinning out of trees takes place within oak and beech plantations. This work helps to provide space for remaining trees to develop. Almost all of the timber sold through auction to a local sawmill at Winsor, called Soffes;
- in preparation for controlled burning later in the winter there is work to cut fire traces in the heather which allow us to limit the extent of burns. The burning invigorates the growth of new gorse and heather;
- Volunteer programme of conservation works is now planned for the year ahead. 1,774 duties are now in the programme;
- health of holly – an aerial survey for tree health across the Forest was had recently conducted and a number of areas where hollies on the open forest are dying back were identified. Samples have been taken to investigate this further but it may be simply part of natural processes;
- Moors Valley Country Park (which was operated by the Forestry Commission in partnership with Christchurch & East Dorset District Council) was successful at the Dorset Tourism Awards in November 2017 winning Gold in the Large Visitor Attraction category for the third year in succession and Silver in the new Artistic, Cultural and Learning Experience category.

26.3 Mr Rothnie advised panel members that the Forestry Commission did not intend to give further permissions for night-time activities similar to the recent event south of Lyndhurst.

Following discussion, the report was noted by the Panel (the full presentation can be found on our website).

27 Coastal Footpath – Jonathan Cox & Brian Tarnoff

- 27.1 Brian Tarnoff (New Forest Association) and Jonathan Cox (Jonathan Cox Associates) addressed the Panel on the Nature Conservation Assessment of the Thorns Marsh to Calshot section of the England Coast Path and referred to the nature conservation designations and qualifying habitats and species populations on this stretch of the New Forest coast. The Assessment was based on a considerable amount of survey and assessment work that had undertaken since May 2015 with the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust which work was still ongoing. This survey included - Habitat mapping, Breeding bird surveys, Wintering bird surveys, Survey and assessment of effects of trampling on vegetated shingle habitats, saltmarsh, and coastal woodland. The work also described how these features were represented in each section of the coast and considered the potential impacts of changes to public access provision on them. They drew attention to and mentioned the nature conservation features of the following sites - North Solent SSSI, Solent & Southampton Water SPA, Solent & Southampton Water SPA, Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar Site, Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar Site, Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar Site and Solent Maritime SAC
- 27.2 They referred to the likely impact of increased public access to the coast, on these sites through damage to local habitats including adverse impacts on breeding waders and other ground nesting birds which would be vulnerable to

disturbance. They drew attention in particular to their concerns regarding the Coastal Margin more commonly referred to as 'spreading room'.

Following discussion, the report was noted by the Panel (the full presentation to the Panel can be found on the website).

28 Constitution Document for Ratification

- 28.1 The Chairman advised that the Panel's Constitution had been updated and submitted with track changes to the June meeting of the Panel and members invited to comment on the changes over the intervening months. He advised that, as no further changes had been submitted, the Constitution as amended is now approved.

29 Any other business

- 29.1 The Chairman advised that he had received two items under AOB as set out below:

- **New Forest wide flood action group**

The Chairman had advised that Ian Miller of the Environment Agency (who was unable to attend the current meeting) had asked if Parish Councils could provide information on their understanding of flood risk in the community and whether this was seen as a priority.

If flood risk was seen as a priority, then the Environment Agency would like to support a New Forest wide flood action group to understand the issues and bring together the necessary authorities to tackle any problems where possible. The Chairman suggested that Mr Miller be invited to the next meeting of the Panel to make a presentation to members on this issue. This suggestion was supported by members.

- 29.2 The Chairman advised that anyone who wished to apply for the role of Chairman needed to advise the Secretariat formally in writing. The deadline for candidates will be published on the website. He also has a draft of what the role involves if anyone is interested and offered to have informal discussions with potential candidates as required.

30 Date of the next meeting

- 30.1 The Panel noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 1 March 2018 at 7.30pm at Lyndhurst Community Centre

The meeting closed at 9.27 pm