

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 255th Meeting held in the Pine Room, Lyndhurst Community Centre on THURSDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2017

Those present: Clive Chatters (Chairman)
David Stone (Panel Secretariat)
Jo Murphy (Panel Secretariat)

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

Also in attendance: Lord Manners, Official Verderer of the New Forest

11 Apologies for absence

- 11.1 Apologies for absence were received from:
Linda Palmer (Whiteparish Parish Council)
Christine Ford (Ringwood Town Council)
Vincent Batty (Denny Lodge Parish Council)
Sami Blackstock (Beaulieu Parish Council)
Mark Carter (Institute of Chartered Foresters)
Nick Clark (NewForce)
Patricia Banks (Milford on Sea Parish Council)
Sam Dovey (NFU)
- 11.2 Substitutes:
Ian Youdan substituted for Dudley Baker-Beall on behalf of Redlynch Parish Council
Cllr Georgie Hough substituted for Dawne Wakelin on behalf of Minstead Parish Council.
Paul Sherry substituted for Christine Ames on behalf of New Forest Tourism Association.
- 11.3 Allison Potts attended on behalf of Natural England; as Hannah Thacker has moved to another team.

12 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2017

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

13 Matters Arising

- 13.1 The Chairman reminded the Panel that he was approaching four years as Chairman and that he did not intend to stand for re-election in the spring. Whilst he reassured them that he would not leave the Panel without a Chairman and

would be happy to continue for a few more meetings however he urged members to start considering possible candidates for the appointment.

- 13.2 The Chairman informed the meeting that he had written to the Forestry Commission on the Panel's behalf in response to the Forest Design Plan, reminding them of the Consultative Panel's existence and the high level of expertise that could be found amongst its members and the Panel were keen and willing to help.
- 13.3 The Chairman introduced Allison Potts from Natural England and asked her for an update on the England Coastal Path progress. Mrs Potts explained that the Highcliffe to Calshot section had been under discussion for over a year and that she hoped that all interested parties had been able to take part in the consultation. She informed the meeting that the report was now in its final stages and Natural England intended to publish in October, and that all affected land owners would receive information direct. There would be an eight week consultation period, before all of the objections and representations from landowners and interested parties would be sent to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for independent scrutiny, she said. Mrs Potts explained that once the route was agreed, Natural England would work with the appropriate access authorities with a view to it being in place by May 2018, however she said there was some flexibility in this timeframe and much would depend on the PINS process.
- 13.4 Mrs Potts clarified the procedures around the 'coastal margin' more commonly referred to as 'spreading room'. She explained that it can, subject to landowners consent include areas to the landward side of the trail too, for the purposes of clarity or to benefit the walker by including special points of interest, views etc She also pointed out that there were a number of exceptions where land will not be subject to new rights, such as private houses and their curtilage, schools, and playing fields. Natural England can also restrict access to certain areas, due to their nature conservation interest, for public safety reasons or national security. She stated that the proposals would include information regarding these exceptions and would also contain information on habitat designations, historic features and the potential impact on them. She reassured the meeting that there were no proposals to re-classify the Beaulieu River as an estuary, however she reminded panel members that they had the discretion to go to the first public pedestrian crossing point on the river.
- 13.5 In response to questions regarding the delays in publication of the proposed route, Ms Potts explained that this was the most complex piece of coast path to date and there had been issues raised which required detailed consideration which had taken them into the purdah period for the General Election, meaning they were unable to undertake the public consultation. A number of representatives raised concerns that the proposed consultation would fall between the meeting dates of the New Forest Access Forum and the Consultative Panel, and requested that the special circumstances warranted the consultation being convened at the convenience of the consultees. Ms Potts believed the timescales were set by Defra but agreed to check. (*Check*

subsequently revealed that 8 week consultation is enshrined in legislation so Natural England are not able to alter it. Also, the start date for the consultation has again been delayed, at least till December 2017). The Coastal Path Report and associated documents would be uploaded to

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-improving-public-access-to-the-coast#overview-of-progress>

14 The Official Verderer – Lord Manners

- 14.1 Lord Manners thanked the Panel for inviting him to the meeting and gave a brief summary regarding his professional background and his connection to the New Forest. He explained that his professional background was as a city solicitor and that his family had farmed the Avon Valley and owned the Avon Tyrrell Estate for over 200 years. He also explained that he no longer practised law but was a trustee of a number of organisations and chairman of the Fortune Riding Centre.
- 14.2 Lord Manners said that he had been appointed to the post of Official Verderer on 1 May and had found the first 100 days to be challenging, busy and interesting. He told the Panel that he was the independent chairman of the Verderers and that the nine others were very knowledgeable about the New Forest and did an enormous amount of work.
- 14.3 The Panel Chairman asked Lord Manners how the Consultative Panel might be of assistance to the Verderers, and Lord Manners responded that they would need to work together on an issue by issue basis and that when the various bodies came together in a relatively unified way they were most successful.
- 14.4 The chairman thanked Lord Manners for taking the trouble to address the meeting and invited him to stay for the remainder of the meeting.

15 NFNPA Update – Alison Barnes

- 15.1 Alison Barnes updated the Panel on some of the work undertaken by the NPA since the last meeting. She stated that the New Forest Show had been most successful to date in terms of getting our messages across to those that make the decisions in Government. She reminded members that we had hosted Lord Gardiner MP at the show and had impressed upon him the importance of having a local scheme to support commoning after Brexit; she was also pleased to report that John Glen, the Member of Parliament for Salisbury and the Minister for the heritage portfolio, had also visited the Show and was keen to understand the work being undertaken by the NPA.
- 15.2 She drew the Panels attention to the Shared Forest safer driving campaign which was funded by the Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) project, and had recruited six local businesses who had committed to working with their employees to promote safer driving. This was particularly important as the

nights draw in at this time of year she said, and it was hoped that more businesses would sign up to the campaign.

- 15.3 Ms Barnes notified the Panel that the NPA Local Plan Update consultation had closed at the end of July and that the NPA must submit it to the Planning Inspectorate by March 2018. She informed the Panel that the draft proposals would be considered by Members of the Authority at their October meeting and that a final draft would be prepared by the end of the year for a further consultation. Ms Barnes pointed out that Poole and Wiltshire Councils were also consulting on their Local Plans and that neighbouring local authorities have a duty to co-operate with each other and have regard to the National Park purposes. The Panel requested more details on our neighbouring authorities' Local Plans to be presented at the December meeting.

Action: Planning Team to update the Panel on key aspects of the Local Plans being drafted by neighbouring local authorities.

- 15.4 There was discussion regarding the A31 Ringwood Improvements Consultation, with a number of representatives raising concerns regarding the likelihood of Ringwood town centre and other villages being used as 'rat runs' by commuters when the work was being undertaken and that the proposal did not appear to have adequate traffic management provision. Ms Barnes agreed to flag their concerns to Hampshire County Council and to send a supplementary to our response if these concerns had not been flagged already.

Action: Planning Team to flag the concerns raised about the A31 proposed works traffic management provision to Hampshire County Council.

- 15.5 Ms Barnes notified the Panel that the NPA recently had had six new Members appointed, which was nearly one third of the total membership; Richard Clewer from Wiltshire, Mel Kendal and Neville Penman from Hampshire County Council, Richard Taylor representing the North East Parish quadrant and two new Secretary of State appointed members, however their appointments were not currently publicly known.

N.B. the two new Secretary of State appointed Members have now been named they are Patrick Heneghan and Gavin Parker.

16 Forestry Commission Update – Bruce Rothnie

- 16.1 Bruce Rothnie explained that the Forest Design Plan consultation period had closed at the end of July and that the document was now being considered by Forest Services whose role it was to approve the plan. He explained that Forest Services was a separate arm of the Forestry Commission act as the regulatory authority approval of forest plans in both the private and public sector. Mr Rothnie explained that some elements of the plan included deforestation to restore heathland. Forest Services would need to take a view on whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would be required. He said that he

hoped that he would have a clearer picture to report to the next meeting in December.

- 16.2 Mr Rothnie gave an update on the current wetland restoration projects and rhododendron clearance. He explained that the Wootton scheme had started but had stopped after the initial phase because of the weather; phase 2 would be completed in the spring. Mr Rothnie commented that the FC had highlighted the contribution made by volunteers at their stand at the New Forest Show, and that there had been a lot of public interest in the work on monitoring aquatic life.
- 16.3 Mr Rothnie updated the Panel on the regular maintenance work undertaken by the FC, he stated that they had 200 bridges and many car parks which all had to be inspected and maintained. Questions were raised about the winter closures and car parks which were in need of repair. Mr Rothnie clarified that the winter closures were the same as in previous years and that in the low season (Oct-Mar) demand for car parking capacity was reduced and some were closed to limit winter damage to the car park surfaces.
- 16.4 Mr Rothnie reminded the Panel of the 'look but don't pick' approach to the fungi season and he circulated a copy of an educational leaflet that had been produced. Mr Rothnie also said that they encouraged educational forays which are licensed by the FC but are concerned about commercial activity. He informed the Panel that they welcomed 'tip offs' and that information on incidents were shared with the police. Mr Rothnie was pleased to report that Andy Page had been ringing goshawk chicks for a number of years and that numbers in the New Forest had risen from none in 2002 to 49 nesting territories today.
- 16.5 Some Panel members felt that the bracken harvesting machine being used was not suitable to all habitats and that it was having a detrimental effect on wildflowers. Mr Rothnie confirmed that the machine was not suitable to every landscape and that the Panel should liaise with FC if they had particular areas of concern. In response to a question Mr Rothnie confirmed that the chemicals used for spraying were not harmful to animals.
- 16.6 The Forestry Commission can be contacted through the general enquiry email enquiries.southern@forestry.gsi.gov.uk where matters of concern such as fungi picking, parking on verges, or maintenance issues etc. can be reported and the email will be forwarded to the relevant officer for response.
- 16.7 There was some debate regarding regeneration of trees in pasture woodlands and whether, in some locations it may be necessary to re-plant trees. Mr Rothnie said that he felt that the natural process were working, however he accepted that Pound Lane in Burley was a particular case within a village setting where some planting along road verges may be possible subject to consent from Natural England.

17 Consultative Panel Terms of Reference

- 17.1 The Chairman advised the Panel that he and the Secretariat had worked on the proposed updates. He recommended that members considered the document which had been circulated with the proposed changes marked in red and raised any comments with either himself or the Secretariat outside the meeting. He said that he proposed to revisit the matter at the December meeting with a view to finalise the document.

Action: Panel members to review the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference and raise any comments with either the Chairman or the Secretariat before the next meeting in December.

18 Recreation Management Strategy – Nigel Matthews

- 18.1 Nigel Matthews updated the Panel on the public call for views consultation the purpose of which was to inform an update to the New Forest National Park Recreation Management Strategy 2010-2030. The NPA had been asked to lead the consultation in partnership with the organisations on the Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group (Forestry Commission, Verderers of the New Forest, Natural England, New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council and NPA).
- 18.2 The online Future Forest consultation had run through the summer and over 1,500 responses were received, including responses from more than 50 organisations.
- 18.3 Respondents had been asked to say which of the 15 topics about management of recreation identified in 2010 should be prioritised in the future and explain why they thought these topics were important. Of the 15 topics, respondents most frequently suggested that the following six topics should be made high priority in the future: raising awareness and understanding, on and off-road cycling, sustainable transport, providing sustainable services and facilities, walking and improving access. They were also asked to advise what new things should be done.
- 18.4 In total over 7,000 comments were received and officers were currently half-way through analysing these; importantly, the comments explain *why* people thought their chosen topics should be prioritised. Mr Matthews is preparing an initial report on the findings for consideration by the Steering Group on 25 September. A public summary would then be prepared later this year and used to inform proposed new actions for managing recreation and to identify lead organisations to take forward these actions. The proposals will be the subject of a further public consultation during the summer of 2018.
- 18.5 Mr Matthews responded to questions by members of the Panel including the need to develop a plan for funding recreation management and for more dialog with neighbouring local authorities regarding the potential impacts on the

National Park of planned new housing which should be mitigated through country parks and other recreational developments.

19 Any other business

- 19.1 Members were advised that the agenda setting meeting of the Chairman, Bruce Rothnie and Alison Barnes would take place in October. Poor attendance at Panel meeting was also mentioned.

20 Date of the next meeting

- 20.1 The Panel noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 7 December 2017 at 7.30pm at Lyndhurst Community Centre

The meeting closed at 9.27 pm