

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 249th Meeting held in the Forest Hall, Brockenhurst Village Hall, Highwood Road, Brockenhurst on THURSDAY, 3 MARCH 2016

Those present: Clive Chatters (Chairman)
David Stone (Panel Support Officer)
Jo Murphy (Panel Secretariat)
Vicki Gibbon (Panel Secretariat)

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

Also present: John Truswell (Natural England)
Sarah Kelly (NPA Landscape Officer)

32 Apologies for absence

32.1 Apologies for absence were received from:

John Hazle – New Forest Access For All
Tony Barnett – Caravan Club
Anne Millar
Robert Clarke – Burley Parish Council

33 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2015

33.1 It was highlighted to the panel that the word 'been' had been omitted from paragraph 30.1.1 and the secretariat agreed to amend the minutes. It was not clear whether the stakeholder meeting on the subject of fungi picking had taken place. The secretariat was asked to update the panel on progress to date.

Following the Consultative Panel meeting Paul Walton (NFNPA) advised that the stakeholder meeting had not taken place. Revisions to the fungi picking code were being considered at a national level by Natural England, who anticipated proposing changes in April/May. Separate meetings have been held with the New Forest Association, foragers representatives and landowners.

33.2 Members requested that the minutes be circulated as an attachment to the email, rather than a link to the NPA website, as this was thought to be more accessible.

33.3 Subject to the above clarification the minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

34 National Park Authority (NPA) update

34.1 David Harrison provided the Panel with an update on the work being carried out on the Local Plan. He explained that it was five years since the current plan was adopted and that it was an important document as it is the basis for determining planning applications. A copy of the statement is attached to the minutes. The Chairman encouraged members to engage with the current Local Plan Consultation.

35 Forestry Commission Update

- 35.1 Bruce Rothnie explained that the Government's Spending Review statements in November 2015 had given protection of funding for public forests, alongside National Parks, but the exact details of that statement were still to be worked through over next few months.
- 35.2 Mr Rothnie informed the Panel that the Forestry Commission were embarking on a review of its Inclosure Management Plan which was working up a long term vision of the New Forest in 100 years' time. A stakeholder event is planned later in the month to discuss this and the next 5-10 year plans for the initial phases of transition to that long term vision.
- 35.3 Mr Rothnie invited the Panel that its annual Tour which would take place on 12 May and he requested that the secretariat collate a list of those interested in attending. He also notified Members of two 'Clean for the Queen' events which were taking place over the next weekend.
- 35.4 Mr Rothnie explained that the weather had not been favourable for the usual programme of seasonal controlled burning of heather and gorse, but this would commence as soon as conditions would allow.

36 England Coastal Path

- 36.1 John Truswell (Natural England) gave a PowerPoint presentation to the panel on the England Coastal Path advising that he and his colleague John Taylor would be leading Coastal Access in the South; Highcliffe to Calshot route.
- 36.2 Mr Truswell highlighted that some of the benefits for the England Coastal path would be a way marked 2700 mile National Trail around the whole of the English coastline, which in turn would be a boost to the local economies. The route would be able to 'roll-back' should issues of eroding or landslips occur maintaining a continuous route along the coast.
- 36.3 Natural England would be required to ensure that the coastal path is safe and provides convenience to those using the route, that it adheres to the periphery of the coast providing views and that interruptions of the route are kept to a minimum. Natural England must ensure that they balance both public and private interests whilst ensuring the protection of the natural environment.
- 36.4 It was explained that Natural England are currently in the process of determining landowners for them to be contacted regarding adapting permissive or de-facto rights of way. However, some of these pockets of land are not on the land registry therefore Natural England would be holding drop in sessions to ask the public who the land belongs to and to explain how this work would be carried out. *(A list of drop in sessions is attached to the minutes)*
- 36.5 Questions were then asked by panel members, these included;
- Would toilet facilities be available along the path?
Natural England would not be looking into toilets or car park facilities
 - Would there be disability access?
John commented that there would not be disability access all the way but they would be trying as much as possible to ensure there would be kissing gates rather than stiles.

- Who would be carrying out maintenance for the paths?
John advised that once the paths are established the maintenance would be passed to the National Trails in perpetuity

37 Underground Cabling

- 37.1 Graham Baker advised the panel that the New Forest Association were currently assisting with arranging bids for underground cabling in the New Forest. National Grid had recently announced that they would be completing underground cabling in Hale, this is one of four schemes to be taken forward, with local distributors planning to spend £40million on the burial of cables in National Parks and AOB's.
- 37.2 It was asked what permission would be needed to carry out this work, Graham replied that when they receive a proposal they would need to check if there is any archaeological significance at the site. Most sites are Forestry Commission land who would be supporting the scheme as much as possible providing there is minimum impact on the Forest.
- 37.3 If members of the panel would like or know of any over ground cables they believed would benefit from this then to contact Mr Baker with OS details, Brookleyfarmhouse@btinternet.com.

38 Verge Protection

- 38.1 Sarah Kelly (Landscape Officer, NFNPA) made a presentation to the Panel on car free ditching and verge protection to deter unauthorised vehicle access which could damage SSSI habitats and reduce the amount of grazing. Over time, erosion of verges by cars either parked or passing on narrow lanes caused long term damage to verges. To prevent further damage, the New Forest HLS scheme was funding the installation of dragons' teeth and the use of ditching, where appropriate, to retain verge grazing and improve the visual aspects.
- 38.2 These measures under the Verge Protection Project were now being extended to grazed verges in and around villages. The Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group, which had recognised this type of verge damage as a problem for some time, had produced a leaflet containing information on how verges could be protected (copies of the leaflet were available at the meeting or via the Panel Secretariat).
- 38.3 Woodgreen Parish Council had also resolved to combat verge damage and was working collaboratively with the Verderers and Forestry Commission on verge protection. The Parish Council had marked up maps showing where verge damage had occurred and had then conducted joint sites visits with the Forestry Commission who were drawing up work plan maps where funding would be used on installing verge protection measures in that area.
- 38.4 Sarah encouraged members to report any damaged verges which they felt needed protection to Gary North at the Forestry Commission on tel. 03000674635 or e-mail Gary.North@forestry.gsi.gov.uk. She also advised that there were HLS funded leaflets which provided information and advice to property owners facing the Open Forest on property boundaries with regard to installing stock proof fencing and gates as well as ditches and banks. In response to a query, she confirmed that Natural England would be involved where protection to SSSI habitats was anticipated.

38.5 Several panel members expressed concern with regard to the material and methods used for verge repairs and stressed that this material needed to be fit for purpose. Sarah mentioned that she was due to have a meeting with Tim Lawton, Head of Highways at Hampshire County Council shortly and would relay these concerns to him.

39 Any Other Business

39.1 School Bus Subsidy

The Chairman raised the above issue on behalf of Mike Thomas (Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council) who had submitted an apology for the meeting. This matter concerned the withdrawal by Hampshire County Council of all subsidies for school bus transport in Hampshire. It was understood that the relevant consultation was due to close on 16 March and Mike Thomas was concerned that, if the subsidy was withdrawn, this would result in a significant increase in car usage; he had accordingly requested that the Panel give consideration to making representations to the County Council against the withdrawal of the subsidy.

The Chairman mentioned that Mark Holroyd (Transport and Tourism Manager, National Park Authority) had advised that the consultation had closed on 19 February and had centred on changes to the subsidy for non-statutory school transport for children living in out of catchment areas. In the New Forest area this included Foxhills and Hounslow schools.

NB – Members are requested to note that whilst the consultation has formally closed, any concerns could still be passed to the County Council via Neil Beswick, Passenger Transport Manager at Hampshire County Council Neil.Beswick@hants.gov.uk or alternatively issues could be passed via the NPA's Transport and Tourism team.

39.2 Dog attacks on deer/deer management

Bruce Rothnie reported that several deer had recently been severely mauled by dogs in the New Forest. He asked Panel members who witnessed dogs chasing deer to report this to the Forestry Commission and provided a 24 hour hotline number (see below) which could be used in this regard.

FC hotline – 0300 067 4600

Relevant Police and NFDC dog warden phone numbers can also be found by using the following link:

http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/downloads/file/620/new_forest_dogs_emergency_hotlines who would in turn inform the Forestry Commission as appropriate.

Bruce Rothnie then responded to concerns about increasing numbers of deer in some areas of the New Forest and reported that the FC continues its cull programme.

39.3 Wetland Restoration Projects – planning applications

Peter Dowling (Hyde Parish Council) advised that there was a lack of information available about when the planning applications for the Latchmore and Pondhead river restoration projects would be available. Bruce Rothnie advised that the planning applications would be available within the next 2-3 months and would then go through a consultation period set by the Planning Authority. He added that the applications have required a considerable amount of study work and consequently would be substantial documents but a non-technical summary would be produced.

39.4 Stripping of bark from Beech trees by ponies in Mark Ash Wood

Jenni Tubbs, New Forest Friends of the Earth reported that ponies had stripped significant areas of bark off mature beech trees in Mark Ash Wood and advised that the extent of this removal could be viewed on youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtUel-4AMpY>).

Bruce Ronthie advised that the Forestry Commission was aware of the problem and were unsure of the reasons why ponies were doing this. They were currently investigating the damage with the Agisters and deciding on what action to take to limit the problem.

39.5 Completion of data capture forms

Vicki Gibbon requested that those Panel members who had not yet completed a data capture sheet for inclusion on the Panel members' electronic database please do so as soon as possible as this would greatly assist with electronic distribution of agendas, correspondence and other documents.

39.6 Last meeting – David Horne, Environment Agency

David Horne (Environment Agency) advised that this was his last meeting and introduced members to his replacement on the Panel, Charlotte Lines. The Chairman thanked David for his input and involvement on the Panel and extended a welcome to Ms Lines.

40 Date of the next meeting

31.1 2 June, 7.30pm Lyndhurst Community Centre

The meeting closed at 9.20hrs.