

FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETING REPORT

Summary of the minutes of the meeting of the National Park Authority held on 28 March 2012

Copies of the papers referred to and the full minutes of the Authority meeting on 28 March are in the 'About Us', 'Meetings and Minutes' page on the Authority's website at www.newforestnpa.gov.uk

NPA Operational Plan 2012/13

Oliver Reichardt, the NPA's Director of Delivery and Performance, introduced the report, explaining that the Operational Plan comprised programme frameworks for the NPA's four programmes, Protect, Enjoy, Prosper and Aiming for Excellence and represented a framework for the NPA's work as set out within the broader context of the Business Plan (which had been adopted the previous year for the period until 2015).

Update report following Members' day on cycling in the New Forest

Eve Gillmon made a presentment on behalf of the New Forest Association (NFA), explaining that the NFA had concerns regarding the impact of uncontrolled cycling activities on the fragile landscapes of the New Forest. The NFA felt that there were two main problems: the fact that a number of cyclists were not aware that the New Forest was a working landscape, dependent upon the practice of commoning for its existence, and these practices must take priority over recreational activities as they were instrumental in maintaining the landscapes; in addition, the NFA felt there was a minority of recreational cyclists who were inconsiderate. Ms Gillmon asked for the NPA's support in tackling these issues to include a review of the issues and the question of whether cyclists could be fined for certain activities.

Ian Taylor then spoke on behalf of the Hampshire Cycling and British Cycling groups, explaining that these groups felt that the negative environmental impact of recreational cycling was often overstated and was in fact significantly less than that of shod horses, that the perceived conflict between user groups was often age dependent and overstated, and that a survey conducted by the Campaign for Rural England suggested that less than 1% of the respondents felt that cycling had a negative impact on the tranquillity of the countryside.

Chris Gregory, the NPA's Transport and Tourism Officer, then presented the report (NFNPA 402/12), explaining that this was a controversial subject that polarised viewpoints; it was important that all parties worked together to help ensure responsible cycling within the National Park. Vicky Myers explained that she had presented the majority view of the RMS working group to the Verderers' Court recently, including suggestions that additional routes be trialed and that cycle 'champions' should work with cyclists in the New Forest to encourage people to use the approved cycle networks. Members thanked Chris Gregory and Vicky Myers for all their work on this issue. One member suggested that a new group could be formed to consider broader issues on cycling, to include within its membership those who had concerns about cycling, and with part of its purpose as liaison with the organisers of group cycle events, or alternatively that the remit and membership of the existing Cycle Working Group or NFDC's Safety Advisory Group could be extended to encompass these other viewpoints and objectives. Other Members felt that this role could be filled by the NPA itself or the RMS working group, and no additional group was needed. Chris Gregory noted that further consideration and discussion were needed on this point. Members endorsed the actions identified at the Members' Day.

Scheme of Members' allowances

Members resolved to continue with a Scheme that was based on the amount of the current basic allowance for the next two years, and adjusted in accordance with any NFNPA staff cost of living pay award applied from April 2012 and April 2013