

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 205th Meeting, held in the Council Chamber, New Forest District Council offices, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, on THURSDAY, 10th May 2007

Those present: Tim Greenwood (Chairman)
Nick Evans (Panel Technical Officer)
David Stone/Rosalind Alderman (Panel Clerk/Secretary)
Members as shown on the Official List, with the exception of those listed below for whom apologies were received.

ITEM 1 **APOLOGIES**

Liza Wood, Bransgore Parish Council
Olivia Keith, Breamore Parish Council
Professor Evans, Institute of Chartered Foresters
Brian Trimmer, Melchet Park and Plaitford Parish Council
Jenni Tubbs, New Forest Friends of the Earth

SUBSTITUTIONS

Sam Dovey for the Commoners' Defence Association
Peter Roberts for the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society
Chris Lemon for New Forest Dog Owners' Group
Jeff Haynes for the New Forest National Park Authority
Roger Neath for the New Forest Tourism Association

SPECIAL NOTE

The Chairman welcomed William Hillier as the new representative of Godshill Parish Council.

It was noted that Cllr. David Scott had retired as a District Councillor and therefore as the New Forest District Council's representative on the Panel. Cllr. Scott had written to say how much he had enjoyed being on the Panel, and passed on his best wishes for all Panel members for the future. The Chairman said that he would write to Cllr. Scott thanking him for his contribution to the Panel and wishing him well.

Action: Chairman to write to Cllr. Scott.

ITEM 2 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** (1 March 2007)

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 3 **MATTERS ARISING**

a) Proposals for vehicle safety barriers at Ashurst (Min 10.4)

3.1 In response to a query from Peter Sopowski (Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council) raised at the Panel meeting in March, Kevin Fuller (Hampshire County

Council Highways) explained that vehicle safety barriers would be installed on the Ashurst bridge. In order to make the barriers less visually intrusive they would be wood-cladded.

ITEM 4

PANEL REPRESENTATION ON THE OPEN FOREST ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 4.1 Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission) explained that Martin Westlake (Fordingbridge Town Council) was retiring as the Panel's representative on the Open Forest Advisory Committee, a body which advised the Forestry Commission on practical management and represented a key interface between the Forestry Commission and various groups including commoners, conservation bodies and the statutory bodies. The Committee met twice a year and there were two places for Panel members, one of which was held by Mark Abbott (Lyndhurst Parish Council). Mike Seddon pointed out that Cllr. Westlake was one of the longest standing members and thanked him for his valuable contribution. Cllr Westlake said that he had greatly enjoyed his time on the Committee and that the new representative should be someone with a broad outlook.
- 4.2 The Panel agreed to appoint Eddie Holtham (Fawley Parish Council) as its representative on the Open Forest Advisory Committee.

ITEM 5

FORESTRY COMMISSION

- 5.1 Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission) gave a presentation on the Forestry Commission's programme of removing inclosure fences over the last five years and in the future. The intention was that stock should be allowed to graze certain areas that had previously been enclosed; some areas would thus be returned to heathland and others would be open woodland. The plans would result in significant changes to the landscape of the Forest and debate had focused on the effect of removing fences on commoners (who often used fences to herd ponies during the annual drifts) and on the conservation of particular habitats and species, such as butterflies. Further consideration would be given to whether some areas should be seasonally grazed. The New Forest Association had produced a Vision entitled "Recovering lost landscapes" which suggested that a more 'natural' unenclosed woodland should be allowed to develop across certain areas within the Crown lands.
- 5.2 Peter Frost (Natural England) said that Natural England was in support of the Forestry Commission's programme and endorsed the New Forest Association's Vision.
- 5.3 Sam Dovey (for the Commoners' Defence Association) said that the commoners welcomed additional grazing but were concerned about the loss of drift lines and open woodland being left unmanaged, and would welcome further consultation. In response to a further query from a Panel member, Mike Seddon said that all those concerned needed a good understanding of the economic impact of changes in woodland management.
- 5.4 Geraint James (Copythorne Parish Council) said it was important to preserve the ancient oak woodlands and maintain the character of the Forest.

- 5.5 Panel members agreed with a suggestion by Peter Roberts (New Forest Association) that the Association present its Vision to a meeting of the Panel.

Action: New Forest Association to present the “Recovering lost landscapes” Vision to the Panel.

ITEM 6

CONSERVATION OF BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS IN THE NEW FOREST

- 6.1 Dr Dan Hoare of Butterfly Conservation gave a presentation on the conservation of butterflies and moths. The debate on forestry management and grazing was very relevant to the conservation of butterflies and moths. He explained that the statistics gathered for butterflies and moths were very useful indicators of general biodiversity in the area, and in particular of the conditions for other invertebrates (which were not so well recorded). Up to three generations of a particular butterfly or moth species can exist within year, resulting in a faster visible evolutionary response to changing conditions and climate.
- 6.2 It was interesting to note that a number of species which were rare elsewhere in the country were more common in the New Forest, partly owing to the prevalence of ancient deciduous woodland upon which many such species depended. Dr Hoare said that Butterfly Conservation hoped to work closely with the New Forest National Park Authority in developing its Biodiversity Action Plan and with the Forestry Commission. He added that good management by the Forestry Commission had been largely responsible for the regeneration of some species, such as the Pearl Bordered Fritillary.

ITEM 7

THE NEW FOREST HAMPSHIRE ACTION TEAM (HAT) – WHO IT IS AND WHAT IT DOES

- 7.1 Sian Campbell of Hampshire Action Team (HAT) and Cllr Clarke (Ringwood Town Council and Chairman of New Forest HAT) gave a presentation, explaining that the organisation was created to identify, consider and make recommendations concerning issues which might influence or improve Hampshire County Council’s services. The members of the New Forest HAT were the county councillors for the New Forest. Among other things the New Forest HAT was looking at public transport and youth services.
- 7.2 In response to concerns raised regarding the need for a more co-ordinated approach to Criminal Records Bureau checks to avoid unnecessary duplication and a detrimental effect on the recruitment of volunteers, Dr Mason-Smith (Hampshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services) informed the Panel that there was an ongoing consultation on the website of the Charity Commission to which Panel members were invited to respond.

ITEM 8

UPDATE ON THE RECREATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE NATIONAL PARK

- 8.1 Jeff Haynes (New Forest National Park Authority) explained that information arising from the informal consultations on a recreation management strategy was being evaluated. National Park Authority members had held a first informal discussion on recreation issues; the Project Board had held its first meeting and the first meeting of a Key Stakeholder Advisory Group was likely to be held the

following month. Consultants had been appointed to take forward the formal consultation exercise starting this summer. This would help the National Park Authority to gain a deeper understanding of stakeholders' views and identification of issues to be addressed. The results of the consultation would be formulated into a paper to be discussed at one of the Management Plan topic group workshops later in the year. Following these detailed discussions with interested groups, a Strategy and Action Plan would be drafted for wider public consultation early next year to secure agreement for the final Strategy. The final strategy would be put forward for adoption in August 2008. The Panel would be kept informed throughout the consultation stages and the New Forest Access Forum (which has a statutory brief to advise the National Park Authority on access and recreation matters) would also be asked to contribute to the process of preparing the Strategy.

ITEM 9

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETINGS REPORT

- 9.1 Jeff Haynes (New Forest National Park Authority) updated the Panel on the progress of the proposed association between the Authority and the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust and said that interviews had been held for the Centre Manager position. He also updated the Panel on matters discussed at the National Park Authority's April meeting.

ITEM 10

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 10.1 The Chairman announced that, further to item 4 of the agenda, Cllr. Westlake (Fordingbridge Town Council) would be standing down from the Panel. Cllr. Westlake had been a member since the Panel's inaugural meeting and the Chairman thanked him for all his valuable input throughout the last 37 years.
- 10.2 The Chairman said that Cllr. David Scott, who had also retired from the Panel, had asked again that planning briefs be circulated to District Councillors by the National Park Authority.

Action: Jeff Haynes to raise the question of circulating planning briefs with relevant officers at the National Park Authority.

- 10.3 Jeff Haynes announced that the Sustainable Development Fund was now offering small grants of up to £500 for sustainable projects that fit the criteria; no match funding would be required for these small grants.
- 10.4 It was requested that litter picking events be arranged for dates following bank holiday weekends rather than beforehand. The Deputy Surveyor agreed to relay this comment to the organisers.
- 10.5 Following queries from parish councillors on Village Design Statements and their place in relation to the planning policies of the National Park, it was agreed that a paper would be brought to the Panel by the National Park Authority to clarify this.

Action: National Park Authority officers to bring a paper on the status of Village Design Statements with regard to National Park planning policies to the Consultative Panel.

- 10.6 Cllr. Holtham (Fawley Parish Council) said that it had been discovered recently that one of the boundaries of the National Park within his Parish ran along a

bridleway 8 metres from the edge of a field, so that the field lay partly within and partly outside the Park, which had caused some confusion. He asked that clear boundary maps of the National Park be provided to parish councils.

Following the meeting Panel members are advised that accurate boundary maps of the National Park are available through Ordnance Survey or on the Authority's website at www.newforestnpa.gov.uk.

- 10.7 In response to a request, Mike Seddon said that the Forestry Commission would consider arranging a Panel tour for September. In addition, the Panel was informed that Forestry Commission open days would be held on Friday 18th and Saturday 19th May at Wilverley inclosure.

Action: Forestry Commission to arrange Panel tour.

- 10.8 Chris Aldous (New Forest Equestrian Association) said that the Pegasus crossing on the A326 was working well. He asked Hampshire County Council to consider installing gates with easy catches to improve access for disabled people and horse riders. He also requested that the speed limit on the road between Fawley and Calshot be reduced to 40 mph, that the cattle grid at Dibden Inclosure be replaced and that a notice be placed there requesting drivers not to park in front of the access gates as this constituted obstruction of the highway.

Action: Kevin Fuller (Hampshire County Council Highways) to raise these points and report back to Panel.

ITEM 11

DATE OF NEXT PANEL MEETING

- 11.1 The next Consultative Panel meeting will be held at **7.30 pm on THURSDAY, 5 JULY 2007** in the Council Chamber, New Forest District Council offices, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst.

The meeting closed at 21.35 hours.