

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 226th Meeting, held in the Louisa Suite, Lyndhurst Park Hotel, Lyndhurst, on THURSDAY, 3 MARCH 2011

Those present: Tim Greenwood (In the Chair)
David Stone (Panel Support Officer)
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

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

- 1.1 David Stone informed the Panel that one nomination had been received, this being for the current Chairman, who had indicated that he was happy to continue in the position. No other nominations were put forward from the floor and Tim Greenwood was subsequently re-elected on a show of hands.

ITEM 2

2.1 APOLOGIES

Arthur French, Boldre Parish Council
Mike Chilcott, CPRE
James Young, Commoners' Defence Association
Jo Russell, Denny Lodge Parish Council
Ros Cooper, Hampshire Federation of Women's Institutes
Leo Randall, Melchett Park and Plaitford Parish Council
Edward Heron, New Forest District Council
Chris Whitlock, New Forest National Farmers' Union
Sheila Campbell, Whiteparish Parish Council
Tony Barnett, Caravan Club

2.2 SUBSTITUTIONS

David Bryant, Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council
Chris Lemon, NFDOG
Julian Johnson, NFNPA

2.3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that Keith Broomfield was the new representative from the Environment Agency. The Government Office for the South East would be closing down at the end of the month and accordingly would no longer be a Panel member.

The Chairman announced that the current year was the Panel's 40th anniversary; and suggested that the occasion be marked by a presentation on the history and milestones of the Panel. In this regard he suggested that Richard Reeves (New Forest History and Archaeology Group) be invited to make a suitable presentation to the Panel. The Panel supported this suggestion and Richard Reeves indicated that he would be happy to make the presentation at a meeting towards the end of the year.

The Chairman also reminded members to announce their name and organisation before speaking and also to contact the Panel Secretariat should they wish to have an item included on a Panel agenda

ITEM 3

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (6 January 2011)

- 3.1 The Chairman mentioned that Sally Owen had submitted her apologies for the last meeting as an individual rather than as a Bransgore Parish Councillor, and that the minutes would be corrected accordingly.
- 3.2 Referring to item 9.2 of the minutes Eddie Holtham mentioned that non-members of the Camping and Caravan Club would be charged an additional £3.50 per night for the use of forest campsites and requested that the minute be updated accordingly.
- 3.3 Subject to the above amendments, the minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4

MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 Minute item 6.3 - The Chairman reminded members that as requested at the last meeting, he had written to the Secretary of State on behalf of the Panel regarding the consultation on governance arrangements for National Parks and the Broads and copies of his letter had been circulated to Panel members with the current agenda.

ITEM 5

FORESTRY COMMISSION

- 5.1 Mike Seddon drew attention to the Government's announcement of the cancellation of the Public Forest Estate consultation and the suspension of the proposal to dispose of forest land. He said that the Government was currently in the process of setting up a panel to advise it on the future of forests in England, although neither the terms of reference nor the membership of the panel had yet been agreed. He added that all responses (approximately 7,000) submitted under the previous consultation would be considered by the panel.
- 5.2 Following discussion, the Chairman suggested that he write to the Secretary of State for the Environment requesting that, on his or her appointment, the chairman of the new panel attend a meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel to speak on how the panel proposed to undertake its work; this would also afford the Panel an opportunity to apprise the chairman of local views and the importance of activities such as commoning which required the whole of the forest estate to be kept intact.
- 5.3 Members agreed with this approach and the Chairman undertook to draft a suitable letter; he also ascertained by show of hands that the Panel supported the retention of the management of the heritage woodland by the Forestry Commission and that this responsibility should not be transferred to a charity.

Action: Tim Greenwood to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment requesting that, on his or her appointment, the chairman of the new panel attend a meeting of the New Forest Consultative Panel to speak on how the panel proposed to undertake its work and receive feedback on issues specific to forest land in the New Forest National Park.

- 5.4 Members then raised several queries with regard to the four year funding settlement of the Forestry Commission (25% funding reduction) and that of Natural England

(30% funding reduction); both Mike Seddon and Rachael Green reported on the staff consultation that was currently on-going at national level with respect to the downsizing of these organisations resulting from the above cuts but said that it was too early to assess what impact this would have locally on the New Forest.

ITEM 6

NEW FOREST ACCESS FOR ALL

- 6.1 Kenneth Hubbard gave the Panel an overview of the work of New Forest Access for All mentioning the services provided by his organisation including the provision of telephonic advice and site visits to assist people with access and mobility difficulties, carrying out access audits for buildings, awareness training for organisations and commenting on planning applications for business premises. He tabled information pamphlets on the organisation which were also available at the offices of the New Forest District Council and local information centres as well as through the website.
- 6.2 He said that there was a need for a wider membership and associate membership base and in particular to increase corporate membership as currently the only corporate member was Sandy Balls. He accordingly invited businesses and local organisations to assist with generating new members to support the work of the organisation and attend relevant events. He also drew attention to difficulties experienced by New Forest Access for All in erecting their marquee at the last New Forest Show and requested any exhibitors who would be willing to share a stand at the forthcoming Show to contact him in this regard.
- 6.3 Ian Taylor reported on the All Ability Bikes project currently being co-ordinated by the New Forest National Park Authority, this would enable young people with disabilities to experience the New Forest on a range of specially adapted cycles (further details on the project, which would commence in the summer, have now been sourced and can be found via the following link: <http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/visiting/vi-whattodo/cycling/inclusivecycling.htm>)

ITEM 7

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETINGS

- 7.1 Julian Johnson updated Panel members on the meeting of the NPA on 10 February 2011 which had considered the National Park Governance Review and the NPA's response to the consultation (summary circulated with the Panel agenda). He said that 57 responses had been received relevant to the New Forest encompassing a wide range of views. He also drew members' attention to the Authority's response to the consultation as detailed in the report and advised that the outcome of the consultation was still anticipated to be the end of March 2011.

ITEM 8

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 Bill Dow drew members' attention to the fact that the date of the local government elections (5 May 2011) coincided with the next Panel meeting and as this affected a number of members present, the Panel supported deferring the date of the next meeting to the following Thursday (12 May 2011).

Action: Secretariat to amend the date of the next Panel meeting to Thursday 12 May 2011.

- 8.2 Bill Dow also queried the minimum age to assist with the litter picking projects at New Forest car parks (minimum age of 16) as including younger people would raise awareness of this problem and increase the numbers to assist in the project. Mike Seddon responded that this was likely to be on health and safety grounds but that he would report back to Bill Dow and also include a note in the minutes for the information of other members of the Panel. Mike Seddon has actioned this request and below is a brief summary for members information:
(The program of public litter pick events is led by volunteer rangers who work for the FC. If the events were run with under 16's, it would be difficult to ask volunteers to accept this high level of responsibility.)
- 8.3 Julian Johnson reported on the New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair 2011 which was taking place on 5 March 2011 at the Lyndhurst Community Centre from 10.30 am to 4.00 pm and invited Panel members to attend.
- 8.4 Mike Seddon advised that Chris Caswell would be presenting an update to the Panel with regard to the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme at the next meeting of the Panel.

ITEM 9

DATE OF NEXT PANEL MEETING

- 9.1 The next Consultative Panel meeting would be held at **7.30 pm on THURSDAY, 12 MAY 2011** in the **Louisa Suite at the Lyndhurst Park Hotel, Lyndhurst.**

The meeting closed at 20:35 hrs.