

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 240th Meeting, held in the Main Hall, Brockenhurst Village Hall on THURSDAY, 6 MARCH 2014

Those present: Clive Chatters(Chairman)
David Stone (Panel Secretariat)
Rosalind Alderman (Panel Secretariat)
Rachel Pardey (Panel Secretariat)
Members as shown on the Official List, with the exception of those listed below for whom apologies were received.

ITEM 1

- 1.1 Tim Greenwood announced his retirement as the Panel's Chairman. Alison Barnes (NFNPA) made a presentation to Tim Greenwood in recognition of his eight years in the role, and a number of Panel members thanked the outgoing Chairman for all his work. The Panel then unanimously resolved to appoint Clive Chatters as the new Chairman with immediate effect until the end of the year.

ITEM 2

2.1 APOLOGIES

Richard Lemon – Natural England
Robbie Roberts – RSPCA
Linda Palmer – Whiteparish Parish Council
Tony Barnet – Caravan Club
George Dart – Totton and Eling Parish Council

2.2 SUBSTITUTIONS

Mrs Diana Kitcher for Ros Cooper on behalf of the Hampshire County Federation of Women's Institutes
Mark Carter for Julian Evans on behalf of the Institute of Chartered Foresters
Dr Tony Hockley for Ailsa Farrand on behalf of the New Forest Equestrian Society

2.3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements on this occasion.

ITEM 3

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (16 January 2014)

- 3.1 With reference to minute 5.3, Cllr. Sue Bennison (Bramshaw Parish Council) said that she had raised the issue of dazzling lights on cyclists' helmets. Nigel Matthews would be asked to mention this at the next meeting of the Cycling Liaison Group.
- 3.2 Minute 9.1 should read 'Barry Olorenshaw' in place of 'Rob Dewing', as Rob Dewing had not been present at that meeting.
- 3.2 Subject to the matters listed above, the minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4
MATTERS ARISING

4.1 There were no matters arising on this occasion.

ITEM 5
NFNPA UPDATE

5.1 Alison Barnes updated Panel members on the successful visit of the planning Minister, Nick Bowles MP, to the New Forest earlier that day. It had been announced during the tour that National Parks and AONBs would be exempt from the proposed changes to permitted development rights in respect of developing rural outbuildings. Alison Barnes thanked the Panel Members for the representations they had made on this matter. The Panel agreed that it would be appropriate for the Chairman to write and thank the Minister.

Clive Chatters to write to the Minister on behalf of the Panel regarding changes to permitted development rights.

5.2 Alison Barnes also reported on the successful Wildlife Forum that had taken place the previous weekend. She explained that a 'business needs survey' was being carried out in the area and urged Panel members to complete it and/or to report back to their organisations and encourage people to complete it as it would influence future training and grant opportunities.

ITEM 6
EDUCATION IN THE FOREST – SUE PALMA (NFNPA)

6.1 Sue Palma explained how the National Park was helping schools across the New Forest and on the boundaries to facilitate and support the Education Forum (a forum established to promote education beyond the classroom, comprising 26 members including commercial organisations, charitable foundations, museums, woodland managers, and local authorities). The Forum members were linked by a willingness to share best practice in the provision of curriculum based sessions and a commitment to increase understanding of the New Forest and how to value it. The NFNPA's education team felt strongly that every school in the New Forest should frontline the New Forest in its education provision; it was vital that local children understood the unique nature of the Forest. The education team worked with local schools to find ways to embed education about the New Forest into each curriculum area. One exciting project that was currently underway was the building of a 'New Forest curriculum' website, which would be hosted by the NFNPA and run for and by teachers. It was intended that the site would go 'live' in time for the second primary curriculum conference in June 2014. A follow-up conference was planned for secondary schools on the theme of 'Our Forest, Our Future' on 4 July 2014.

6.2 In terms of initiatives aimed at informal education, the team worked with others to develop age-appropriate learning for adults and families through invents and projects

6.3 Alison Barnes congratulated Sue Palma on the number of children the team had reached over the previous year (approximately 4000 directly through work with local schools, and a further 4000 through educational campaign work on issues such as litter and animal accidents). These numbers were particularly impressive in view of the fact that there were only 1.5 education posts at the NFNPA, currently filled by Sue Palma together with her colleague Helen Robinson.

ITEM 7

FORESTRY COMMISSION UPDATE

7.1 *Dog Deaths*

Mike Seddon updated members with regard to the incidence of dog deaths in the New Forest, thought to be caused by Alabama Rot. Members learned that there had been 12 confirmed cases between December 2013 and February 2014 as well as 10 confirmed cases across the country.

7.2 There had been numerous anxious queries from dog owners regarding safe areas to walk their dogs. Mike Seddon advised that it was difficult to provide advice as much was still unknown about the cause and spread of the illness. However the Forestry Commission, veterinary clinics and other organisations were providing as much advice and guidance as possible to concerned dog owners.

7.3 In response to the evolving national situation and feedback from local dog owners the Forestry Commission would be changing its approach to signage locally. Rather than only sign sites where there have been confirmed cases, in future, information signs about Alabama Rot would be placed more widely around the New Forest with the aim of raising general awareness. In addition the New Forest Dog Owners Group had established a fund into which dog owners could contribute towards research into this problem – more information on this aspect was available from the Group

7.4 Mike Seddon reported briefly on Ash Dieback disease which he said was likely to continue to spread.

ITEM 8

PANEL AGENDA SETTING

8.1 The Chairman invited input from members of the Panel with regard to future agenda items.

8.2 Alison Barnes suggested that a presentation on the New Forest Community Routes be made to a future meeting. This was a project to identify well-maintained and easy to use existing paths and other connecting routes that people can use to walk, cycle and ride between settlements and countryside areas within the New Forest National Park. She said that the NPA had been talking to Parishes in connection with this initiative the aim of which was to link settlements and key points in the New Forest with a view to using these routes in a more sustainable way and for the routes to be well maintained so users can be more confident about using them.

8.3 A query was raised with regard to the Quiet Lanes Scheme and members were provided with a brief update on this initiative and were advised that the Hampshire County Council would make a presentation to a future meeting of the Panel.

8.4 Members also requested an update on the effect of the recent severe weather in the New Forest, particularly with regard to the impact on local rivers and what work was being done to address possible similar difficulties in the future. David Horne (EA) undertook to make a presentation to the Panel in this regard.

- 8.5 The Chairman advised that many of the decisions which affect the New Forest were made outside the Forest boundaries. Some of these proposals were in areas which abutted the boundaries of the National Park. He said that it was essential that the Panel was consulted by local authorities and other statutory bodies in this regard so that it was able to input into the proposals in terms of their effect on the Forest. He advised that he would be consulting with Alison Barnes and Mike Seddon in this regard and would report back accordingly to the Panel.
- 8.6 Members were advised of two forthcoming events, namely the Annual General meeting of the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme on 27 March 2014, starting at 5.30 pm.

ITEM 9 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

9.1 *Gruffalo Trails*

Tony Hockley of the New Forest Equestrian Association requested information on the new Gruffalo Trails, which would operate under a new national franchise between the Forestry Commission and the production company Magic Light Pictures Ltd. He said that he was surprised that such a commercial activity was taking place at sites in the New Forest and the NF Equestrian Association was concerned that this would set a precedent for similar events in the future.

Mike Seddon responded that the aim of the activity was to give children a better understanding of woodlands and what happens in them. He said that 4 out of 5 children did not recognise an Ash tree and half did not recognise an Oak tree. Most children today played outside half as much as their parents. Using the Gruffalo character which is very familiar to children, this initiative was designed to get children outdoor, raise awareness and engage children in woodland and environmental issues. The intention is to provide temporary trails at Bolderwood inclosure and five camping sites.

A definitive set of proposals would be brought to the Forestry Commission and Verderers. He said that the Gruffalo sculpture which was approximately 7 feet tall would not be located in the New Forest.

9.2 *Update on Public Forest Estate*

In response to a query from Peter Roberts of the New Forest Association, Mike Seddon updated the Panel on developments with regard to the Public Forest Estate and said that the Government was looking to set up a new organisation to manage the Public Forest Estate. These changes would involve new national legislation which would need to take account of the New Forest Acts. The intention is to create a fresh remit for the Public Forest Estate and organisation responsible for its management to ensure that future management was fit for purpose. A balanced set of environmental, social and economic objectives was expected.

He advised that this would involve primary legislation and he would report back to the Panel as soon as draft legislation was available for scrutiny.

9.3 *Maintenance of the countryside*

Stuart Hall of Woodgreen Parish Council advised that he had recently returned from a trip to the Pembrokeshire Coast where he had observed that the countryside was better maintained than in the New Forest, namely hedges, verges and ditches. He commented that property

owners in the New Forest did not seem to maintain these as well as in the past. He suggested that the Panel encourage better upkeep of these features. Edward Heron acknowledged that information explaining what landowners' responsibilities were could be improved and he would refer this issue back to the County Council. Alison Barnes advised that the Verderers Higher Level Scheme was producing guidance to property owners in this regard. Village design statements were also a good source of information – four of these had been completed to date.

9.4 *Litter on the A337*

In response to a concern about litter on the A337, Edward Heron advised that he would bring this to the attention of the New Forest District Council. He mentioned that the Forestry Commission was responsible for litter picking on Crown land.

9.5 *Clearance of culverts*

Eddie Holtham (Denny Lodge Parish Council), raised a concern by the Council with regard to clearing of culverts in the parish area. Edward Heron advised that this was the responsibility of the County Council and he would liaise with Eddie Holtham regarding the location of the culverts which were causing concern.

ITEM 10

DATE OF NEXT PANEL MEETING

- 10.1 Date of the next meeting would be **7.30 pm on THURSDAY, 1 MAY 2014** in the **Main Hall, Brockenhurst Village Hall, Brockenhurst** .

The meeting closed at 21.45 hrs.