**NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL**

**Minutes of the 237thMeeting, held in the Louisa Suite, Lyndhurst Park Hotel, Lyndhurst, on THURSDAY, 7 March 2013**

Those present: Tim Greenwood (In the Chair)

 Frances Connolly/ Debbie Copping/Vicki Gibbon (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 **APOLOGIES**

 Ros Cooper – WI

 Jennifer Tubbs – New Forest Friends of the Earth

 Robert Lintonbon – Godshill Parish Council

 Christine Ames – New Forest Tourism Association

 Tony Barnett – Caravan Club

 Mike Chilcott – CPRE

 Stan Wade – Hythe and Dibden Parish Council

1.2 **SUBSTITUTIONS**

Tony Hockley – New Forest Equestrian

Frank Weller – New Forest Ramblers Association

1.3 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman expressed his deep regret of the recent passing away of Ken Hubbard from New Forest Access for All and welcomed Valerie Rawlings who will be taking his place on the panel.

The Chairman advised the Panel that Cllr Allen from Landford Parish Council had resigned and therefore there would not be a representative on the panel.

The Chairman informed the Panel that the Verderers HLS Annual General meeting would be taking place on 3 April from 5.00pm until 7.00pm in the VerderersHall and that Panel members were welcome to attend. Should Panel members wish to attend this meeting they would need to contact either the Panel Secretariat or Colin Draper in the Verderers office on 02380 283134.

**ITEM 2**

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** (10January 2013)

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

**ITEM 3**

**MATTERS ARISING**

3.1 There were no matters arising at this meeting.

**ITEM 4**

**FORESTRY COMMISSION ITEMS**

4.1 **Government Response to the Independent Panel on Forestry**

 Mike Seddon introduced his PowerPoint presentation on the recent Government response to the Independent Panel on Forestry, explaining that the Forestry Panel report was published in July 2012. On 31 January 2013 the Government released their forestry policy statement which set out how they share much of the Forestry Panel’s vision and aspirations for England’s trees, woods and forests.

 The document covered the whole of England, however it specifically mentions that the special characteristics of the New Forest and Forest of Dean need to be preserved.

4.2 The document sets out the Government’s three main objectives.

 Objective 1 – Protect.

 This outlines the Government’s commitment to protecting trees and woodlands from disease, and also includes the impacts of deer, squirrels, invasive species and climate change.

 Objective 2 – Improve

 The main focus here is on increased management of woodlands, driving economic growth, realising the benefits for people and improving access.

 Objective 3 – Expand

 England has 10% woodland cover and on current rates of increase by 2060 there would be 11% cover. The Government aspires to increase this rate of expansion achieving 12% woodland cover by 2060.

4.3 Mike Seddon explained that the Government response acknowledges the important role undertaken by the Forestry Commission while proposing evolution of the organisation to ensure it met future needs. Notably the Government was intending to establish a new separate public forest estate management body to hold the public forest in trust for the nation, while still being accountable to Parliament. Details about how this change would be taken forward were not yet known but there would be a process by which local communities could feed in their views.

4.4 He advised the Panel that the response did not contain precise details of every measure but did clearly set out the direction the Government wished to go and had generally received a positive welcome. The response confirms the cancellation of previous plans to sell large areas of the forest estate. The New Forest would remain part of the wider public forest estate in England and management objectives set by the new policy would be broadly similar to today.

4.5 Questions were then taken from the Panel, these included –

 The current Government was proposing primary legislation to establish the new forestry management organisation, what were the oppositions view?

 There had been diverse political views to the idea of selling the public forest estate but a more general welcome to this recent statement of policy. There is likely to be political debate about some of the details e.g. about the new public forest management organisation, but broadly it was felt that there was broad consensus on the main issues of policy.

 Are there any indications of what mechanisms and funding the Government would use to achieve its policy goals?

 There are no specific funding commitments in the Government response document but there are statements that recognise the need for some ongoing public funding of forestry. The document also sets out ideas for other forms of investment e.g. corporate funding and makes clear the Government’s desire to engage with various organisations to implement policy in partnership. It also highlights examples of things that are currently working. It does not ste a specific a timespan for delivery.

 Does it rule out any disposals of the Forest?

 It does effectively rescind large scale areas of the estate, however it is still possible to buy and sell small parts of land for sensible operational reasons as has traditionally happened.

 Is the ditching which has been happening over various areas of the forest purely to stop vehicle access?

 Yes, the programme funded by the Forest’s HLS Scheme has proved to be a great opportunity to reinstate some of the 1970’s infrastructure designed to protect the forest from unwanted vehicle access onto the open heaths.

**ITEM 5**

**NEW FOREST REMEMBERS PORTAL – PRESERVING OUR PAST FOR THE FUTURE – JAMES BROWN- NFNPA**

5.1 James Brown introduced his PowerPoint presentation and reported that the project had been received very positively by all parties and had recently been given an extension to April 2014. James Brown commented that, with the help from volunteers, a great deal of information had been uncovered on what events took place and what life was like in the New Forest during the war.

5.2 James demonstrated the New Forest Remembers website portal to the panel members, explaining that this would be where the public could upload memories, documents and pictures of wartime activities. For more information on the project please contact james.brown@newforestnpa.gov.uk or gareth.owen@newforestnpa.gov.uk

 Website portal address - [www.newforestww2.org](http://www.newforestww2.org)

**ITEM 6**

**PANEL AGENDA SETTING AND CONSULTATIONS LOG**

6.1 It was suggested that future presentations could be made by the National Trust and RDPE? leader group, the panel secretariat will look into this.

**ITEM 7**

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

7.1 Tony Hockley commented that there had been an increase in commercial recreational activities within the Forest, particularly bootcamps which were operating at Rockford Common.

 Mike Seddon agreed to look into this and advise the panel.

7.2 Eddie Holtham stated that access to the Fawley Inclosure from bridleway 36 had been unusable for pedestrians for most of the winter due to the deep mud in the boxgate.

 Mike Seddon agreed to look into this and advise the Panel.

7.3 Eddie Holtham advised the Panel that he had received complaints regarding a large man hole cover that had broken away from its pit and was a danger to animals on the Forest this was in Kings Copse, Blackfield at its junction with Bell Lane.

 Mike Seddon agreed to look into this.

7.4 Ted Fleat commented that a ‘wiggle ride’ would be taking place from New Park in April which would attract between 3000 – 5000 cyclists.

 Richard Lemon advised the panel that Highways would provide advice for these events and that volunteer marshals would be around, should there be any major problems police would step in.

7.5 Mike Moriarti mentioned that he would like to see email addresses of any guest speakers on the agenda; this was noted by the Secretariat.

**ITEM 8**

**DATE OF NEXT PANEL MEETING**

10.1 Date of the next meeting would be**7.30 pm on THURSDAY, 2 MAY 2013** in the **Louisa Suite at the Lyndhurst Park Hotel**, **Lyndhurst.**

The meeting closed at 21.30 hrs.