

## **NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL**

### **Minutes of the 243<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, held in the Main Hall, Brockenhurst Village Hall on THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Those present: Clive Chatters (In the Chair)  
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 APOLOGIES**

Cllr Peter Turner, Breamore Parish Council  
Tony Barnett, Camping and Caravan Club  
Mark Carter, Institute of Chartered Foresters  
Cllr Bill Dunn, Landford Parish Council  
Cllr Christine Ford, Ringwood Town Council

##### **1.2 SUBSTITUTIONS**

Mike Manley for Sally Owen of Bransgore Parish Council  
Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre for Alison Barnes of the New Forest National Park Authority

##### **1.3 NEW REPRESENTATIVES/ ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Sam Dovey would represent the NFU on the Panel, following Chris Whitlock's resignation from the NFU. Cllr Colin Draper would represent Godshill Parish Council.

Mike Seddon, Forestry Commission, proposed that the annual Panel Tour be rescheduled until the following Spring as the relevant member of staff was currently unable to conduct the tour, having sustained a knee injury.

#### **ITEM 2**

##### **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** (3 July 2014)

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record with the addition of two paragraphs in connection with matters raised by the Commoners' Defence Association, to be included at paragraphs 5.4 and 9.3 of the draft minutes as set out below:

"5.4 The Commoners' Defence Association objected to the retention of so much fallen timber because it adversely affects commoning in that grazing is lost, access for and safety of stock is compromised as well as potential revenue lost for the FC"; and

"9.3 The Commoners' Defence Association expressed their strong opposition to the cycling code and noted that their concerns were shared by many NPA Members."

### **ITEM 3** **MATTERS ARISING**

- 3.1 Eddie Holtham, Fawley and Denny Lodge Parish Councils, reiterated his concerns about bridleway 36 and stated that he would raise this issue again on behalf of the two Parish Councils he represented, as and when complaints were made to them.

### **ITEM 4** **NFNPA UPDATE – OLIVER CROSTHWAITE EYRE**

- 4.1 The Chairman welcomed Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre to his first Consultative Panel meeting following his appointment as Chairman of the NFNPA in June.
- 4.2 Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre gave an update on the draft NFNPA Management Plan, explaining that the idea of a brief update of the National Park Management Plan had been discussed at the last meeting. This would be a simple supplement to the existing Plan (agreed in 2010), focusing mainly on a set of priority actions for the period 2015-20. An initial draft was being pulled together at present, for informal consultation and discussion beginning around mid-October. This draft had been produced by many of the main statutory organisations, with contributions from others, and so was not intended to be a plan solely about the work of the NFNPA. The draft plan was being tested out on a few organisations in the Forest over the next three or four weeks to make sure that it took a reasonable approach overall, before it would be circulated to all interested parties. The draft would be sent out to Panel members when ready (it would also be available on the NFNPA website, would be discussed in more detail at the November Panel meeting. Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre pointed out that there would be plenty of opportunities to comment, including (i) two months of informal consultation asking for views from mid-October to mid-December in 2014, followed by revisions to the draft update, and then (ii) a further six weeks of formal consultation in February and March 2015.
- 4.3 A National Park update sheet was also tabled for the meeting, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.
- 4.4 Following Oliver Crosthwaite Eyre's update, Cllr. Stewart Hall of Woodgreen Parish Council raised the matter of the appearance and untidiness of the New Forest, which was also extensively discussed under item 5 below.

### **ITEM 5** **HCC CONTRIBUTION TO THE EMERGING MANAGEMENT PLAN DEBATE (PAUL GARROD, HCC)**

- 5.1 Paul Garrod explained that HCC was revisiting traffic initiatives in the New Forest with a view to improving these whilst retaining a sensitivity to the special qualities of the New Forest. Broadly, HCC's focus would be on traffic issues, traffic trends, the improved use of the highways network, and looking at various initiatives designed to tackle traffic problems. It was anticipated that the volume of traffic travelling through the New Forest would increase in the coming years. The main objective of HCC's work was to promote initiatives that would encourage through traffic to use the most appropriate routes (the major roads). Among other measures, the designation and signage of some minor roads as 'quiet lanes' would be piloted and monitored, to remind motorists of the other road users who were likely to be on these roads and to encourage slower speeds and more considerate driving. HCC would also seek to mitigate the impact of heavy goods vehicles crossing the Forest by developing a map based web facility and discouraging the use of car-based satellite navigation systems as far

as possible. He assured the Panel that HCC would seek to be as sensitive as possible to the rural character of the New Forest in considering infrastructure design.

- 5.2 Following Mr Garrod's presentation, he responded to a number of queries from Panel members as to the probable implications of this work in their specific local areas. Panel members were supportive of the 'quiet lanes' and HGV initiatives. Members also asked questions about sign rationalisation and downgrading; Mr Garrod explained that at present there were no funds available for a major project of this type but that some of this work would be undertaken in the event that money became available. Richard Bastow, HCC, responded to Cllr. Stewart Hall's query, explaining that the County Council was allowed to cut back verge vegetation to one metre's width from the road on fenced roads, but on the Crown lands they did not have this capacity. Mike Seddon explained the FC's work on maintaining verges on the Crown lands, adding that where Parish Councils raised issues in connection with overgrown hedges at specific sites they would seek to take action where funds allowed. He explained that it was important to manage vegetation in a controlled fashion as there were a number of considerations involved, including the provision of habitat for invertebrate species and grazing issues.

*NB: A copy of Mr Garrod's presentation can be found on the Panel website.*

## **ITEM 6**

### **OUR PAST, OUR FUTURE – LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME (RACHAEL GALLAGHER, NFNPA)**

- 6.1 Rachael Gallagher, the NFNPA's Landscape Partnership Scheme Development Manager, summarised the 'Our Past, Our Future' Heritage Lottery and stakeholder funded four year project for the Panel. It was intended that this project would ensure that the New Forest's distinctive landscape survived through future change and modern-day pressures, and specifically that the project would have positive outcomes for heritage (including conservation and habitats), for people, and for communities within the National Park. A stakeholder group had been set up to involve the wider community within the Park.
- 6.2 Ms Gallagher explained that as part of the vision behind the project it was intended that volunteers would be involved as much as possible, in order to connect people with their environment. Work would concentrate as much as possible on the private lands in the National Park as there were already a number of initiatives being undertaken in respect of the Crown lands. There were three overall themes (each with a number of priorities), including restoring lost landscapes, developing Forest skills, and discovering Forest heritage and inspiring a new generation. Staff would also seek to monitor the success of the project.

*NB: A copy of Ms Gallagher's presentation can be found on the Panel website, and further information on the 'Our Past, Our Future' project is on the NFNPA website at [http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/downloads/download/208/our\\_past\\_our\\_future](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/downloads/download/208/our_past_our_future).*

## **ITEM 7**

### **PANEL AGENDA SETTING**

- 7.1 Members supported a suggestion by the Chairman that the Panel receive an update on cycling events in the New Forest at a future meeting.

## **ITEM 8**

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 8.1 Mike Moriarty, Copythorne Parish Council, raised the question as to what the true number of flooded properties had been in the New Forest over the last year, as he felt the lists he had seen so far did not reflect the reality of the situation on the ground. David Horne,

Environment Agency, was able to give Cllr Moriarty and Panel members a verbal update. Mr Horne explained that the Environment Agency was continuing to work with partners and local communities to manage flood risk and had carried out flood recovery work, including patch repairs to the Pennington Sea Wall at Keyhaven and works to the wall at Lymington Quay (works to upgrade the gates are ongoing). New Forest District Council had finished repairs to Hurst Spit with the EA's financial backing. The EA had been assisting local residents and Hampshire County Council in progressing their own small scale schemes to reduce the risk of flooding Bartley and Woodlands. They were still in the early stages of the tidal flood alleviation scheme in Totton and would be carrying out surveys shortly.

*NB: A copy of the detailed list of properties affected is available on the Panel website*

8.2 Cllr Robert Clarke, Burley Parish Council, asked a number of questions of Mike Seddon regarding proposed works by the Forestry Commission relevant to the restoration of the stream bed, meanders and associated mire of the watercourse at Harvestslade Bottom, namely:

(i) Had an Environmental Impact Assessment yet been carried out and due consideration given to the possible effect of consequent reduced water flow to the downstream Mill Lawn Brook and adjoining land ownerships?

(ii) What arrangements were in place to monitor, measure and address the practical outcome of such a scheme over the longer term, both on site and further afield?

(iii) Had the value of such dramatic and intensive engineering works really been established yet, both locally and in wider terms for the New Forest National Park (putting aside the availability of EU and other external finance for such schemes)?

8.3 Mike Seddon explained that the proposed works formed part of a programme of such works across the Forest that were intended to manage and restore habitats to a better state, such as the project at Blackwater / Warwickslade that the Panel had visited. He explained that the NFNPA, as the relevant planning authority, had advised that an Environmental Impact Assessment was not necessary in respect of Harvestslade Bottom. However, the planning process would still require the submission of a wide range of environmental information in respect of the proposals, and a hydrological report had been carried out to look at water flow. Mike Seddon explained that the purpose of the scheme was not to stop water flow but to spread it over time, by increasing the forest's capacity to retain excess water and release it slowly, which should operate to improve downstream flow whilst reducing peak incidents. The effect of the works would continue to be monitored by an ecologist and hydrologist from the FC for some time following implementation. Natural England would also carry out habitat assessments, and across the wider New Forest there would be a series of more specialist studies commissioned to look at the effects on, for example, invertebrates and fish. In respect of Cllr Clarke's third query, there was anecdotal evidence from the Environment Agency and others that these schemes were effective, and as Panel members had seen at Blackwater / Warwickslade, it was now impossible to tell where the restoration works had taken place. Where further works were needed to these schemes they could be carried out. A number of more scientific studies existed in respect of restoration works undertaken outside the New Forest which had shown the benefit of renaturalising works of this type.

8.4 The FC winter car park closures were announced.

*NB: A map showing the closures is available on the Panel website.*

8.5 The Chairman announced that an expression of interest had been received for membership of the Panel from the New Forest Timber Users Group; the Secretariat had provided them with the membership criteria to assist them in making a fuller application for membership.

8.6 The Chairman announced that it was Mike Seddon's last Panel meeting owing to his recent appointment within the FC as Director of Operations for the Public Forest Estate. Mike

Seddon said that it had been a privilege to work in the New Forest and he had enjoyed working with the Consultative Panel. Members joined with the Chairman in thanking Mike Seddon for all his work and wished him well in his new role.

**ITEM 10**

**DATE OF NEXT PANEL MEETING**

- 10.1 The next meeting would be held at **7.30 pm on THURSDAY, 6 November 2014** in the **Main Hall, Brockenhurst Village Hall, Brockenhurst.**