

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 206th Meeting, held in the Council Chamber, New Forest District Council offices, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, on THURSDAY, 5th July 2007

Those present: Tim Greenwood (Chairman)
Nick Evans (Panel Technical Officer)
David Stone/Carolyn Hoole (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**

Arthur French (Boldre Parish Council)
Lord Montagu (English Heritage)
Ian Mason-Smith (Hampshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services)
John Davison (Hampshire County Council)
Bill Dow (Hyde Parish Council/ Fordingbridge Town Council)
Olive Collins (New Forest Village Shops' Association)
Steve Clarke (New Milton Town Council)
Ray Miles (Ramblers' Association)

SUBSTITUTIONS

Peter Roberts for Hampshire Field Club
Roger Neath for New Forest Tourism Association

NEW REPRESENTATIVES

Sally Owen for Bransgore Parish Council
Stewart Hall for Dibden Parish Council
Alex Wade for Hythe and Dibden Parish Council
Mark Bridle for Minstead Parish Council
Edward Heron for New Forest District Council
Caroline Morrison for Salisbury District Council
Wendy Simpson for Wellow Parish Council

ITEM 2 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** (10 May 2007)

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

ITEM 3
MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1. In response to a query raised at the meeting on 10 May 2007 (Min No. 10.2), which related to the circulation of planning briefs by the New Forest National Park Authority, Steve Trotter (New Forest National Park Authority) informed the Panel that this issue had been raised with the Authority's Head of Development Control. The Panel was advised that planning briefs would be made available on the Authority's website two weeks after each application had been registered so could be accessed in this way rather than being distributed to councillors by post.
- 3.2 A Community Planning Memorandum was produced by the New Forest National Park Authority and distributed to Panel members in response to the queries raised in the meeting on 10 May 2007 which related to the status of Village Design Statements with regard to National Park policy (Min. No. 10.5). It was requested that the memorandum be circulated with the minutes of the meeting so that it would be distributed to those Panel members who were absent from the current meeting.

***NB:** The memorandum is accordingly appended at **Annex 1**.*

- 3.3 Following discussion it was felt that the memorandum did not cover all of the concerns Panel members had in relation to the Village Design Statements. Consequently the Panel suggested that John Ward (Director of Strategy and Planning for the National Park Authority) and Penny Velander (Community Planning Officer for New Forest District Council) should be asked to attend the next Panel meeting in order to respond to the queries raised.

Action: John Ward and Penny Velander to be asked to attend the next Panel meeting in order to respond to queries raised regarding Village Design Statements.

- 3.4 Referring to Minute No. 10.6 of the meeting on 10 May 2007, Eddie Holtham (Fawley Parish Council) requested that parish councils be provided with clear and accurate National Park boundary maps. Steve Trotter said that he would pass this request on to the relevant officers of the National Park Authority.

Action: Steve Trotter to enquire as to whether National Park boundary maps could be issued to parish councils.

- 3.5 Kevin Fuller reported back on the various issues raised in Minute No. 10.8 by Chris Aldous (New Forest Equestrian Association). He said that Hampshire Highways were currently looking at improving the accessibility of catches on the gates at the Pegasus crossing on the A326 to make them easier for people with disabilities. The cattle grid at the entrance of Dibden Inclosure would be replaced and signs requesting drivers not to park in front of the access gates would be installed but he pointed out that this was not a statutory requirement. He said that the speed limit on the road between Calshot and Fawley would be reviewed as part of the national review of speed limits on A and B roads.

- 3.6 Barry Olorenshaw (New Forest Business Partnership) asked whether the 40 mph speed limit on the road between Ashurst and Lyndhurst would be permanent. Kevin Fuller confirmed that it was only temporary.

ITEM 4

FORESTRY COMMISSION

Panel Tour

4.1 Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission) informed the Panel that the Forestry Commission Tour would take place from 3.30 pm until 7:00 pm on Wednesday 12 September and that a coach would pick members up from the Lyndhurst Town Centre car park. Panel members were asked to contact Grace Ford of the Forestry Commission if they wished to attend. A reminder would be sent in August, along with a rough itinerary. He asked the Panel to suggest any particular locations that they would like included in the tour. The following suggestions were made:

- The locations of large campsites
- Areas where the regeneration of beech and oak trees had occurred
- Sites affected by the removal of inclosure fences
- The locations of early 'LIFE' projects to see how they have developed

Crown Lands Management Plan

4.2 Mike Seddon thanked the organisations that had given feedback on the "Issues, Policies and Actions" paper, which would inform the draft Crown Lands Management Plan. He informed the Panel that the draft plan would be produced in the autumn and he would advise the Panel when this would be available. He said he would look into making the "Issues, Policies and Actions" paper available on the internet.

Action: Mike Seddon to make the "Issues, Policies and Actions" paper available on the Forestry Commission Website.

Strategy for England's Trees Woods and Forests

4.3 Mike Seddon gave a brief introduction to a new National Forest Strategy that had been recently released by Defra. The strategy replaced the previous Forest Strategy and incorporated new themes including the use of trees for wood fuel. The Strategy also highlighted issues surrounding climate change. The Strategy would guide the work of the Forestry Commission throughout England.

ITEM 5

PANEL REPRESENTATION ON THE NEW FOREST LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

5.1 Information relating to this appointment was circulated to Panel members prior to the meeting. Libby Holmes (New Forest National Park Authority) asked the Panel to appoint a member to the New Forest Landscape Partnership Board. The Board was set up to develop a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2008. It aimed to develop projects that would help interpret, conserve and celebrate the landscape and cultural heritage of the New Forest.

5.2 The Panel agreed to appoint Peter Sopowski (Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council) as the Panel representative on the Landscape Partnership Board.

ITEM 6

NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION'S VISION ON "RECOVERING LOST LANDSCAPES"

- 6.1 Following a request made at the previous meeting of the Panel, David Humbert of the New Forest Association's Land Management Committee gave a presentation on the New Forest Association's vision "Recovering Lost Landscapes". He informed the Panel that the New Forest Association had been established in 1847 and was an organisation devoted to the conservation of the New Forest. "Recovering Lost Landscapes" had been designed to mitigate the fragmentation of the Forest, which had been caused by forestry operations, and sought to restore important habitats including grazing lawns, valley mires and heathland. The proposals would involve a reduction in conifer plantations and the removal of some inclosure fences so that connections could be made between existing ancient landscapes. The proposals were built on the Forestry Commission's Forest Design Plans and incorporated scientific research.
- 6.2 Julian Evans (Institute of Chartered Foresters) asked what the role of the Panel would be in implementing the proposal. Peter Roberts (New Forest Association) informed the Panel that the long term aim of the proposal would be to influence Forest Design Plans, and this would require the backing of influential groups within the Forest. Professor Evans also asked whether the proposals intended to return the landscape to how it stood at a particular date. David Humbert said that the Association had no particular period in mind and that the proposal had been designed to achieve a long term sustainable result.
- 6.3 When asked how the proposals differed from the Forest Design Plans, Peter Roberts (New Forest Association) responded that the Association's vision considered conservation and sustainability issues to a higher degree than the Forest Design Plans. The New Forest Association wished to accomplish its vision within 60 years, while the Forest Design Plans foresaw completion within 120 years.
- 6.4 Chris Aldhous (New Forest Equestrian Association) thanked David Humbert for his interesting presentation and asked whether the proposals would include the waterside. David Humbert said that they did not.
- 6.5 Panel members expressed concerns relating to the effect of the proposals on Commoners whose businesses and employment depended on forestry and how the removal of fences would affect the management of stock. David Humbert explained that a large area of conifer plantations would remain and so forestry would still be an important part of the Forest. He said that the activities of Commoners would be paramount in considerations and the extent of fence removal would be discussed in consultation so that issues relating to drift lines and the ability to section up the Forest in emergencies (e.g. to prevent spread of disease) would be addressed.
- 6.6 Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission) said that the Forestry Commission was consulted on the proposals before they were released. The Commission viewed the proposals as a valuable piece of work and were not dissimilar to the Forest Design Plans. The Forestry Commission had taken many elements of the proposals on board already such as heathland restoration and fence removal and would continue working with the New Forest Association.

ITEM 7

NATIONAL AIR TRAFFIC CONSULTATION: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE AIRSPACE OVER THE NATIONAL PARK

- 7.1 David Illsley (Planning Policy Officer for the New Forest National Park Authority) gave a presentation on the National Air Traffic Service's proposed airspace changes over the National Park. The proposals would increase the capacity of the airspace by systemising the north/south flows of air traffic to and from Bournemouth and Southampton airports and, as a result, the area of airspace would increase by five nautical miles west over Romsey, Landford, Plaitford, Bramshaw, Fritham, Brook and Bramshaw.

The proposals would result in an increase in noise, visual intrusion and exhaust emissions and would disrupt the tranquillity of the area. The New Forest National Park Authority was liaising with New Forest District Council, the Forestry Commission, the Council for National Parks and various parish councils in preparing a response. This would highlight government guidance which states that, where alternatives exist, the over-flying of National Parks should be avoided. It would also highlight the Section 62 duty placed on all relevant authorities by the Environment Act 1995 to have regard to the statutory purposes of the New Forest National Park in undertaking any function that might have an impact on the Park. The response would also point out the failure to take account of the projected increases in aircraft movements from Southampton and Bournemouth between 2005 and 2030.

The National Park Authority would encourage other organisations to respond to the consultation (material for which could be accessed on the internet via: http://www.nats.co.uk/text/121/terminal_control_south_west.html) by 10 August 2007. The Planning Policy team at the National Park Authority would seek to help parishes in writing their response.

- 7.2 Tony Gentle (Test Valley Borough Council) asked a question regarding the hours during which the proposals would affect the area. David Illsley informed the Panel that the flights into Bournemouth Airport were not time restricted, while flights from Southampton Airport would not operate between 11 pm and 6 am.
- 7.3 Barry Olorenshaw (New Forest Business Partnership) commented that he had supported the airport extensions but it was now clear that the increase in the airspace would have a negative impact on the tranquillity and wildness of the Forest. He said that he also had concerns regarding the large number of light aircraft such as microlites flying over the Forest. David Illsley informed the Panel that the proposals would not affect recreational flights.
- 7.4 Geraint James (Copythorne Parish Council) commented that National Air Traffic Services should have alternative options. David Illsley said that the National Park Authority would be requesting alternative proposals in its response.
- 7.5 Peter Sopowski (Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council) requested that the National Park Authority put its response to the consultation on its website.

Action: David Illsley to ensure that the National Park Authority's response be put on its website.

- 7.6 Panel members agreed that a letter in response to the consultation should be sent to National Air Traffic Services on behalf of the Panel, outlining the concerns raised regarding the proposals.

Action: A letter be sent to National Air Traffic Services by the Chairman on behalf of the Panel in response to the consultation.

ITEM 8

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETINGS

- 8.1 Nigel Matthews (New Forest National Park Authority) informed the Panel that three papers relating to signage within the National Park had been approved at the Annual Authority meeting on 28 June 2007 and these were available on the National Park Authority website. The papers were produced by an advisory group set up by the Authority which included representatives from District and County Councils, the Forestry Commission and the Verderers. The report included a draft signage strategy, plans for a signage rationalisation action plan and proposals for National Park boundary markers. Panel members were informed that new signs were expected to be set in place during late August 2007. Information relating to the signage proposals had been displayed outside the Council Chamber and Panel members were invited to give their comments after the meeting.

ITEM 9

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 9.1 Eddie Holtham (Fawley Parish Council) commented that gravel lay-bys and car parks on the Forest were becoming badly pot-holed. Mike Seddon said he would ensure that remedial action would be taken by the relevant authorities.
- 9.2 Eddie Holtham also raised a concern relating to seasonal pitching of caravans at Forestry Commission campsites, which was being offered by Forest Holidays at sites including Roundhill and Ashurst. He believed that this would amount to urbanisation of campsites and would be detrimental to the environment due to the absence of hardstanding. Mike Seddon responded that Forest Holidays would ensure that damage to the ground would be minimal by taking measures such as the rotation of caravan pitches.
- 9.3 The Chairman advised that there was an item on the agenda under Any Other Business and requested that a note be appended to the minutes outlining this matter.

NB: A note is appended at Annex 2.

ITEM 10

DATE OF NEXT PANEL MEETING

- 10.1 The next Consultative Panel meeting will be held at **7.30 pm on THURSDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2007** in the Council Chamber, New Forest District Council offices, Appletree Court, Lyndhurst.

The meeting closed at 21.40 hours.