

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the 223rd Meeting, held in the Louisa Suite, Lyndhurst Park Hotel, Lyndhurst, on THURSDAY, 2 September 2010

Those present: Tim Greenwood (In the Chair)
David Stone (Panel Support Officer)
Rachael Bowen (Panel Clerk/Secretary)
Jo Murphy (Panel Clerk/Secretary)
Members as shown on the Official List, with the exception of those listed below for whom apologies were received.

ITEM 1

1.1 APOLOGIES

Peter Sopowski, Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council
Tony Barnett, Caravan Club
Ian Mason Smith, Community First/ HCVYS
Malcolm Connolly, Fordingbridge Town Council
Peter Stammers, Godshill Parish Council
Ros Cooper, Hampshire County Federation of Women's Institutes
Alex Wade, Hythe and Dibden Parish Council
Julian Evans, Institute of Chartered Foresters/Royal Forestry Society
Martina Humber, Lymington and Pennington Town Council
Mark Abbott, Lyndhurst Parish Council
Alan Shotter, Marchwood Parish Council
Edward Heron, New Forest District Council
Nigel Clarke, Ringwood Town Council
Robbie Roberts, RSPCA

1.2 SUBSTITUTIONS

Ann Hickman, Bransgore Parish Council
Gordon Taylor, Brockenhurst Parish Council
Bernard Austin, CPRE
Ailsa Farrand, New Forest Equestrian Association
Bob Giddings, Netley Marsh Parish Council
Bill Dunn, Redlynch

1.3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed new representatives Pete Durnell for Hampshire County Council who will alternate with Denise Hewitt. He also welcomed Peter Stammers for Godshill Parish Council.

ITEM 2

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (8 July 2010)

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

ITEM 3

MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Alison Barnes, NPA, reported back to the Panel on the meetings which had taken place with neighbouring authorities on loss of back up grazing and with the Land Management Advice Service on possible solutions to alleviate the problem of limited hay supplies. Ms Barnes also explained that the Land Management Team

was working with other organisations to manage grazing year round, and that the issue was likely to be discussed at the next meeting of the Equine Forum.

ITEM 4

FORESTRY COMMISSION

- 4.1 Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission) advised the Panel that the winter car park closures had now been agreed. The closures would commence on 8 November 2010 until 25 March 2011 and were the same car parks as last year. Copies of the map detailing the individual car parks involved were available at the meeting for interested parties to take away and could also be found at http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings_and_minutes/new_forest_consultative_panel.htm. Some members raised concerns regarding dangerous roadside and verge parking which occurred during the closures last year. Mr Seddon reassured the Panel that Rangers monitored the situation and persistent offenders would be contacted by the police.
- 4.2 John Durnell (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust) asked whether there were any conclusions regarding the use of basalt as a surface treatment for forest car parks. Mr Seddon explained that the stability of basalt was better than the more traditional local hoggin because it was angular and therefore did not leach into the surrounding SSSI's. He said that at this stage there was not a definitive result to the trial.
- 4.3 Tim Greenwood (Chairman) reminded members that at the last meeting they were requested to feedback their views on what activities they felt should be prioritised in the light of the potential budget cuts. Mike Seddon confirmed he had received no feedback to date.
- 4.4 Roly Errington (Ellingham, Harbridge and Ibsley Parish Council) asked what training the operators of the Forestry Commission emergency hotline were given on local issues, as he believed they were based in Scotland. Mr Seddon explained that the operators were able to identify the name of local keeper or their beat partner from a comprehensive list of place names, and then the call was referred to them for local help. Panel members were also reminded that Forest Watch could be contacted by dialling 101 for problems such as fire and theft.

ITEM 5

OPERATION RESTORE

- 5.1 David Richardson (Hampshire County Council Highways) informed the Panel that Operation Restore was in response to the severe impact last winter's weather had had on the areas roads. The plan of action was financed for the short and medium term to repair surface damage and potholes. He explained there were 40 schemes on the schedule, 4 of which had already been completed and the rest were planned to be finished by the end of the year. A list of the New forest sites can be found at http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings_and_minutes/new_forest_consultative_panel.htm He told members that the highways team had used information regarding claims, enquiries, category of road and usage and number of potholes to prioritise which schemes would form part of Operation Restore. Additionally routine inspections, reactive repairs to dangerous sites and planned road works schemes were continuing as normal, alongside Operation Restore, he said.

- 5.2 Once Operation Restore was completed, Mr Richardson explained there was a second programme of works named Operation Resilience. Operation Resilience would be focussed on longer term schemes to make the roads more resistant to future damage from the weather, covering works such as re-surfacing, improved drainage and sealing cracks.
- 5.3 Members of the panel questioned Mr Richardson about specific roads in their areas and also why it had taken so long to start the work. Mr Richardson explained that Operation Restore was a county wide project and that works had been ongoing in other parts of the county during the summer with the New Forest just starting recently. He assured them that dangerous potholes were treated as a matter of urgency by, if necessary, filling them temporarily to make them safe pending later permanent repairs. Mr Richardson committed to getting back to individual members regarding the specifics raised about their local areas.

ITEM 6

HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

- 6.1 Chris Caswell (HLS Programme Manager) introduced himself to the panel and explained that, under the terms of the scheme, he was responsible to Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission), Alison Barnes (NPA) and Oliver Crosswaite-Eyre (Verderers). He gave an informative presentation about the HLS scheme, how it was to be implemented and the progress made to date. He explained it was a 10 year project and that he was in the process of setting up working groups to take the project forward.
- 6.2 Flow charts detailing the HLS Scheme Project Management Process were circulated at the meeting and can be found at http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings_and_minutes/new_forest_consultative_panel.htm. For more information Chris Caswell can be contacted chris.caswell@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

ITEM 7

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETINGS

- 7.1 There have been no NPA Authority meeting since the last panel and accordingly nothing to report under this item

ITEM 8

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 Ailsa Farrand (New Forest Equestrian Association) raised the issue of increasing deer numbers. She said that due to their growing numbers the deer were competing for grazing land, which was further exacerbating the hay shortage and subsequent price rises. Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission) confirmed that deer numbers in the UK countryside were increasing. He explained that the New Forest did have a managed deer programme and that approximately 1000 animals were culled every year to control numbers. However he admitted it was difficult to stop deer moving from neighbouring privately owned land onto the crown lands.

- 8.2 Eddie Holtham (Fawley Parish Council) raised concerns that the ragwort on the A326 had not been pulled this year. David Richardson (Hampshire County Council Highways) responded that ragwort pulling was carried out routinely throughout the summer and he would ask a member of his team to investigate the area in question. Eddie Holtham was happy to meet with HCC to show them the exact area of concern.

Action: David Richardson to ask a member of his team to investigate the extent of ragwort pulling carried out on the A326.

- 8.3 Eddie Holtham (Fawley Parish Council) explained that he had been involved in a dialogue with the Forestry commission regarding the reinstatement of the Fawley Inclosure following thinning operations. He understood that the work was being carried out by contractors and that it should have been completed by the end of July. Mike Seddon (Forestry Commission) said he recalled this being raised earlier in the year. He committed to look into the issue when he was next back in the office the following Monday and to get back to Eddie Holtham directly with the latest situation.

Action: Mike Seddon to investigate the latest position on the works at Fawley Inclosure and report back to Eddie Holtham.

- 8.4 Pat Thorne (Verderers) explained that every year the Verderers received complaints regarding the use of fireworks, particularly rockets, in the forest. She suggested that the NPA should devise a voluntary code of practise on the use of fireworks.

- 8.5 Alison Barnes (NPA) explained that the use of fireworks was already controlled by the Firework Regulations 2004 which gave clear guidelines about the times and places where it was acceptable to let off fireworks. Ms Barnes had recently met with Fire Officers engaged with Forest Watch and had highlighted the issue to them. The Panel was reminded that letting off fireworks in car parks or on crown lands was against the local bye-laws and that anyone witnessing such action or any other kind of anti-social behaviour should report it to Forest Watch by dialling 101. Alison Barnes agreed that the NPA Communications Team would work with local partners to get the message out of the detrimental impact noisy fireworks can have on the forest livestock and recreational horses.

- 8.6 Christine Ames (New Forest Tourism Association) informed members she was keen to work with the NPA and circulate the messages to local hoteliers who may be considering firework displays.

Action: The NPA Communications Team to work with the Forestry commission and the New Forest Tourism Association to discuss ways of getting the message out about the dangers of fireworks in the Forest and the potential impacts on animals.

ITEM 9

DATE OF NEXT PANEL MEETING

- 9.1 The next Consultative Panel meeting would be held at **7.30 pm on THURSDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2010** in the **Louisa Suite at the Lyndhurst Park Hotel, Lyndhurst.**

The meeting closed at 21.15 hrs.