

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the Meeting held in the Pine Room, Lyndhurst Community Centre on THURSDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2019

Those present: Harry Oram (Chairman)
David Stone (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

Also in attendance:

1 Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Rob Waite (Environment Agency)
Pamela Keen (Norleywood Society)
Mark Carter (Institute of Chartered Foresters)
Caroline Hubbard (Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council)

1.2 Substitutes

Ian Davis for Ailsa Farrard, (New Forest Equestrian Association)
Gale Gould for Brian Tarnoff (New Forest Association/Friends of the New Forest)

2 Approval of Minutes from the meeting held on 6 June 2019

- 2.1 The minutes from the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3 New Forest National Park Authority Update – Steve Avery

- 3.1 Steve Avery advised the Panel that the NPA's Local Plan had been adopted at the Authority's meeting on 29 August.
- 3.2 Mr Avery then reported that Officers were working with partners in updating the Partnership Plan for the New Forest which was due to be completed by the end of next year. The Plan, which was led jointly by all the statutory bodies in the New Forest, would have regard to key issues including the review of the Recreation Management Strategy and the findings of the Glover Review of national parks.
- 3.3 A 'Primer Document' for the Partnership Plan had recently been produced by the Partnership – this document sets out the background, expected outcomes and timetable for the review.
- 3.4 Referring to the Glover Review, Mr Avery reported that the interim findings of the Review had recently been published. These initial findings included the need to increase resources to national parks in meeting government

expectations such as around the objectives set out in the Government's 25-year Plan. The interim findings had also highlighted diversity through reforming the governance of national parks. There would be a lead role for national parks in tackling climate change and enhancing health and wellbeing. It was anticipated that the final report would be published in October.

- 3.5 Mr Avery advised that the Authority had recently published its Annual Review setting out what had been achieved over 2018/19 and copies were available at the meeting.
- 3.6 He said that some significant planning applications were expected during the year including the Fawley development which was due for submission in December.
- 3.7 Mr Avery mentioned that the membership of the National Park Authority had recently changed. Pat Wyeth and Richard Frampton had not stood for re-election at the local government elections in May and had been replaced on the Authority by Caroline Rackham and Sue Bennison from New Forest District Council. Two new Secretary of State members, Steve Trow and George Meyrick had been appointed to the Authority. Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre had been re-appointed as Chairman of the Authority at its meeting in July and Patrick Heneghan had been appointed Deputy Chairman.

4 Forestry Commission Update – Bruce Rothnie

- 4.1 Mr Rothnie updated the Panel on two recent staff changes, namely that Mike Seddon had been appointed Chief Executive of Forestry England and Sam Jones had been appointed as Head of Recreation and Public Affairs in Forestry England's South District.
- 4.2 He said that the Forestry Commission had come into being in 1919 and in this Centenary year, the Royal Mail have issued a collection of stamps showing six scenes from Forestry Commission owned forests around England, Scotland and Wales to commemorate the landmark. A book has also been released entitled "British Forests Forestry Commission 1919 – 2019" which told the story and evolution of the Forestry Commission over the last hundred years.
- 4.3 Mr Rothnie gave an update regarding the determination of the Environmental Impact Assessment covering the deforestation elements of the Forest Design Plan which commenced last year. He further explained that the deforestation plan which included removal of conifers to restore heathland had been approved subject to a range of conditions. The full Forest Design Plans would then be subject to a Habitat Regulation Assessment as well as public consultation which would commence next month before approval.

Mr Rothnie added that he would provide a summary to members regarding the EIA process and Forest Design Plan (this information is not yet available and will follow publication of the minutes).

- 4.4 An archaeology team from Bournemouth University, recently completed an archaeological dig which had unearthed new evidence which might suggest that the history of the people that settled in the New Forest went back much earlier than first thought. Analysis of a small amount of charcoal found at what is believed to be an Iron Age hill fort at Matley Heath, had dated the monument much further back to the earlier Neolithic period.
- 4.5 Mr Rothnie said that the Ranger and Keeper teams continue to deal with a number of unofficial camping incidents with tents and motorhomes being set up in different locations across the Forest, which led to over 90 enforcement notices being issued. Mr Rothnie reminded the Panel of the telephone number to report any problems of this nature. The number to call being Tel. 0300 067 4600. Homelessness and sleeping rough in the New Forest had also been significantly increasing and the team continued to work with partners such as Social Services, New Forest District Council and the Police to help support the individuals concerned.
- 4.6 Mr Rothnie advised that staff had hosted an event in August which included field visits and presentations to delegates attending the 16th European Heathlands' Conference. The focus was on Commoning, mire restoration and controlled burning management. The event had showcased how the New Forest managed its heathlands as well as sharing expertise in management, conservation and research.
- 4.7 On protecting New Forest Fungi, Mr Rothnie advised that this year's message remained consistent with last year's, i.e appealing to the public to 'Look Not Pick'. Commercial fungi collecting continued to be a risk and Mr Rothnie encouraged people to report suspected operators/incidents. He said that the telephone number to report suspected fungi picking in the New Forest was 0300 067 4600 (24 hours a day 7 days a week).
- 4.8 Mr Rothnie reported that, during the summer, the New Forest had been audited by the Soil Association to ensure it met with the full requirements of the UK Woodland Assurance Standard for sustainable forest management. The New Forest was one of a number of sites audited across England and this concluded that the Standard had been met. This allows Forestry England to continue to label all its timber as coming from sustainably managed forests indicated with the use of the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) logo. He added that the Forestry Commission had been the first state Forest Service in the world to obtain the high standard of certification for its full estate which has now been met consistently over the last 20 years.

A member of the Panel requested a summary of the findings of the recent audit and Mr Rothnie undertook to provide this once the final report had been completed.

- 4.9 Mr Rothnie reported that on 22 August 2019, 6 White Tailed Eagles had been successfully released on the Isle of Wight following months of preparation. Forestry England partnered with the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation to deliver

this project. This reintroduction will mean that White-tailed Eagles will return to the Solent for the first time in 240 years.

- 4.10 Mr Rothnie then responded to queries from Panel members in connection with updating parish councils on the deforestation elements of the Forest Design Plan.

5 Local Plan Update – Steve Avery

- 5.1 As mentioned is his update earlier in the meeting, Mr Avery reported that the Authority resolved to adopt the new Local Plan 2016 – 2036 at the Authority meeting on the 29 August 2019
<https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/documents/authority-meetings/authority-meeting-29-08-19/>
- 5.2 Mr Avery explained that the Plan would be the Authority's principal planning policy about the vision, objectives, spatial strategy and planning policies for the period up to 2036.
- 5.3 He said that over 80 Parish and Town Councillors attended a training workshop on the 4 September outlining the new plan and Mr Avery agreed to attend further Town and Parish meetings in order to provide an overview or to discuss specific matters in the Plan.
- 5.4 Mr Avery gave a brief summary of the new policies, which included new allocated sites for housing, restrictions on the size of net new houses and the government's proposed reforms to amend permitted development rights to support the deployment of 5G and extend mobile coverage. Mr Avery confirmed that National Parks England on behalf of the 10 English National Parks would be feeding into a combined response to the current government consultation by the deadline of 4 November 2019. A link to the reform of permitted development rights would be provided in the Consultative Panel minutes. [Link here](#).

6 Recreation Management Strategy – Nigel Matthews

- 6.1 Mr Matthews provided an overview of the of the review and update of the Recreation Management Strategy for the National Park. This was set in the context that there are now an estimated 15.2 million recreation and leisure day visits to the National Park per year by 1.4 million people.
- 6.2 He confirmed the roles of the Recreation Management Strategy Steering and Advisory Groups set up to guide the review and described the 2017 and 2018 consultations which had been carried out by the Steering Group organisations: NPA, Forestry England, Natural England, the Verderers, New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council and Hampshire County Council.

- 6.3 The actions proposed in 2018 have now been redrafted into 22 strategic actions with clear explanations of what will be done. Partner organisations were taking these to their respective governing bodies for endorsement.
- 6.4 He confirmed the NPA's commitment to explore the potential to create a Local Development Order designed to influence where recreation takes place in the New Forest through the provision of formal recreation facilities across the New Forest, including the distribution of car parking.
- 6.5 Mr Matthews then responded to a number of queries by Panel members on the process and benefits of the review.

7 Any Other Business

- 7.1 There was no further business on this occasion.

8 Date of the next meeting

- 8.1 The Panel noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 5 December 2019 at 7.30pm at Lyndhurst Community Centre

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Consultative Panel Meeting 5th September 2019

**Mark Carter, Harry Oram, Jonathan Blanco Díaz and Sonia Lorenzo Martín
Queens House 21 10 19**

Q. What is the legal status of these conditions?

- A. Forest Services accepted an Environmental Statement in support of an application under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 from Forestry England to carry out the deforestation of 290 hectares in the New Forest to convert to Open Forest Habitats.

Forest Services considered the information provided in the Environmental Statement and comments received following the consultation exercise. Based on that information, Forest Services determined to grant consent subject to 14 conditions. The 14 conditions vary from standard conditions, conditions linked to an enhanced Operational Site Assessment (OSA), and other conditions linked to communication with stakeholders.

All these conditions are legally binding. It is worth noting that the conditions are only applicable to the deforestation areas (290 ha) and not to the whole of the plan for the New Forest Inclosures.

Q. Who enforces the conditions?

- A. Forest Services, a Forestry Commission department that regulates the forestry industry in England, will be responsible for this.

Q. What is the discharge procedure?

- A. The discharge procedure has been made clear in the conditions themselves and Forest Services will monitor that. As an example, the 6 conditions linked to the enhanced Operational Site Assessment (OSA) will be discharged once the new OSA template is agreed between Forestry England and Forest Services. The deadline for this is 6 months of approval of the decision (end of January 2020).

Q. What is the time frame for discharge when a time frame is not specifically given in the condition?

- A. We understand that the time frame for those conditions will be the duration of the plan (10 years).

Q. Condition C:

Geographical extents, this states that the permission and conditions apply only to Plantations on Ancient Woodland site. This is surely not the case as the Vereder's inclosures were planted on open forest, not ancient woodland sites. Does the permission and the conditions apply to the Vereder's inclosures as well? If so, does this condition need correcting?

- A. Condition "c" states that the consent and conditions relate to the deforestation proposals included in the New Forest Inclosures Design Plan, that means all the areas to be clearfelled and restored to Open Forest Habitats in the 10 years of the plans. These are the "red and orange areas" on the Open Habitat Restoration Summary Map provided and attached.

Q. Condition D:

Given that this condition recognises an issue with the public consultation process, is it possible to consider an alternative consultation process in the future, such as adaptive pathways?

- A. Alternative consultation and engagement with local communities is considered in conditions "d" and "i". Forestry England will provide notices and guided walks when proposing operations in those areas where local interest is known to be strong. Interested parties will be invited to send comments/refinements to the design within 4 weeks of notices being displayed (bearing in mind that the principle of the deforestation is accepted). However, and in line with all the other conditions, this only applies to the deforestation areas (red and orange areas on the attached map). In reference to the overall Forest Design Plan, the process for public consultation is governed by Forest Services.

Q. Condition E:

Will a new management plan be produced for the whole Forest, and if so will this be subject to a further round of public consultation?

- A. Condition "e" requires Forestry England to produce an integrated management plan for the whole Forest (Inclosures and Open Forest) within 5 years. This management plan will be based in the New Forest Inclosures Forest Plan and the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) plan. The SAC plan review will be undertaken in the near future and Natural England (NE) will lead the process. This review will involve a level on consultation with key stakeholders.
- The scope of the integrated management plan will be agreed between Forest Services and Forestry England within 12 months of Forest Services' decision. There is not a formal procedure to develop this plan and therefore, it is unclear the level of public consultation that this will involve. However, a public consultation exercise is likely to be required.

Q. Condition G:

Will this result in a greater recognition of the need to address climate change above all other considerations and the fact that the deforestation to be carried out will make climate change worse?

- A. As this condition is only applicable to the deforestation areas that will be converted to Open Forest Habitats, we understand that its main aim is to ensure that the methodology used for this transformation is appropriate and assessed on a site by site basis. In order to do that, independent advice from a range of specialists from different organisations will be sought to prepare a decision matrix that will be incorporate into the OSA.

Q. Condition I:

Is it possible to consider an alternative consultation process in the future, such as adaptive pathways?

- A. This condition defines how Forestry England should engage with the local communities in those specific areas where local interest is known to be strong. This will be applicable for the duration of this plan for areas that will be converted to Open Forest Habitats. Beyond that, and for future consultation exercises, we are open to consider alternative channels that could be beneficial for both Forestry England and our consultees.

Q. Condition K:

Where will this mitigation planting be carried out? How will the appropriateness and success of this mitigation be measured, and how will this be reported back to the consultative panel?

- A. It is worth noting that Forestry England is under no obligation to undertake any compensatory planting as the sites that are proposed to be converted to open habitats are within a nationally or internationally designated area, notified for open habitat.
Forestry England will seek opportunities to carry out this compensatory planting and the geographical context will be across the wider Forestry England estate. This is not likely to be possible in the New Forest, as it would be contradictory with the principle of the plan.

Q. Condition L:

How will a 'forest dependant job' be defined? How will the job creation be measured, and how will this be reported back to the consultative panel?

- A. We understand that the concept of “forest dependant jobs” is much wider than the direct production of timber and will include other opportunities arising from Open Forest management and Open Forest products as well as ecology or recreation related jobs. We believe that the new Forest

Design Plan will ensure the Forest will continue to host work and enterprise.

For example, the annual programme of work to ensure we have a healthy heathland habitat, including mowing bracken and regenerative controlled burning of heather and gorse. Commercial forestry activity and the economic activity this helps sustain is being maintained.

As stated in the condition itself, the New Forest Partnership group provides a good forum to discuss this and incorporate the proposals to the new Partnership Plan which is due to be renewed in 2020.