

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MICROSOFT TEAMS VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 9 JULY 2020 AT 10.00am

Present:

Members

Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre (Chairman)

Patrick Heneghan (Deputy Chairman)

Gordon Bailey

David Bence

Sue Bennison

George Bisson

Richard Clewer

David Harrison

Edward Heron

Keith Mans

George Meyrick

Gavin Parker

Neville Penman

Leo Randall

Caroline Rackham

Barry Rickman

Ann Sevier

Richard Taylor

Steve Trow

Officers

Alison Barnes

Chief Executive Officer

Steve Avery

Executive Director, Strategy and Planning

Rosalind Alderman

Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Nigel Stone

Head of Resources

David Stone

Corporate Services Manager

Tony Spence

Policy Officer

Vicki Gibbon

Member Services Administrator

50. Apologies for absence

50.1 Apologies for absence were received from John Sanger.

51. Declarations of Interest

51.1 All New Forest District Councillors on the NPA declared an interest in minute item 62 as members of NFDC, which owned the adjacent car park across which access to the affordable housing was to be acquired. It was noted that a dispensation was in place under section 33 of the Localism Act, covering interests arising in relation to local authority members' appointing councils.

52. Chairman's announcements

52.1 The Chairman expressed his sadness at the death in April of Harry Oram, paying tribute to a very popular member of the Authority who had spent his working life with the Forestry Commission, having in-depth knowledge and expertise about the Forest and who was always approachable and happy to help. The Chairman offered his sincere condolences on behalf of the Authority and members to Harry Oram's family.

- 52.2 The Chairman conveyed his thanks to Mel Kendal who had recently left the Authority to take up a position as Chairman of the County Council.
- 52.3 The Chairman then welcomed two new members to the Authority; Alexis McEvoy who had been appointed by Hampshire County Council to replace Mel Kendal and Stephen Tarling, Parish Member for the South West Quadrant. He explained that as Mr Tarling's position had not yet been ratified by the Secretary of State he was unable to vote on agenda items however he would be permitted to participate in discussion.

53. Minutes

- 53.1 The minutes of the 23 January 2020 Authority meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.
Voting: 15 for, 3 abstentions

54. Public Question Time

- 54.1 There were no questions from members of the public.

55. Chief Executives Report (AM 558/20)

- 55.1 The Chief Executive introduced her report advising members that owing to the March meeting being cancelled due to Covid-19, the report covered a much longer period from January 2020 – July 2020 covering 2 quarters and straddling 2 financial years.
- 55.2 Ms. Barnes explained that like many organisations, the Authority was required to make some drastic changes to the way staff worked at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, with all staff being required to work remotely. The IT department had worked tirelessly ensuring this ran smoothly for both staff and members. During lockdown the Authority had continued to run a full planning service with virtual meetings, planning applications and enforcement investigations. Staff continued to work closely alongside colleagues from other National Parks along with Defra, supported local businesses and deployed Rangers to help with both deliveries of meals and medical supplies to those most vulnerable.
- 55.3 Under the Protect programme the Chief Executive praised the Planning Department for being the first local Authority in Hampshire to hold virtual planning meetings, which was also featured on BBC South Today, with 400 viewers to date over the first four meetings. The team were also dealing with some significant applications including the Fawley Waterside application which would be heard at a Planning Committee meeting on Tuesday 28 July.
- 55.4 Ms. Barnes advised that prior to lockdown the Land Advice Service had been working with farmers to protect the Beaulieu River catchment which had made a positive impact on the local environment. The Wilder for Water conference had also taken place attended by nearly 100 experts and eels had been returned to Beaulieu River as part of the OPOF scheme. Again prior to lockdown, Ms. Barnes had attended the Curlew and Other Species Recovery Summit at Highgrove and had personally presented the outcomes of a roundtable discussion on balancing landscape, species recovery and access back to the Prince of Wales. She said that this had been an invaluable experience to highlight landscape, species and discovery, with the opportunity to work more closely with the Princes' foundation in the future.

- 55.5 The Chief Executive was pleased to announce that the Hill Fort at Denny Lodge was now off the 'at risk' register; she also highlighted some of the outstanding work the Archaeology team had recently completed including the VE day podcast which included some fascinating oral history accounts. The HLS scheme had now been given a one-year extension which would allow more certainty for the Habitat Restoration Scheme.
- 55.6 As lockdown was lifted during May, Rangers were out daily with the emergency services and Forestry England to ensure a safe experience for visitors. The Forest had an unprecedented number of visitors with the majority enjoying the Forest safely, however Rangers dealt with an increase in anti-social behaviour including verge parking, BBQs and litter. A New Forest Code was published to promote useful information for both visitors and businesses alike to try to curb this behaviour. Ms. Barnes was pleased to announce the new initiative #BBQFreeNewForest to remove disposable BBQ's for sale in and around the New Forest. Within the first two weeks, 18 stores had already signed up and four villages were now disposable BBQ free.
- 55.7 Under the Enjoy programme Ms. Barnes was pleased to report the excellent engagement of virtual quadrant meetings. Steve Avery advised that at the recent Parish C19 summit on 8 July, the general consensus was to give more support to volunteers and that clear guidelines and equipment were needed; with this in mind a volunteer coordinator would be required to take this work forward.
- 55.8 Continuing on the Enjoy programme, the Chief Executive reminded members of the Volunteer Fair back in January of this year, which had been the busiest yet with 760 people attending and 60 organisations represented. The #Add3Minutes campaign continued to run over the winter months with a number of drivers caught exceeding the speed limit.
- 55.9 Ms. Barnes highlighted the importance of nature especially under the current difficult circumstances and the need to get outside and connect with nature. She explained how the Authority had led on recovery proposals with other National Parks on health and wellbeing along with an initiative to support key workers and those impacted by Covid-19.
- 55.10 Under the Prosper programme the Chief Executive drew members' attention to the Building Design Awards which had a new category of Best Green Building to mark the Year of Green Action, which had been awarded to HPW Architects for the Peppa Pig sustainable building at Paultons Park. During February the Green Halo conference took place which reflected on climate change and nature emergencies - over 80 people attended the conference hosted by OS.
- 55.11 As restrictions were gradually lifted, the Authority continued to work with partner organisations to ensure sustainable tourism and safety in the Forest and Ms. Barnes was pleased to announce the recommencement of the New Forest Tour returning Saturday 18 July until 31 August.
- 55.12 Under the Excellence programme Ms. Barnes conveyed her thanks to the communications team who had continued to work hard on social media channels with engagement up 623% and 5.3 million people reached, along with thousands of emails and messages responded to.
- 55.13 Finally, the Chief Executive gave her thanks and praise to Harry Oram, dedicating

her report to him.

- 55.14 Following brief discussion Ms Barnes was thanked for her very comprehensive and informative report which was then noted.

Report Item 12, Coronavirus update, was moved up the agenda and considered following the Chief Executive's report.

56. Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme (AM 559/20)

- 56.1 Tony Spence introduced the report and referred to the consideration of the draft Scheme at the last Authority meeting in December 2019, at the Planning Committee meeting in December 2019 and the six-week public consultation which had followed, running from 8 January to 19 February 2020. He then referred to the responses to the consultation, the majority of which showed support for the Scheme. The details of these responses were set out in the Consultation Statement attached as Annex 1 to the report.
- 56.2 Mr Spence referred to several key areas of the report and aspects of the Scheme which would support the recently adopted Local Plan and informed members that a number of modifications to the draft Scheme had been carried out in response to the consultation which were designed to improve the Scheme and clarify its wording. These were shown in track changes in the draft Scheme attached as Annex 2 to the report.
- 56.3 Mr Spence suggested that when considering the adoption of the SPD, members' attention should be drawn to several key aspects of the Scheme. These included the provision of rangers; that the Scheme is only designed to tackle the impacts of new development coming forward in the Local Plan; and that the Authority aims to participate in the longer-term development of a cross boundary strategic, proportionate and coordinated approach to mitigation, informed by the recently published research reports by Footprint Ecology, which was commissioned by six local authorities including the NPA
- 56.4 Mr Spence concluded by asking members to consider the responses to the consultation and the modifications being proposed, and if content with these, to follow the recommendation to adopt the Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme SPD.
- 56.5 Following a couple of points raised, Members agreed to adopted the revised Scheme.

Resolved, that the Revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme be adopted.

Voting: Unanimous

57. Review of Constitutional Documents (AM 560/20)

- 57.1 Rosalind Alderman introduced her report reminding members that officers had recently conducted an overall review of the Authority's constitutional documents in order to ensure their consistency and fitness for purpose. In highlighting key areas of the documents, Ms Alderman drew members' attention to the proposed changes to the draft Standing Orders which would allow secret ballots to take place. Guidance on a mechanism for this would be circulated in due course.

- 57.2 Following discussion, members agreed that a secret ballot would be required in certain circumstances and should be provided for in the Standing Orders. They accordingly agreed to formally approve the documents with immediate effect.

Resolved, that the revised Standing Orders (Annex 1), the Code of Conduct (Annex 2), the Arrangements for dealing with Member allegations (Annex 3), the Local Protocol for Member and Officer Relations (Annex 4), the Scheme of Delegations to Officers and Committees (Annex 5), the Financial Regulations (Annex 6), the Standing Orders to Contracts (Annex 7) and the Local Protocol for Members dealing with planning matters (Annex 8) be approved with immediate effect.

Voting: unanimous

58. Decisions made under Delegated Powers (AM 561/20)

- 58.1 Members noted the report dealing with decisions which had been necessary for the Chief Executive to take, in consultation with the Chairman, under the Authority's Scheme of Delegations during the current public health crisis

59. NPA member on the Recreation Management Strategy Advisory Group to replace Harry Oram (AM 562-20)

- 59.1 David Stone introduced his report advising members that due to Harry Oram sadly passing away in April, the Recreation Management Strategy Advisory Group would need a replacement representative until the Annual Authority meeting at which time representation on all outside bodies would be reviewed by the Authority.
- 59.2 The Chairman also advised that as his appointment as Secretary of State member on the NPA would be coming to an end on 31 August a replacement would also need to be sought for the member representative on the Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group.
- 59.3 Following discussion, members unanimously agreed that Patrick Heneghan be appointed to replace Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre on the Recreation Management Strategy Steering group and that Richard Taylor would replace Harry Oram on the Recreation Management Strategy Advisory Group.

Resolved, that Richard Taylor replace Harry Oram on the Recreation Management Strategy Advisory Group and that, with effect from 1 September 2020, Patrick Heneghan replace Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre on the Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group until the Annual Authority meeting at which time representation on all outside bodies would be reviewed by the Authority.

Voting: unanimous

60. Coronavirus Update Report – End of June 2020 (AM 563-20)

- 60.1 This report was taken following the Chief Executive's Report.
- 60.2 Nigel Stone introduced his report to members explaining that the report detailed how the Authority had coped internally with the Covid-19 pandemic and how recovery could take place at the appropriate time. He ran through the key sections of the report including

section 1 the pandemic timeline, how quickly things had escalated and how the Authority had managed this issue. Section 2 set out how the Authority had responded to the emerging situation, ensuring all staff members were safe and able to work from home effectively. Section 3 detailed the financial impacts with respect to the Authority being currently financially stable due to government grant funding and finally section 4 looked at if and when it would be safe for staff to return to the office.

60.3 Members noted the report.

61. Partnership Plan (AM 564-20)

61.1 Steve Avery updated members on the work which had been undertaken on the Partnership Plan since the Authority meeting in January. Two workshops had been held; one in February and one in March. Unfortunately the remaining two workshops, namely connecting people with nature and nature recovery, had had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, however these had now been re-scheduled to take place on 15 and 24 July respectively.

61.2 Mr Avery advised that the Partnership Plan process presented an opportunity to bring the recovery work of individual organisations together to set out a recovery plan for the whole of the National Park. He highlighted section 2.5 of his report regarding setting up a new partnership group, a proposal for which would be brought to the next Authority meeting. He also went on to highlight section 3 of his report dealing with emerging key themes and important changes affecting the Forest and how the Forest would recover following the pandemic. Mr Avery advised that some of the next steps had been put on hold due to the pandemic, however these would be in place by March 2021. He then asked members to note and endorse the report.

Resolved, that Members endorse the overall proposed approach to the updated Partnership Plan review

62. Development of two new affordable homes and Heritage Centre, Land at Park Lodge, Ringwood Road, Burley BH24 4BS (AM 565-20)

62.1 Steve Avery introduced the report which updated members on progress to acquire a plot of land to the rear of the NFDC car park in Burley for the purposes of providing two new affordable homes and a local heritage center. He advised that the acquisition was progressing well and was close to completion. He said that although progress reports had been submitted to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee the purpose of this report was to update all members and to seek formal approval to complete the acquisition.

62.2 Edward Heron and Barry Rickman indicated that they would abstain from the vote in view of their involvement in this matter at NFDC.

Resolved, that

1. officers be authorised to take all action as necessary to finalise the acquisition of the land and secure access to the site as previously agreed by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee, and
2. thereafter, a further report to be presented to a future meeting of the full Authority to confirm the appointment of the preferred contractor and to approve the associated building costs.

Voting: 16 (2 abstentions)

63. Any other items the Chairman decides are urgent

63.1 The Chairman informed members that this would be his last Authority meeting as he would be standing down as Chairman at the end of August. He formally said farewell after eight and a half years with the Authority and six of those as Chairman. He thanked officers, members and the Chief Executive for the trust they had placed in him over the years and said that it had been a pleasure working with everyone.

63.2 In reply, local authority and Secretary of State members on the Authority each expressed their appreciation to Mr Crosthwaite-Eyre for his leadership, dedication, knowledge and experience which had been such a valuable asset to the Authority and the wider Forest. Patrick Heneghan, as Deputy Chairman, then formally moved a vote of thanks to Oliver which was unanimously supported by all members.

Resolved, that a vote of thanks be recorded to Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre for his excellent leadership, input and dedication as a member and Chairman of the Authority

Voting: unanimous

64. Date of next meeting

64.1 The next meeting of the New Forest National Park Authority will be held at 10:00 am on Thursday, 24 September 2020, venue to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 12:30 pm.

Signed: Date:
(Chairman)