

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE MICROSOFT VIRTUAL TEAMS MEETING OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER 2020 AT 10.00 AM

Present:

Members

Gavin Parker (Chairman)

Patrick Heneghan (Deputy Chairman)

Gordon Bailey

Sue Bennison

George Bisson

Richard Clewer

David Harrison

Edward Heron

Victoria Mander

Keith Mans

George Meyrick

Neville Penman

Caroline Rackham

Leo Randall

Barry Rickman

John Sanger

Ann Sevier

Stephen Tarling

Richard Taylor

Officers

Alison Barnes

Steve Avery

Rosalind Alderman

Nigel Stone

David Stone

Vicki Gibbon

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Director, Strategy and Planning

Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Chief Finance Officer

Corporate Services Manager

Member Services Administrator

1. **Chairman's Introduction to Conduct of Remotely held Meetings on Microsoft Teams, live events.**
2. **Apologies for absence.**
 - 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from David Bence, Alexis McEvoy and Steve Trow.
3. **Declarations of Interest.**
 - 3.1 Edward Heron, Keith Mans, Sue Bennison, Caroline Rackham and Ann Sevier declared interests under part 2 section B (non-pecuniary interests) of the NPA's Code of Conduct in minute item 10 as District Council Members.
4. **Chairman's announcements.**
 - 4.1 There were no Chairman's announcements on this occasion.
5. **Minutes**
 - 5.1 The minutes of 15 October 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

6. Public Question Time

- 6.1 Brian Tarnoff made a presentation to members on virtual meetings in promoting accessibility and transparency to the public. The Chairman thanked Mr Tarnoff for his presentation. A copy of the full presentation is available from Member Services.

7. Chief Executive's Report (AM 566-20)

- 7.1 The Chief Executive then introduced her report, reminding members that the report covered the period from the last Authority meeting in October.
- 7.2 Ms Barnes firstly gave a brief overview on how the Authority had been responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. She advised that staff were still working from home and that support had been given in regards to wellbeing and equipment required. During the second lockdown all volunteering events had been put on hold and access to offices had been reduced. The Forest and coast were again popular with the public and Ranger staff continued socially distanced monitoring and engagement throughout.
- 7.3 Under the *Protect* programme Ms Barnes brought members attention to the recent announcement from the Prime Minister of a 10-point plan for the Green Industrial Revolution. She also advised Members of the Greenprint for South Hampshire which would provide an opportunity for the New Forest to pioneer developing nature friendly farming, support more green jobs and career paths along with how to attract private investments for environmental ambitions. An Agricultural Act had now been launched which was currently going through parliament to ensure as the UK leaves Europe there would be transition to a new level of support, this would prove to be one of the biggest focus points for the forest over the coming year.
- 7.4 The Chief Executive highlighted the work that the Land Advice Service had recently carried out including working with landowners to improve the quality of Bartley Water, with Natural England funding setting up a farm cluster on the north of the forest to further agri-environment projects and working with Forestry England on Hatchet Pond improvements. The Authority's planning service continue to have high case loads with a number of large scale and complex developments along with many active pre-application discussions on allocated sites. There are also a high level of enforcement cases and tree work applications.
- 7.5 Under the *Enjoy* programme Ms Barnes commented on the visible presence on the Forest by the rangers and partner organisations she also congratulated Hayden Bridgeman who had secured the position of northern ranger. The education team had managed to get out during this period and had supported an event at Lepe Country Park for SCARF New Forest (Supporting Special Children and their Relatives and Friends) introducing the John Muir Award along with some school visits. Ms Barnes advised that the caring for the forest campaigns continued across the forest over this period including the animal accidents campaign and New Forest Code, there had also been over three million impressions on social media since April.
- 7.6 Under the *Prosper* programme it was reported that New Forest Marque along with other businesses were requiring a huge amount of support especially coming into the Christmas period and the Authority had been supporting them with the editorial for the producers guide along with advertisements in the Lymington Times and encouraging people to buy local. Ms Barnes advised that the Sustainable Communities Fund had continued to support projects and some funds had recently been allocated to The New Forest Live at Home scheme for older people to get outdoors in a safe way and

continuing to support the New Forest Non-native Plants project hosted by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

- 7.7 Under the *Excellence* programme Ms Barnes highlighted some of the wonderful poppy displays in and around the forest for Armistice Day and how many communities in the forest had done a great job remembering the fallen. Finally, Ms Barnes thanked all staff and members for their support over the last year and wished everyone a Merry Christmas, she then asked members to note her report.
- 7.8 Responding to a request from members, Ms Barnes advised that she would ask Jim Mitchell to submit a report to the next meeting of the Authority providing information on the fellowship placement of Lizzie Moore from Public Health England and her work with the Authority in promoting health and wellbeing in the Forest.
- 7.9 Ms Barnes responded to a query from Caroline Rackham regarding various areas of work done on Bartley Water with a view to linking these under one project for the whole river. She said that officers would contact Ms Rackham separately with regard to promoting this approach.
- 7.10 Members referred to several planning concerns in the New Forest and Steve Avery advised that a report updating members on these issues would be submitted to the next Planning Committee meeting.
- 7.11 Ms Barnes advised members that she had just learned that the Green Recovery Fund had supported the Green Generation bid submitted by the New Forest in partnership with other National Parks. Funds available were £2.5 million with the New Forest's funding being in the amount of £65,000. The funds would be used to support young people aged between 14 to 26 focussing on a new work force for green recovery and creating future green leaders and apprenticeships.

8. Oral Report RAPC

- 8.1 David Harrison as Chairman of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee referred to issues considered by the Committee at its meeting on 2 November 2020 including the half-year progress and budgetary control reports, local progress on the Accord between the Forestry Commission and National Parks England and the future business planning process.

Following brief discussion, including confirmation from Nigel Stone that the 2019/20 Financial Statements and Annual Governance Statement were signed off by officers and the Auditors as planned on 30 November, the report was noted.

9. Appointment of Independent Persons (AM 577-20)

- 9.1 Rosalind Alderman presented the report recommending the appointments of the Authority's two Independent persons in terms of the Localism Act 2011. She said that, following a recruitment process, two candidates had been recommended for appointment to the positions – Vanessa Sharp and Peter Power.

In response to a request at the meeting for a summary of the relevant background of the candidates to be included in the minutes, the following summary sets out the relevant background of the two people concerned:

- *Vanessa Sharp – formerly General Counsel and Compliance Officer of KPMG and member of their Ethics and Independence Committee*
- *Peter Power – retired Magistrate / Presiding Justice of the Southampton Bench*

Resolved, that Vanessa Sharp and Peter Power be appointed as the Authority's Independent Persons in accordance with s28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 for a four year term commencing on 11 December 2020 and that approval is given for the continued payment of an annual allowance of £141.72 per person per year (index-linked in the same way as allowances payable under the Members' Scheme of Allowances), plus expenses.

Voting: non voting against, 1 abstention

10. Partnership Plan Update (AM 578-20)

- 10.1 Steve Avery presented the report updating members on the review of the Partnership Plan and the work of the recently formed Task & Finish Group appointed to investigate the feasibility of establishing a new Partnership Board with a report from the Group being submitted to the Authority meeting in March 2021. He also drew members attention to the public survey currently in progress to capture people's experience of the Forest during the pandemic, the results of which will help to inform the Partnership Plan review process and would be published at the end of January 2021 on the Authority's website.

Following brief discussion on the above points, the report was noted.

11. Resource Planning Update (AM 579-20)

- 11.1 Nigel Stone presented the report which provided a brief summary of resource planning to be undertaken over the coming months to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of the Authority's work within the overarching Partnership Plan. The resultant Business Plan, which would set out resourced plans for the Authority's own priorities/actions as derived from within the Partnership Plan, would be focussed around 'Net Zero with Nature' and continuing to improve our 'Ways of Working'. It would draw on our resources to ensure internal cross-team working and integration, whilst also sharing and combining resources with others wherever possible to maximise the impacts for the Forest.

The report was noted.

12. Any other items the Chairman decides are urgent

- 12.1 There were no items on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 12.05pm.

Signed: Date:
(Chairman)