

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the Meeting held via Microsoft Teams Live Event on THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER 2020

Those present: Bruce Rothnie (Chairman)
Steve Avery (NFNPA)
Alison Hoare (NFDC)
David Stone (Panel Secretariat)
Vicki Gibbon (Panel Secretariat)

Members could log into the virtual meeting but no record was possible of those present. The following members provided apologies in advance.

1 Apologies for absence

Gordon Bailey (Test Valley)
Petronella Nattrass (BHS)
Nick Clarke (NewForce)
Martin Fletcher (RFS)
Graham Saunders (Minstead Parish Council)
Vincent Batty (Denny Lodge)
John Haywood (Ringwood Town Council)
Simon Smith (Lymington and Pennington Town Council)

2 Election of Chairman

- 2.1 The Chairman introduced the two candidates who were applying to be the new Chairman of the Panel - Andrew Gilruth and Peter Hebard. Both applicants gave a brief statement in support of their application for Chairman. Following this, a vote using slido software was taken with some e-mail votes being permitted where members were having difficulty using the slido voting process.

3 Approval of Minutes from the meeting held on 3 September 2020

- 3.1 As members were unable to participate it was agreed the minutes from the last meeting would be approved as a true and accurate record unless any members raised any point with the Secretariat in the next week.

Referring to an enquiry raised at the last meeting of the Panel as to whether the summer ban on BBQs this year would be made permanent, Bruce Rothnie advised that a possible permanent ban on BBQs on the Crown Lands was under consideration but a decision on this had not yet been made due to more urgent matters arising from the Coronavirus Pandemic. However, a decision was likely before the next fire season and an update would be provided at the next meeting of the Panel in March.

Mr Rothnie reminded members to submit any items/topics they would like to see on future agendas to the Panel Secretariat.

4 Introduction from Gavin Parker NPA Chairman

- 4.1 Gavin Parker introduced himself as the new Chairman of the National Park Authority. He said that he was Professor of Planning Studies at the University of Reading with a specialism in countryside planning. Over the years, he had been involved in research projects such as agri-environment schemes and countryside access and, more recently, neighbourhood planning. He had been born and brought up in Salisbury before moving to London but had always maintained a keen and avid connection to the Forest. He said that he saw the New Forest as becoming a real beacon not only locally but nationally in addressing some of the big challenges of climate change and nature emergency.
- 4.2 The Chairman thanked Gavin Parker for his presentation and reminded members of the question and answer facility which was available at the current meeting – using this feature members could comment or raise a question live which would be responded to by officers at the meeting.

5 New Forest National Park Authority Update – Steve Avery

- 5.1 Steve Avery brought Panel members up to date on the work of the Authority since the last meeting in September.
- 5.2 Mr Avery advised that the next Full Authority meeting would take place on Thursday 10 December and that the agenda and reports for this meeting were available on the website at [New Forest National Park Authority Meeting 10/12/20 - New Forest National Park Authority \(newforestnpa.gov.uk\)](https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/news/new-forest-national-park-authority-meeting-10-12-20) He highlighted that the Chief Executive's report, a standing item for all meetings, sets out a comprehensive summary of work being undertaken by the Authority and partner organisations.
- 5.3 Mr Avery reported the launch of the Government's 'Green Industrial Revolution' - a national ten-point plan led by the Prime Minister that accompanied the Chancellor's spending review, which included proposals to protect and restore the natural environment. He explained that the Authority was currently awaiting the details to see how these new initiatives and transitional arrangements would affect the Forest. He said that the Forest Farming Group in particular was looking at the transitional agricultural arrangements and what these might mean for the future of farming in the New Forest.
- 5.4 Over the coming months members can expect to hear a lot more about these transitional arrangements as well as new initiatives to lead nature recovery in the Forest and achieve 'net zero with nature' as we tackle the climate and nature emergency.

- 5.5 The NPA with its partners is progressing the review of the Partnership Plan and there would be a public consultation taking place on this in the new year. In the meantime a snapshot survey had been launched asking people to provide comments on their experiences of the Forest during the pandemic. The survey could be found on the Authority's website at [New Forest snapshot survey - New Forest National Park Authority \(newforestnpa.gov.uk\)](https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk) and it was hoped that the responses would help to inform the Partnership Plan review. Mr Avery encouraged members to complete the survey.
- 5.6 At the end of October the Authority formally responded to the Government's Planning for the Future White Paper, which proposes radical changes to the planning system throughout England. Mr Avery advised that the Authority's main concerns were the lack of any mention of National Parks and how the new planning system would apply to areas of environmental significance such as the New Forest. The Authority had welcomed the Government's stated intention to introduce tougher enforcement measures for those that breach planning control.
- 5.7 Mr Avery updated members on the situation at Vernon Dene, just outside Bransgore. He advised that he hoped that the Government, in reforming the planning system, would also take the opportunity to close planning loopholes such as those that had allowed developers to begin laying out an 84-unit residential park home on the land at Vernon Dene. Mr Avery reminded members that no planning permission was required due to the site benefiting from an unrestricted lawful use as a caravan site. The NPA was working closely with colleagues at the New Forest District Council and Environment Agency in respect of drainage matters on the site— one particular aspect which was being looked into was that the developers may be in breach of the Habitat Regulations in regard to drainage given the current issues with phosphates and nitrates pollution in the Forest.
- 5.8 Another concern was the proliferation of pop-up camp sites in the New Forest –normally permitted to operate for 28 days per year without planning permission, this had been extended to 56 days this year and next year This was a concern to some local communities and would need to be monitored closely to see how the impacts associated with this extended use could be mitigated.
- 5.9 Mr Avery concluded by saying that the Authority had generally seen a rise in enforcement cases during lockdown and the pandemic. The NPA would also be responding to the New Forest District Council's Emerging Waste Strategy and other local consultations.

6 NFDC Update – Alison Hoare

- 6.1 Alison Hoare began her presentation by advising the panel that the Cabinet had agreed a new draft policy for consultation which was related to the restrictions contained in section 157 of the Housing Act 1985 that restricted the onward disposal of Council property sold under the right to buy in designated rural areas. The New Forest faced difficulties with regards to

affordable homes not only were there less but there is further problems with affordability and that there was less opportunity to build new dwellings. Therefore, Section 157 was a discretionary power which if local authorities could choose to take to restrict the sale of former council houses in those designated areas for only local people with a local connection. This consultation would help New Forest families afford their own homes. The District Council had also recently built their first shared ownership houses and wished to increase the stock of these throughout the district.

- 6.2 Ms Hoare advised that since lockdown began, 25 electric vehicle charging points had been installed in nine car parks across the district and free parking would be available at all district car parks to help promote local businesses on the following dates – 12,13,19 and 20 December.
- 6.3 Ms Hoare informed the Panel that the District Council had been awarded £71,000 by the Government to employ COVID-19 safety ambassadors, there were now four specially trained ambassadors who work within town centres, parks, train stations and colleges. They do not have enforcement powers as such; however, they would be on hand to advise the public on social distancing, wearing face masks and general good hygiene.
- 6.4 Local response centres would be opening again to assist those who are unable to get food and these would be open for 24 hours over the Christmas period. Ms Hoare advised that earlier in December the local business restriction support scheme was launched and to date had managed to provide just over £2 million to 1,300 businesses.
- 6.5 Ms Hoare reminded the Panel that the draft waste strategy was out for consultation until 10 December with more details being found on the website www.nfdc.gov.uk/wastestrategy. Finally, it was advised that the emergency works to the sea wall at Milford would be completed by 21 December.

7 Forestry England Update – Bruce Rothnie

- 7.1 Bruce Rothnie gave a PowerPoint presentation detailing some of the activity that Forestry England had undertaken since the last meeting. He began by outlining the impacts of Covid-19 and the pressures on the Forest by large numbers of visitors following the easing of lockdown restrictions.
- 7.2 Other points highlighted by Mr Rothnie in his presentation (which is filed with the agenda papers for the meeting at [Agendas, reports and minutes 03/12/20 - New Forest National Park Authority \(newforestnpa.gov.uk\)](https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/agendas-reports-and-minutes-03/12/20)) included:
 - pony drifts had continued in the Autumn under Covid 19 arrangements;
 - a study on regeneration of holly had been carried out;
 - an update on Ash Dieback disease;
 - a temporary suspension has been made by Forestry England of all trail hunting licenses across England while a police investigation was carried out into allegations that some hunts may be acting illegally;

- verge habitat protection work;
- restoring heathland from former plantations by levelling of original ridge and furrow created at time of planting; and
- an extension of the pannage season to 21 December following a heavy crop of acorns this year.

A copy of the presentation can be found on the website.

8 Announcement of Chairman

- 8.1 Following the conclusion of the counting of votes for Chairman, it was announced that Andrew Gilruth had been elected as Chairman of the Consultative Panel.

9 Any Other Business

- 9.1 A number of questions were raised during the meeting and were responded to by the relevant officer. In replying to a query regarding the growing use of electric bikes in the Forest, Bruce Rothnie advised that Forestry England was proceeding with an awareness and education campaign promoting responsible cycling on the waymarked network and he would update Panel members on the progress of the campaign at the next Panel meeting.

10 Date of the next meeting.

- 10.1 The Panel noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 4 March 2021 venue and time to be confirmed pending the status of the pandemic at that time.