

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom on THURSDAY 4 MARCH 2021

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

Panel members in attendance:

John Korbey, Alexa Carcas, Richard Reeves, Janet Bache, Brian Tarnoff, Matt Kangarani, Mark Carter, Melissa Sheppard, Jenni Tubbs, Anthony Climpson, Patrick Heneghan, Jeremy Allen, Patricia Banks, Lynne Aggas, Pamela Keen, Chris Willsher, Martin Fletcher, Ailsa Farrand, John Goodwin, Roly Errington, Graham Ferris, Charles Payne, Sue Bennison, Simon Smith, Gordon Bailey, Frank Weller, Diana Kitcher, Steph Osborne, Timothy Cook, James Young, Vincent Batty, Barry Olorenshaw, Michael Proctor, Graham Chillcott, Petronella Natrass, Peter Brown, Nick Clark, Neal Martin, Sam Dovey, Russell Webb, Rob Dewing, Alison Bolton, Hannah Marsh, Gerald Lewis

[Galaxy Tab, Mike, jezzamage@gmail.com, bliss, Graham 's iPhone]

The Chairman advised members of the format of the meeting

1 Apologies for absence

Bob Chapman (HIWWT)
David Hall (Hordle Parish Council)
Rob Waight (Environment Agency)
John Hayward (Ringwood Town Council)

Substitute - Jeremy Allen (Sopley Parish Council)

2 Approval of Minutes from the meeting held on 3 December 2020

- 2.1 The minutes of the Panel on 3 December 2020 were approved. The Chairman also thanked Bruce Rothnie for stepping in as Chairman for the Panel and thanked the NPA for providing the secretariat for the Panel.

3 Matters for Discussion

3.1 Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS)

Members noted that whilst CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) payments were continuing, the Government had already begun tapering down this type of financial support following Brexit with subsidies being phased out by 2024. Rural subsidies played a vital role in the maintenance of the landscapes of the Forest and the payment of direct income support to farmers through the Basic Payment Scheme. However, there was general agreement amongst interested parties that CAP payments needed reforming though less agreement on the nature of this reformation.

The proposal by Defra was that the replacement would be the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) which would include:

- clean and plentiful water
- clean air
- protection from and mitigation of environmental hazards
- mitigation of and adaptation to climate change
- thriving plants and wildlife
- beauty, heritage and engagement

The Chairman then explained in more detail the working of ELMS which was a significant undertaking. He suggested that the Panel may wish to become involved with and assist this process through a small group of Panel members who would report back to the main body. He asked that those interested in joining the group contact the Chairman or Panel Secretariat.

3.2 Superfast Broadband Programme

Members discussed the rollout of fibre across the New Forest and highlighted those areas where this work still needed to be completed. It was noted that a presentation on superfast broadband had been made to the Panel in December 2018 and it was agreed to revisit this issue and ask Glenn Peacey of Hampshire County Council to make a further presentation updating the Panel at its next meeting.

3.3 Wildfire Risk Management

The Chairman said that this agenda item had been prompted by a number of discussions with Panel members regarding the use of BBQs by visitors to the New Forest last summer – and the successes in reducing the use of portable BBQs. Whilst this would likely be covered by Bruce Rothnie in his presentation, the Chairman mentioned that there were a number of significant wildfires last year and, with longer drier summers predicted by the Climate Change Committee and the population of the UK increasing, it was reasonable to expect visitor numbers to increase over the next 20 years – so the risk will increase and consequently the Panel might begin to pay more attention to this issue. He suggested that Panel members who had any thoughts in progressing this issue e-mail these into the Secretariat or the Chairman. He added that it the Panel might begin reviewing what

other places, particularly other countries, were doing in other fire prone landscapes and bring a short paper to the next meeting.

3.4 Panel Agenda Setting

The Chairman said that an on-line questionnaire would be circulated to Panel members requesting their thoughts on future agenda items. The list of topics would then be circulated with the next Panel for discussion.

3.5 EHV1 (equine herpes)

A question was raised by the New Forest Equestrian Association regarding a virulent outbreak of equine herpes which had forced European Equestrian events to be cancelled across the continent. A number of horses had already died. It was thought that the outbreak of EHV1 was probably the most serious in Europe in many decades.

The New Forest Equestrian Association would be happy to assist the Verderer's and CDA with any contingency plans to deal with an outbreak (or any other equine disease) in the New Forest, as most of their members would be affected.

4 Matters For Reporting

4.1 Forestry England Update – Bruce Rothnie

Bruce Rothnie updated members on developments since the last Panel meeting. He said that with the current lockdown, high numbers of people were visiting the Forest for their daily exercise. This has resulted in many car parks being full at peak times and some damage to verges from indiscriminate parking. He mentioned the Government's announcement of its 4 stage "roadmap" to easing of lockdown during the spring and early summer. This roadmap is only indicative at present with further guidance yet to emerge and its final shape will depend on the status of Covid 19 infections at each stage. Preparatory work was taking place in anticipation of increased visitor numbers as lockdown eases using the experience of managing the situation in 2020. Forest organisations are drawing up a shared response plan and partners include the NPA, NFDC, Fire Service, Police and CDA.

Mr Rothnie advised that with hotter, drier summers now becoming more frequent, the risk of wildfires was increasing substantially during the early spring and during very dry spells in the summer. The number of small wildfires that occurred last year caused by campfires and disposable BBQs on the Forest was of increasing concern. The FE imposed a ban on disposable BBQs last year and have decided to continue the ban throughout 2021. Fire awareness patrols with the Fire Service would be taking place to raise awareness with the public about the dangers and impacts of wildfires.

Mr Rothnie reminded members that with effect from 1 April 2019, the Forestry Commission in England and Scotland had become separate organisations reporting into their respective Government's following devolution. He explained that woodland and land managed by the Forestry Commission in England had moved under a new organisation, Forestry England. The re-branding of the new organisation was being delivered in a phased way as resources permitted, i.e. corporate clothing and new branding of vehicles as and when old vehicles were replaced. Ladder Board signage at the thresholds to the Forest and at car parks in the Forest would also be gradually replaced and the first adjustments would start to roll out in next few months.

Mr Rothnie referred to programme of controlled burning in the Forest which took place every year usually between January to March if weather and ground conditions allow. This was done to remove coarse growth and encouraging the vigorous regrowth of the heather and gorse. The sites are planned in partnership with Natural England and commoners about a year in advance. Fire traces are cut at boundaries to each burn area. It is important that burning is undertaken only when weather (particularly wind strength and direction) conditions are right to ensure control of the burn,

Mr Rothnie advised that the FE had initiated a media campaign last week with partners about protection of ground nesting birds during their breeding season (March to July) and explained what protection measures were being taken.

Referring to the 10 year project to release white-tailed eagles back onto the Isle of Wight, Mr Rothnie advised that this was now in its third year and the FE with its partner (Roy Dennis Foundation) was planning to receive the next batch of chicks from Scotland in June to join the 10 birds already released. Every bird is fitted with a satellite tracker so their movements can be monitored.

4.2 NFNPA Update – Steve Avery

Steve Avery added to the comments made earlier by Bruce Rothnie that a high number of visitors were expected to visit the New Forest over the coming months and the Authority was working closely with Forestry England and other partners on strongly promoting the New Forest Code.

Referring to recent Government consultations, Mr Avery said that a Government response to last year's consultation on wide ranging planning reforms was expected in the next few weeks.

A further Government consultation which would be running until the end of March was the National Design Code for all new buildings in England and associated changes to national planning policy with the intention of driving up the quality of all new built development. This was of real interest to the NPA and he would include a [link](#) to this consultation in the minutes of the meeting. This was also a timely consultation as the Authority was working on updating its own design guide.

Mr Avery drew members' attention to a consultation brochure published by Southern Water referring to plans for a significant desalination plant at Fawley as the water

company will no longer be able to extract as much water from the Test and Itchen rivers. A meeting to discuss the project with Southern Water was planned for 16 March.

A bid for the Solent to become a Freeport had passed the first stage of the bid process as confirmed by the Chancellor during his budget speech. Mr Avery explained the rationale behind Freeports and said that the NPA had made it clear that it wanted to see a comprehensive package for green infrastructure and environmental improvement.

He mentioned that the Vision for the Waterside agreed between HCC, NFDC and the NPA already sets out the ambition for new green infrastructure provision in the Waterside area.

On planning applications, Mr Avery advised that plans had now been submitted for the redevelopment of the Lyndhurst Park Hotel site and these had been considered and supported by the Lyndhurst Parish Council. Plans had also been submitted for 2 affordable dwellings at Hale by a community land trust and these would be reported to the Planning Committee in due course.

Mr Avery also referred to a number of enforcement matters that the Authority was currently dealing with, which included illegal tree felling at a site in Netley Marsh. He said that the trees were protected by TPOs and were in a conservation area; consequently a court injunction had been secured to prevent further tree felling and a prosecution was being progressed

The site at Vernon Dene was being investigated further to establish compliance with the Habitat and EIA Regulations.

The Government had extended temporary permitted use rights for campsites for up to 56 days again this year and the Authority was considering options for how these sites could be better managed in regard to the Habitat Regulations.

Mr Avery advised that the Government was getting close to giving its response to the Landscape Review and this response would further help to inform the emerging new Partnership Plan.

4.3 NFDC Update – Alison Hoare

Alison Hoare advised that the District Council's Environmental Health Inspectors had visited over 100 supermarkets within the district alongside DIY stores and garden centers giving advice to staff on how to keep their businesses COVID-19 compliant, ensuring they are offering hand gel, cleaning trollies, policing the wearing of masks, and keeping numbers within their stores at government limits.

She updated members regarding the upgrade to the mooring facilities at Keyhaven and advised that the works should take about 8 weeks to complete. This should enable NFDC to increase occupancy and confidence in Keyhaven.

Plans for the re-development of the shower and toilet block at Lymington Quay would be submitted to the District's Planning Committee in May. NFDC had worked closely with Lymington Town Council and the Harbour masters with regard to the proposed work and online public engagement session had been held in January with local business owners, residents and councillors. Work was anticipated to commence in mid-September and be completed by April 2022. Closely aligned with this scheme plans will be developed to enhance the quay. In preparation for the summer, plans were being made to jet clean the quay in readiness for Easter and install solar powered compactor bins, to help reduce the litter and bin emptying frequencies.

A decision had been taken to reopen the public conveniences at Barton and Calshot after some upgrading, to ensure they are COVID compliant with regard to the air circulation within the buildings. It was hoped that Barton will re-open for Easter and Calshot a few weeks later.

Various litter campaigns were planned to be launched and the District Council planned to support the great British spring clean which will run from 28 May to 13 June 2021.

Litter was becoming a significant problem and with the large number of visitors anticipated to be visiting the New Forest in the summer, the NFDC, NPA and Forestry England would be working together to formulate a joint communications campaign. In addition NFDC was looking at enhancing cleaning and carrying out litter collections in certain areas.

All urgent works relating to the sea wall at Milford on Sea were now completed. Following the storms over Christmas there was no further damage to the wall. NFDC had been awarded £250,000 to produce plans and a business case for phase 2 of the work.

She said that agreement had been reached with local residents where the coastal path traverses their properties allowing NFDC to move the path back, away from the cliff edge, enabling the council to re-open this prior to Easter.

Bruce Rothnie, Steve Avery and Alison Hoare then responded to a number of questions raised by members in connection with the issues in their presentations. Members also discussed attendance at Panel meetings by Natural England and the Chairman suggested that NE might be invited to engage with the Panel on the Environmental Land Management Scheme. The Chairman thanked Bruce, Alison and Steve for their presentations.

5 Statutory Consultations

The Chairman noted that the consultations had been covered in the presentations and thanked Mr Avery for guiding the panel on which consultations were relevant to the Panel. Steve Avery advised that the list of consultations on the Authority's website would be made available to members.

6 Any other items the Chairman feels urgent

6.1 None

7 Dates of next Panel Meetings.

7.1 Thursday 3 June
Thursday 2 September
Thursday 2 December