

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 10:00 HOURS IN THE GATES HALL, LYMINGTON COMMUNITY CENTRE, NEW STREET, LYMINGTON

Present:

Members:

David Bence
Sue Bennison
Patrick Heneghan (Chair)
Alexis McEvoy (Deputy Chair)
George Meyrick
Neville Penman
John Sanger

Officers:

Alison Barnes	Chief Executive
Rosalind Alderman	Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Nigel Stone	Head of Resources (CFO)
Paul Walton	Head of Environment and Rural Economy
David Illsley	Policy Manager
Jim Mitchell	Interpretation and Outreach Manager
David Stone	Corporate Services Manager
Frances Connolly	Executive Assistant

72. Apologies for absence

72.1 Apologies for absence were received from Gordon Bailey, Ann Sevier and Caroline Rackham.

73. Declarations of Interest

73.1 There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

74. Chairman's announcements

74.1 Patrick Heneghan thanked Members for their confidence in appointing him as Chair. He welcomed Alexis McEvoy as the new Deputy Chair, and Caroline Rackham the newest member of the Committee.

74.2 Mr Heneghan then formally thanked David Harrison, the previous Chair, for his outstanding work on the Committee over the past seven years.

75. Minutes

75.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

76. Public Question Time

76.1 There were no questions or statements from the public.

77. Half-year Progress Report 2021/22

77.1 In introducing the report, Nigel Stone drew members' attention to paragraph 4.2.1 and advised that the Natural England MEOPL team (Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in Protected Landscapes) had recently completed a draft review of their indicators within all protected landscapes. They had recommended the list of further indicators set out in the above-mentioned paragraph about which they currently held data potentially useful to individual national parks. These could be provided for use commencing in 2022. The proposed new indicators were subject to consultation and officers would be submitting feedback on the proposals in the coming weeks. Members welcomed the indicators, notably 'Nature Recovery Network Coverage' and 'Carbon sequestration – vegetation' as well as the introduction of possible new indicators in future through the consultation, such as an expansion of those measuring water quality.

77.2 Members discussed the number of planning appeals allowed (7 out of 17 appeals) under local indicators on page 11 of the cover report and requested that information on the appeals concerned be referred to the Planning Committee to establish any consistent reasons behind the Inspectors' decisions as well as information on NPA costs and officer time associated with responding to the appeals.

Action: information on recent planning appeals be referred to the Planning Committee to establish any consistent reasons behind the Planning Inspectors' decisions as well as information on NPA costs and officer time associated with responding to the appeals. (Steve Avery)

77.3 Members noted the performance indicator on member attendance at meetings (78% for Q2, below the year-end target of 82%) and briefly discussed the possible impact of Covid and the return to physical meetings on the figures. Members noted that the attendance figures were monitored and regularly reviewed.

77.4 Members then considered the action dealing with 'Enhanced public engagement on climate change amongst National Park communities and businesses' on page 11 of the progress report. Members were advised that National Parks UK had not been included in the delegate list for COP26; however, they were represented on the World Conference on Protected Areas which considered national parks and protected areas, both nationally and globally, to be the engine room for nature recovery.

77.5 The Chair drew attention to the amount of work that had gone into the Q2 period, such as the funding of the New Forest Tour and the social media outreach which had been achieved, and on behalf of members thanked officers for their hard work and input.

Members noted the report.

78. Half-year Budgetary Control Report 2021/22

- 78.1 Nigel Stone presented the report which provided a summary of the financial performance for the first six months of the 2021/22 financial year. He said the overall expenditure position showed £2.24m spend over the first six months of the year (43% of the budget). Without the partnership projects, spend was £2.01m from a budget of £3.94m (51%).
- 78.2 He said the income figures were very similar, so overall the budget was in a good position and there were no significant concerns to raise.
- 78.3 Mr Stone informed members that a new planning IT system had been procured and a two year contract had been agreed with the new supplier, Agile Applications Limited. He said the planning system had been bought at a lower cost to that of the current system, and was likely to go live in February 2022. Steve Avery, Executive Director, would oversee the implementation of the new system.
- 78.4 Nigel Stone hoped that the Authority would hear what its three-year grant settlement would be from Defra within the next couple of months.
- 78.5 Mr Stone reported on the implications of the Spending Review in terms of next year's potential pay award for staff. In the Government's budget it was mentioned that inflation could rise to 4% next year. Every 1% of pay award would cost the Authority around £20,000 and therefore a potential 4% or 5% pay award could cost the Authority between £80,000 to £100,000.
- 78.6 There was some discussion about the Sustainable Communities Fund whereby a budget of £30,000 had been set aside for community project applications. Nigel Stone explained that up to £2,000 could be used to help towards projects, and it could often then take up to two years before the money was then claimed – hence the use of an earmarked reserve.
- 78.7 A further discussion about developers' contributions followed and it was asked if the in-perpetuity ecological mitigation funds were held in different accounts and monitored separately. Nigel Stone advised that they were monitored separately and that a paper went to an Authority meeting in 2018 which set out how the Authority would account for and spend those contributions. He said he would circulate the paper via a link so members could see examples of what that money could be spent on.
- 78.8 In response to a query as to whether developers' contributions included money from other areas, Nigel Stone explained that developers also often paid a 'Solent Contribution' which was administered by Test Valley Borough Council and had its own methodology of how the contributions were spent. There were other contributions, albeit infrequently, associated with transport and those monies were made available to Hampshire County Council as the Highways Authority. These contributions were not held by the Authority so the figures were not included on the paper.
- 78.9 Mr Stone confirmed that the Authority did have a record of those funds and he would look to add those figures to the paper in future.

Action: Nigel Stone to circulate Solent Mitigation Authority paper to the RAPC members and to add the Solent and Transport contributions to the Budgetary Control Reports in future.

- 78.10 The £23,000 budget allocation for the Local Listed Buildings Surveys was discussed, and it was asked if the Authority could take part in a more comprehensive survey of all listed buildings. This funding has been received from the Government's 'Local Heritage List Campaign Fund' to enable the Authority to take forward work on non-designated heritage assets. The funding was awarded to the National Park Authority, the Isle of Wight Council, and Winchester City Council and we will be working with town and parish councils and local communities to take this work on 'local listings' forward. Members were informed that the Authority's Building Design and Conservation officers could look at doing a wider assessment.

Action: David Illsley to look at a comprehensive survey for Listed Buildings. A members' day on the 'Local Listing Project' is being held on 18 November 2021 and the project will build on the 2,000+ assets already identified within the National Park.

- 78.11 Members then noted the current income and expenditure position, including the potential savings and pressures identified in the report.

79. Corporate Risk Log

- 79.1 David Stone introduced the report which had been submitted for members' input and comments.

- 79.2 Several requests were made during the ensuing discussion:

- Future changes to the risk register were to be set out in the log using italic text to show where changes had been made since last being considered by the Committee.
- Risk 17 was to be amended to reflect wider reputational risk such as negative public perception of the actions and decisions of the Authority and its members, which if it occurred could reflect badly on the Authority's nature conservation and environmental credentials.
- Risks to be included under 'Protect' as to not achieving net zero by the Authority's timeframe, and consequential loss of habitat and species.

- 79.3 Members then noted the report.

80. Funding Approach

- 80.1 Nigel Stone introduced the report, on behalf of Hilary Makin, which proposed how the Authority would continue to seek funding and in-kind support for its work during 2021/22 and how its future funding strategy might be developed. In the remainder of the financial year, and with the draft Partnership Plan due to go before members, the Authority needed to assess its options for seeking further income which would require a feasibility study into the best fundraising mix for the NPA around the themes set out in paragraph 1.6 of the report. It was proposed to employ specialist consultants to carry out this work.

- 80.2 Considerable discussion then followed on aspects of the strategy, the remit of the consultants, training, sharing data with other national parks, working with partners towards achieving funding bids and the Authority's ability to set levies. In connection with this latter issue, members agreed to discuss the matter further at a members' day in due course.
- 80.3 Following further discussion, members agreed to support the recommendation.

Resolved, that the allocation of £10,000 of underspend from this year's budget be approved for a feasibility study to look at potential income streams and the costs and returns on investment of different aspects of the fundraising mix.

Voting: Unanimous

81. Carbon Reduction Plan

- 81.1 The report set out an initial draft Carbon Reduction Plan for the Authority that contained the current status and proposed a way forward to reduce and/or offset the Authority's own carbon footprint from its assets and operations. Nigel Stone explained that the report was for the Authority's carbon footprint and not for the geographical area of the National Park, and so focussed on emissions such as those from the Authority's offices and staff travel.
- 81.2 Defra informed the Authority that they would like to establish clear carbon footprint baselines for all their Defra bodies, so they had appointed the Carbon Trust and a consulting firm to do so. Nigel Stone informed members that he had sent Defra a set of information from 2017-18 as a base year which they would collate and review, and then send the Authority their official baseline for 2017-18 by the end of December 2021.
- 81.3 Mr Stone explained that he had included in the Draft Carbon Reduction Plan some draft figures that he had calculated and he would update members once he had heard officially from Defra. The Defra carbon footprint baselines would be put into the Plan and it brought to the next RAPC in February for further scrutiny and then to the Authority meeting in March for adoption.
- 81.4 Nigel Stone explained that it was important for Defra to see how the Authority calculated its baseline, namely, what was and was not included. He explained that there were three scopes:
- Scope 1 – what is owned/created
 - Scope 2 – what the organisation uses
 - Scope 3 – additional operational impacts that would be common across the Defra bodies

He highlighted his 2017-18 to 2020-21 figures based on the Authority's core output:

- Scope 1 – The Authority's pool vehicles
- Scope 2 – The Authority's headquarters and the tenanted properties in Bransgore

- Scope 3 – Business travel which included staff and members and commuting which was for employees only

- 81.5 Mr Stone said that he had added some home office usage for Defra and the consultants to look at in the 2020/21 statistics because, although the Authority had saved carbon by not using the offices so much, employees were obviously putting heating and computers on at home instead.
- 81.6 The largest amount of CO2 emissions was from purchased goods / services. Mr Stone said the stats were an estimate of how much carbon was emitted from all the products and services the Authority bought.
- 81.7 He reported that all staff and members would have a key role in the plan to achieve Net Zero by 2030 and that the formal monitoring of the Carbon Reduction Plan would be overseen by the established staff working group.
- 81.8 Members agreed that it was an excellent paper and it was clear what needed to be achieved, and the Authority would be able to monitor its performance against the other national parks. The Chair thought it would be good to have the Plan as a regular feature on the RAPC Agenda. Members then noted the report.

82. Any other items that the Chairman decides are urgent

- 82.1 There were no urgent items on this occasion.

83. Date of next meeting 7 February 2022

- 83.1. Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 7 February 2022.

The meeting closed at 12:40 hours.

SignedDate.....
(Chairman)