

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 24 MARCH AT 10.00 AM AT THE LINDEN HALL, LYNDHURST COMMUNITY CENTRE, CENTRAL CAR PARK, HIGH STREET, LYNDHURST SO43 7NY

Present:

Members

Gavin Parker (Chair)

Patrick Heneghan (Deputy Chair)

Diane Andrews

Gordon Bailey

Sue Bennison

George Bisson

Richard Clewer

Zoe Clewer

David Harrison

Victoria Mander

Keith Mans

Caroline Rackham

Ann Sevier

Stephen Tarling

Richard Taylor

Officers

Alison Barnes

Steve Avery

Rosalind Alderman

Nigel Stone

Paul Walton

David Stone

Hilary Makin

David Illsley

Jim Mitchell

Sally Knott

Emily Dee

Vicki Gibbon

Sam Greatorex

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Director, Strategy and Planning

Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Head of Resources (Chief Finance Officer)

Head of Environment & Rural Economy

Corporate Services Manager

Communications Manager

Policy & Conservation Manager

Interpretation & Outreach Manager

Senior Building Design & Conservation Officer

Building Design & Conservation Officer

Member Services Administrator

Systems Support Technician (Attending Remotely)

30. Apologies for absence.

30.1 Apologies for absence were received from David Bence, George Meyrick, Alexis McEvoy, Michael Thierry and Steve Trow.

31. Declarations of Interest.

31.1 Rosalind Alderman noted that a dispensation had been issued under s33 of the Localism Act 2011 to allow Members to vote on minute item 41.

31.2 Ann Sevier declared an interest under part 2 section B (non-pecuniary interests) of the NPA's Code of Conduct in minute item 37 as a member of the Verderers.

31.3 Victoria Mander declared an interest under part 2 section B (non-pecuniary interests) of the NPA's Code of Conduct in minute item 37 as a she works with RSPB.

32. Chair's announcements

32.1 The Chairman congratulated the winners of this year's Building Design awards, which were now in their fifth consecutive year. The winners were:

Best Residential Scheme - Tuckermill House in Boldre

Best Conservation Project - the Ice House at Beaulieu Palace

Best Green Building - Cameron's Cottage at RSPB Franchises Lodge in Landford

Best Non-Residential Scheme - the Old Dairy in Sway

33. Minutes

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022 be approved as a true record.

Voting: None voting against

34. Public Question Time

- 34.1 Members received a presentation from Councillor Tina Vickery of Hale Parish Council that summarised the Parish Council's support for the Article 4 Direction in respect of temporary campsites, to be considered under item 14 of the agenda.

A copy of the presentation is held by Member Services and available on request.

35. Chief Executive's Report (AM 617/22)

- 35.1 The Chief Executive introduced her report, reminding Members that the report covered the period from the Authority meeting in January 2022.
- 35.2 Under the *Protect* theme, the Chief Executive drew Members' attention to the Landscapes Review Consultation with the draft response being considered later in the agenda, along with the final draft of the Partnership Plan which would form the new 5 year plan for the New Forest National Park's work with partner organisations. On 10 March 2022 the Rural Affairs Minister, Lord Richard Benyon, visited the New Forest. He looked at wetland restoration, a commoner's holding, the Verderers' Hall and the Waterside area. Ms Barnes said she had received some excellent feedback regarding his visit.
- 35.3 Continuing on the *Protect* theme, Ms Barnes explained that climate change was having serious consequences on the tree population with the ever-increasing storms the UK was experiencing; during February when storm Eunice hit there had been significant damage across the New Forest and storm damaged trees were continuing to be identified. The Planning and Enforcement teams continued to be busy over the last quarter, with a series of s106 agreements for major applications being worked on along with a nine-day public inquiry relating to an enforcement notice at a site in Lymington. Ms Barnes was pleased to announce that a joint agency venture with Forestry England, National Highways and the police had managed to progress the clearance of an unregistered site used for scrap vehicle storage next to the A31.
- 35.4 The Chief Executive explained that the first year of the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme was coming to an end, and during the past year over £180,000 in grants had been allocated to a wide range of projects. Through the National Grid Landscapes Enhancement Initiative the Authority had worked with local landowners and communities to improve habitats and access for people across the New Forest.
- 35.5 Under the *Enjoy* theme, Ms Barnes highlighted the recent Awakening Festival which took place throughout February. A wide range of organisations had been involved to

bring people together and share messages of what they were doing to combat climate and nature emergencies. Many of the 45 online and in person events were sold out and the climate champion assemblies had reached over 2100 children. The Volunteer Fair continued online this year with 240 people registered and 130 people attending online talks during the day. The New Forest Spring clean would be launched on 25 March and run until 10 April.

- 35.6 The Chief Executive continued on the *Prosper* theme by highlighting the work of the Education team, which had included providing travel grants for local education providers, climate assemblies and films and providing training for work experience placements. In preparation for the visitor season and in conjunction with partner organisations the ground-nesting bird campaign had been launched, along with the 'care for the forest, care for each other' campaign planned with publications, signage and patrols. The New Forest Tour would resume on Saturday 25 June until Sunday 18 September.
- 35.7 Under the *Prosper* theme, Ms Barnes advised that the New Forest Marque 2022/23 Directory would shortly be launched and that Marque members were currently preparing to return to key events including the New Forest Show.
- 35.8 Under the *Excellence* theme, the Chief Executive was pleased to announce that the Authority had joined with National Parks UK and Campaign for National Parks to recognise extraordinary women on International Woman's Day. She then concluded her presentation by advising that, with Covid restrictions easing, the Authority and partner organisations were able to come together more frequently on a face-to-face basis to pursue their shared objectives.
- 35.9 Following discussion, Members noted the report.

36. Oral Report from Resources, Audit and Performance Committee (7 March 2022)

- 36.1 The Chair of the Committee (Patrick Heneghan) referred briefly to the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2022, including the draft general fund revenue budget, budgetary allowances and National Parks Partnerships.

37. Partnership Plan Update (AM 618/22)

- 37.1 Steve Avery presented the report which was to seek Members' approval of the final draft version of the new Partnership Plan 2022-2027 (attached to the report as Annex 1), which included the substantive amendments suggested by partners, Members and staff since the previous draft version was considered at the Authority meeting in January, as well as recommendations of the Landscapes Review. Mr Avery said that once approved by the Authority, the principal partner organisations would be invited to approve the Plan within their own organisations over the coming months, following which the final version would be published in the summer on the Authority's website. An executive summary would be made available as a visual document for distribution to interested parties.

Resolved, that

- (i) the final version of the Partnership Plan and the action plan be approved, and
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Executive Director (Strategy and Planning) to make any final minor amendments in consultation with the Chair prior to the Plan being finalised.

Voting: Unanimous

38. National Landscapes Review – Authority’s Consultation Response (AM 619/22)

- 38.1 David Illsley began his presentation by reminding Members that in January 2022 the Government had published its response to the National Landscapes Review report. The response took forward many of the recommendations of the review and was currently subject to a 12-week public consultation closing on 9 April 2022. During February, workshops had been held with both Members and staff to formulate the Authority’s proposed response. Mr Illsley explained that the Authority’s response was generally supportive of the proposals; however, it also highlighted the challenges in delivering the Government’s priorities for protected landscapes without adequate finances or resources. Members were then asked to endorse the response (Annex 1) with the delegation of authority to the Policy & Conservation Manager to make any minor amendments as necessary.
- 38.2 Following discussion Members asked for certain areas of the response to be elaborated upon in order to emphasise the importance of local accountability and representation in the delivery of the Authority’s statutory planning functions, and the importance of Natural England working in partnership with others in their future broadened role.

Resolved, that

the Authority’s consultation response (Annex 1) to the Government’s proposals on the National Landscapes Review be endorsed for submission by the deadline of 9 April 2022; and that authority be delegated to the Policy & Conservation Manager to make any minor amendments to the response in consultation with the Chair prior to submission.

Voting: Unanimous

39. Climate Emergency and Net Zero with Nature (AM 620/22)

- 39.1 Olivia McGregor informed Members that the Authority had made a commitment with partners to develop a plan for the National Park and surrounding area to be ‘net zero with nature’ by 2050. She explained that this was part of the 2021-2026 Partnership Plan under Net Zero with Nature objective 5. Ms McGregor briefly summarised the paper. Following discussion, the report was duly noted.

40. National Parks Partnership (AM 621/22)

- 40.1 Alison Barnes explained that this report had previously been considered at the Authority’s Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting. The Authority had been part of the National Parks Partnerships for the last three years, and had recently been contacted with a proposal to continue for a further three years. Ms Barnes commented that due to uncertainty around budgets and the response to the Glover review, the officers’ recommendation was to approve funds for one year and to review the situation further after that. Members resolved to approve the report as detailed below.

Resolved, that

the Authority approves one year (2022/23) of further funding for National Parks Partnership and the UK Comms Team, whilst further information and assurances are sought by officers prior to any longer-term agreement.

Voting: Unanimous

41 Scheme of Members' Allowances (AM 622/22)

- 41.1 Nigel Stone presented the report and advised that the current Scheme of Members' Allowances was due to expire on 31 March 2022. He explained that on 31 January 2022 the Standards Committee had met and agreed to make the recommendation to the Authority as set out in section 1.2 of the report. In making this recommendation, the Committee had asked that Officers raise the question of available resources with the Chief Finance Officer, and if necessary this could be discussed by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee to consider whether resources were available for the proposed increase.
- 41.2 Mr Stone explained that the Standards Committee's recommendation had been considered by both the Chief Finance Officer and the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee, particularly with regard to the proposal for an increase in the basic allowance to £2,500 from 1 April 2022 with further increases to the allowance being in line with any pay awards to staff. The outcome of this investigation was set out in Section 2 of the report and three options were set out in the paper for Members' consideration. Patrick Heneghan, Chair of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee, then summarised the discussions that had taken place at the meeting of that Committee on 7 March 2022, and George Bisson as Chair of the Standards Committee provided further background on the reasons for the recommendation made by the Standards Committee.
- 41.3 Members considered at length the possible scenarios outlined in the report for a Scheme of Allowances to take effect from 1 April 2022. A proposal recommending the approval of Option A as set out in the report was voted on but not carried. Members then voted to approve Option C (as set out below), deciding in addition that it would be appropriate to establish an informal Member working group tasked with investigating the facts and context that the Authority should take into account in its future decision-making as to the adoption of a new Scheme with effect from 1 April 2023. The results of this work would be reported in due course by officers to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee for consideration, with that Committee subsequently reporting to the full Authority.

Resolved, that:

1. The draft Scheme of Allowances annexed to the report be adopted for one year with effect from 1 April 2022 with the basic allowance index linked to any staff pay awards for senior staff for that year effective from that date, and that a Dependent Carers' Allowance of £10.50 be added to the Scheme of Members' Allowances together with a Co-optees' Allowance as per the report; and
2. authority be delegated to officers, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority and the Standards and Resources, Audit and Performance Committee Chairs, to set up and support a Member working group to investigate and review the relevant factors in respect of the adoption of a new Scheme of Members' Allowances from April 2023.

Voting: 8:3, 3 abstentions

42 Draft General Fund Revenue Budget for the Financial Year 2022/23, Treasury Management Strategy and Medium-Term Position (AM 623/22)

- 42.1 Nigel Stone presented the paper which set out draft proposals for a revenue budget for the financial year 2022/23 for consideration by the Authority. This report also provided a medium-term projection of the Authority's financial position up to March 2025 and a forward projection beyond this. He added that a draft of the paper had been considered by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee on 7 March 2022 which had recommended it to the full Authority for approval.
- 42.2 He then took Members through key elements of the report. Members expressed concern with the level of the General Fund Reserve, which they felt was too low for the current operating climate, and asked Officers to review this amount and report to Members during the current financial year.

Action: Officers to review the current level of the Authority's General Fund Reserve and report to members during the current financial year.

Resolved, that

1. the General Fund Budget for 2022/23 be approved;
2. the underlying minimum level for the General Fund Reserve remain at £0.3 million be noted;
3. the implications on the Reserves of the proposed budget for 2021/22 be noted;
4. the Risk Assessment and Section 25 Statement be noted;
5. the Treasury Management Strategy in Annex 3 be approved; and
6. the Medium-Term Financial Plan up to 2024/25 and the Forward Projection in Annex 4 be noted.

Voting: 9:2

43 Confirmation of Article 4 Direction (AM 624/22)

- 43.1 Steve Avery presented his report, reminding Members that at the March 2021 Authority meeting, Members had considered a report on the options for managing temporary 'pop-up' campsites within the National Park. He explained that a non-immediate Article 4 Direction had subsequently been published in September 2021 and was subject to a 6-week consultation. A further report on this issue and the consultation responses had been considered at the January 2022 Authority meeting, with the intention at that time being to consider confirming the Article 4 Direction and accompanying planning guidance at the current meeting.
- 43.2 Members then approved the Article 4 Direction and accompanying planning guidance as detailed below.

Resolved, that

- (i) the non-immediate Article 4 Direction to take effect from 30 September 2022 to remove permitted development rights (Schedule 2, Part 4, Class B to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended, the GPDO)) for larger and all new temporary campsites be confirmed, (Annex 1); and that the Executive Director be authorised to attest its sealing and to take all such action as necessary in relation to its publication and service in accordance with the GPDO; and

- (ii) the accompanying planning guidance to assist applicants applying for planning permission for temporary camping uses caught by the Article 4 Direction be endorsed.

Voting: Unanimous

44 Code of Corporate Governance (AM 615/22)

- 44.1 Rosalind Alderman presented her report, advising that the Authority needed to update its Local Code of Corporate Governance. Members were asked to resolve to adopt the draft updated Code of Corporate Governance (Annex 1) with immediate effect.

Resolved, that the revised Code of Corporate Governance (Annex 1 to AM 615/22) be adopted with immediate effect.

Voting: Unanimous

45. Any other items the Chair decides are urgent

- 45.1 None

46. Date of next meeting

- 46.1 Thursday 14 July 2022 at 10.00am – Venue – TBC

PART II ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ON THE GROUNDS THAT EXEMPTED INFORMATION MAY BE DISCLOSED

None

The meeting closed at 13:30pm.

Signed: Date: (Chair)