

## NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### MINUTES OF THE OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 27 JANUARY AT 10.00 AM AT THE LINDEN HALL, LYNDHURST COMMUNITY CENTRE, CENTRAL CAR PARK, HIGH STREET, LYNDHURST SO43 7NY

#### **Present:**

##### *Members*

Gavin Parker (Chair)

Diane Andrews

Gordon Bailey

Sue Bennison

David Bence

George Bisson

Richard Clewer

Zoe Clewer

David Harrison

Alexis McEvoy

Victoria Mander

Keith Mans

Neville Penman

Caroline Rackham

Barry Rickman

John Sanger

Stephen Tarling

Richard Taylor

Michael Thierry

Steve Trow

##### *Officers*

Alison Barnes

Steve Avery

Rosalind Alderman

Nigel Stone

David Stone

Hillary Makin

David Illsley

Paul Walton

Jim Mitchell

Vicki Gibbon

Sam Greatorex

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Director, Strategy and Planning

Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Head of Resources (Chief Finance Officer)

Corporate Services Manager

Communications Manager

Policy & Conservation Manager

Head of Environment & Rural Economy

Interpretation & Outreach Manager

Member Services Administrator

Systems Support Technician (Attending Remotely)

#### **15. Apologies for absence.**

15.1 Apologies for absence were received from Patrick Heneghan (Deputy Chair), George Meyrick and Ann Sevier.

#### **16. Declarations of Interest.**

16.1 There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

#### **17. Chair's announcements.**

17.1 Members were reminded that there would be a Part 2 report at this meeting, and a subsequent briefing to discuss the Government's response to the Landscapes Review.

#### **18. Minutes**

**Resolved**, that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2021 be approved as a true record.

*Voting: none voting against*

## 19. Public Question Time

Members received a presentation from the Friends of the New Forest in connection with the emerging Partnership Plan, campsites and strengthened bylaws to tackle infringements such as verge parking. A copy of the presentation is held by Member Services.

## 20. Chief Executive's Report (AM 610/22)

- 20.1 The Chief Executive introduced her report, reminding members that the report covered the period from the Authority meeting in October 2021.
- 20.2 Under the *Protect* theme, the Chief Executive advised members that the Government's response to the Landscapes Review had now been published, with the period until 9 April available to formulate a response. A short briefing would be given following the meeting, a members' day would be held on 2 February and further discussions with staff would be held over the coming months to consider the response.
- 20.3 The Net Zero with Nature programme had now identified 28 sites that had the potential for habitat restoration or as green spaces for wildlife and people which would be further discussed with landowners and partners to identify funding. Ms Barnes went on to highlight the COP26 conference, which had been attended by NPP and at which the Revere programme was launched with Palladium to drive investment into natural solutions and climate change. The New Forest Climate and Nature challenge had also been launched with over 500 people already signed up to pledge to move towards more sustainable living.
- 20.4 Continuing on the *Protect* theme the Chief Executive was pleased to announce that the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme had awarded £174,000 for 13 separate projects. The Authority and its partners had also been involved in the Government's test & trial schemes to find out what would work in term of a post-CAP scheme, one of the pilots for landscape recovery would be the New Forest.
- 20.5 Ms Barnes advised that 164 planning applications had been received over the period with an approval rate of 94%. The team were currently dealing with 180 live planning enforcement cases and there had been an increase in complaints regarding holiday accommodation requiring permission. The Chief Executive conveyed her thanks and best wishes to Senior Planning Officer Clare Ings who had retired at the end of January following 16 years with the Authority.
- 20.6 Under the *Enjoy* theme, the Chief Executive highlighted the recent success of the walking and cycling festival with over 80 experiences guided by experts, and 20 events having sold out. It was the first time that cycling experiences had been added and they had proved very popular. Volunteering had had its busiest quarter since 2019 and there were currently 776 registered volunteers, with 70 of those being new.
- 20.7 The Calshot to Gosport section of the England Coastal Path had been decided with ground works starting in March / April and the path scheduled to open in August 2022. The National Grid Enhancement Initiative (LEI) was currently funding five projects to improve access and biodiversity with another three new projects to commence shortly. Ms Barnes advised members of the 'Operation Mountie' speed awareness campaign that had been launched, in which 72 vehicles had recently been stopped by police and 112 speeding tickets had been issued.

- 20.8 Under the *Prosper* theme, Ms Barnes informed members that the Authority had now acquired a site in Burley for the development of two new affordable homes and a local heritage centre. It was intended that the centre would be taken forward by third parties and the homes would be let.
- 20.9 The New Forest Marque had grown in membership and was currently at its highest ever number with 170 businesses being part of the scheme, some of which had recently been finalists in the Brilliance in Business Awards - including three winners. Ms Barnes advised that the New Forest and Surrounds Green Health Group had recently had its first meeting and was progressing with its first project of developing a Green Health Hub website signposting health professionals to outdoor health and wellbeing prescription options.
- 20.10 Under the *Excellence* theme, Ms Barnes drew members' attention to the Annual Monitoring Report, which had been considered at the January Planning meeting and the Infrastructure Funding Statement, which set out the level of developer contributions received and released by the Authority. Ms Barnes drew attention to the ICT team and their excellent support of remote working during the pandemic, they were working tirelessly with countless security updates, had recently undertaken a cyber audit and were preparing for the new planning software. It was advised that staff wellbeing was continually at the forefront, with the wellbeing group looking at ways to improve wellbeing, through regular staff meetings and updates. Arrangements for working and returning to the office were being looked at in light of the recent lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.
- 20.11 Following discussion members then noted the report.
- 21. Oral Report from Resources, Audit and Performance Committee (1 November 2021)**
- 21.1 The Deputy Chair of the Committee (Alexis McEvoy) gave details of the main agenda items at the 1 November meeting of the Committee, namely the half year progress report, the half year budgetary control report, an updated risk register report, a report on the Draft Carbon Reduction Plan and a funding report. On this latter report, Committee members had noted that as the new draft Partnership Plan was finalised, a review of the Authority's funding approach would be required to enable the Authority to take forward the Plan's five themes with its partners and had voted that £10,000 of budget underspend be allocated for a feasibility study to look at potential income streams.
- 22. Partnership Plan Update (AM 611/22)**
- 22.1 Steve Avery introduced his report to members which related to the latest draft of the emerging Partnership Plan and highlighted the revisions that had been made in response to the public consultation last year. An important addition to the document was the insertion of proposed actions to deliver on the shared ambition for each of the five themes now included as an annex to the Plan. He added that the revised document had been produced prior to the Government's response to the Landscapes Review and therefore some further amendments might be necessary.
- 22.2 Mr Avery also highlighted section 3 of the report, regarding the feasibility of establishing a Partnership Group once the Partnership Plan was approved by partner organisations. Members were asked to note the latest draft of the Partnership Plan. The next steps to finalise it and the progress being made to establish the new

Partnership Group to oversee the implementation of the new Partnership Plan. Considerable discussion took place on the report and draft Plan and members thanked officers for their work in producing the document and co-ordinating feedback from the consultation.

**Members noted**

- (i) the latest draft of the Partnership Plan and associated work programme (Annex 1),
- (ii) the next steps to finalise the Plan and
- (iii) the progress being made to establish a new Partnership Group to oversee the implementation of the new Partnership Plan

**23. Adoption of Design Guide SPD (AM 612/22)**

- 23.1 David Illsley commenced his presentation by reminding members that at the Planning Committee in July 2021 members had approved the draft Design Guide SPD for a statutory period of public consultation. He explained that this report summarised the feedback that was received and, the amendments made, and recommended that the Authority formally adopt the Revised Design Guide. The Planning Committee meeting in December 2021 had considered the revised draft document and endorsed its formal adoption to this Authority meeting. Members supported the amendments made to the Design Guide following the public consultation held in late 2021; and the role the Design Guide will play as a material consideration in future planning decisions as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

**Resolved, that;**

- (i) members formally adopt the New Forest National Park Design Guide SPD with immediate effect from 27 January as a material consideration in planning decision making; and
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Executive Director (Strategy & Planning) to make any final minor amendments to the design and formatting of the SPD prior to publication.

*Voting: unanimous*

**24. Article 4 Direction (AM 613/22)**

- 24.1 Steve Avery reminded members that at the Authority meeting in March 2021, members had considered a report on the options for managing temporary 'pop up' campsites within the National Park and had authorised him to draft a non-immediate Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights for larger sites (50 or more pitches) and all new temporary campsites. He said that the main purpose of the current report was to update members on the public feedback from the 6-week period of consultation held in late 2021. This feedback, together with officers' responses, were set out in paragraph 2.6 of the report.
- 24.2 He proposed that confirmation of the Article 4 Direction would take place at the March Authority meeting which would allow officers to put in place guidance to provide better regulation and control of these sites and to assist potential applicants in putting together any future planning applications. Both guidance and the Article 4 Direction would therefore be recommended for approval to the Authority meeting on 24 March 2022.

**Members noted;**

- (i) the summary of responses to the National Park-wide Article 4 Direction relating to temporary campsites following the public consultation held in September – November 2021; and
- (ii) the intention to present a report on the confirmation of the Article 4 Direction, accompanied by the planning guidance, to the full Authority meeting in March 2022.

**25. External Audit Provision for 2023/24 (AM 614/22)**

- 25.1 Nigel Stone reminded members that in 2016/17, the Authority had opted into the ‘appointing person’ national auditor appointment arrangements established by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the period covering the Accounts for 2018/19 to 2022/23.
- 25.2 He said that the PSAA was about to undertake a procurement exercise for the next appointing period, covering audits for 2023/24 to 2027/28. Local government bodies had an option to arrange their own procurement and make the appointment themselves or in conjunction with other bodies, or they could join the PSAA and take advantage of the national collective scheme administered by them.
- 25.3 The conclusion of an analysis by officers was that the sector-wide procurement conducted by PSAA would produce better outcomes and would be less burdensome for the Authority than a procurement undertaken locally, for the reasons set out in the report.
- 25.4 Members supported opting into the national auditor appointment arrangements. In reply to a query from a member, Mr Stone advised that he would update the risk register in connection with the future risk of securing appropriate auditors and the carrying out of legally competent audit.

**Resolved that** the Authority accepts the Public Sector Audit Appointments’ invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government, police and other bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

*Voting: Unanimous*

**26 Appointment to Vacancies on Committees (AM 615/22)**

- 26.1 The Chair advised members that there was currently a vacancy for a Local Authority member on the Planning Committee, however unfortunately no one was available to currently take this position on. The Chair therefore proposed to defer the appointment and carry the vacancy until the Annual Authority meeting in October 2022. Members were minded to support this recommendation.

**Resolved,**

The Authority carry the current Local Authority member vacancy on the Planning Committee until the Annual Authority meeting in October 2022.

*Voting: unanimous*

**27. Any other items the Chair decides are urgent**

- 27.1 None

**28. Date of next meeting**

28.1 Thursday 24 March 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**

Members are asked to resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during the following item of business, as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and further that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, namely the need to avoid disclosing sensitive information relating to the Authority’s financial and business affairs and information that is subject to legal professional privilege.

**29 Proposed Enforcement Action (AM 616/22)**

Members considered a report on the above matter, which was minuted separately.

The meeting closed at 12:30pm.

Signed: ..... Date: ..... (Chair)