

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 26 JANUARY AT 10.00 AM AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON SO41 9ZG

Present:

Members

Gavin Parker (Chair)

Patrick Heneghan (Deputy Chair)

Diane Andrews

Gordon Bailey

George Bisson

Sue Bennison

Zoe Clewer

David Harrison

Victoria Mander

Keith Mans

George Meyrick

Neville Penman

John Sanger

Ann Sevier

Stephen Tarling

Richard Taylor

Steve Trow

Officers

Alison Barnes

Steve Avery

Nigel Stone

David Stone

Paul Walton

Vicki Gibbon

Simon Ludlow

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Director

Head of Resources (Chief Finance Officer)

Corporate Services Manager – Deputy Monitoring Officer

Head of Environment & Rural Economy

Member Services Administrator

ICT Technical Officer (Attending Remotely)

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Richard Clewer, David Bence, Alexis McEvoy and Caroline Rackham.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

3. Chair's Announcements

- 3.1 None

4. Minutes

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2022 were approved as a true record.

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2022 be approved as a true record.

Voting: None voting against

5. Public Question Time

- 5.1 Brian Tarnoff, informed members that he was speaking as a member of the public rather than on behalf of the New Forest Association on this occasion. Mr Tarnoff then gave a presentment which referred to minute item 9, Public Space Protection Orders.

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

6. Chief Executive's Report (AM 638/23)

- 6.1 The Chief Executive introduced her report, reminding Members that the report covered the period since the Authority meeting in October 2022.
- 6.2 Under the *Protect* theme, the Chief Executive began her report by highlighting the remarkable transformation of landscape which had been achieved by the undergrounding of power cables near Burley in conjunction with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks. The Local List project had now a total of 2,351 assets with a range of places including places of worship, schools and military remains.
- 6.3 Continuing on the *Protect* theme, Ms Barnes advised that the Farming in Protected Landscape Scheme had reached its half-way point, with the Panel committed to spend £156,000 so far in 2022-23 and a further allocation of £100,000 by March 2024. Most of this support was for landowners to plant trees and hedgerows along with harvesting rainwater to alleviate flooding issues. The Planning team had continued to hit a 93% approval rate this quarter despite the challenges they had faced with the new Agile software system and the Tree team had 100% of decisions issued within an eight-week period.
- 6.4 The Chief Executive explained that the Authority was working with eight neighbouring planning authorities in order to achieve a strategic approach to mitigate recreational impacts on the National Park as a result of local developments. With regard to Freeports and Investment Zones, the Authority submitted a letter to the Secretary of State setting out concerns on Investment Zones, this was subsequently dropped in the Autumn Statement. The Solent Freeport was launched in December and contacts are ongoing to ensure continued focus on green pledges contained within the bid.
- 6.5 Under the *Enjoy* theme, Ms Barnes highlighted Public Space Protection Orders which would be discussed later in the agenda. The New Forest Code, with two new operations in place; Operation Mountie to reduce animal accidents and Operation Wolf to tackle fly tipping both were in conjunction with the local police and partner organisations.
- 6.6 A recent visitor survey had received over 700 responses, this would help to form an understanding of behaviour and impacts on the National Park. A visitor welcome film was currently being produced in conjunction with partners, which would include the New Forest Code messages and would be launched in the coming months.
- 6.7 Continuing on the *Enjoy* theme, Ms Barnes welcomed Shelley Filby to the team as the new Project Manager for Pedall and Steve Trow joining as trustee, she thanked David Harrison for his input who recently retired as a Trustee. The walking and cycling festival celebrated its 10th year with over 700 people taking part in 96 guided events.
- 6.8 Under the *Prosper* theme, the Chief Executive was pleased to announce that the Rangers had been supporting local food banks and warm hubs, along with providing New Forest themed activities for families. The New Forest Marque had a successful 'eats and treats' fair at Brockenhurst college over the Christmas period and 11 Marque members and associates were shortlisted at the recent Brilliance in Business Awards.

- 6.9 Ms Barnes reported that James Alden, National Park Health Fellow, had recently given a presentation on the avoided health care costs provided by local greenspace and the Forest, which combined existing data from ONS and the footprint ecology report, with the annual figure estimated to be £27 million. The early green careers network had recently been set up and a presentation was given at the Careers Leaders and Enterprise Advisor Network event. The Chief Executive advised that the New Forest Tour had run for 12 weeks last year with a slight increase in passenger journeys. The tour had received positive feedback with a 4.7 rating on TripAdvisor.
- 6.10 Under the *Excellence* theme, Ms Barnes advised that the New Partnership Plan Leaders' Panel met online during January and would continue to meet four times a year to ensure cross-organisational working against the Partnership Plan. She also commented on the English National Park Authorities letter to the Times regarding diminishing resources. Ms Barnes explained that the Authority did have a balanced budget for the current financial year and were currently progressing a member-led resources task and finish group.
- 6.11 Ms Barnes then paid tribute to the late Julian Johnson, who had sadly passed away. Mr Johnson had been an Authority member for 12 years until 2017, with four of those as Authority Chair. She said it had been a great pleasure and privilege working with him and many have fond memories of his time as member and Chair.
- 6.12 During discussion a member requested that a Members Day be arranged to discuss Freeports further. A question was raised regarding variable speed cameras on the Roger Penny Way, Mr Avery responded that it was currently at feasibility stage and should be an outcome by next summer. It was also raised that no progress had been made on cycle networks and it was hoped that the Partnership Leaders Panel would be able to help get this moving. Members noted the report.
- 6.13 Following the Chief Executive presentation, Dan Parsons New Forest Marque Chair gave a presentation. He highlighted the goals of the New Forest Marque for 2022-2025, along with some of their recent work. A copy of the presentation can be found on the website.
- 7. Climate and Nature Emergency (AM 639/23)**
- 7.1 Paul Walton began his report by reminding members that a commitment had been made to become a net zero organisation by 2030; and to work with partners to develop a plan for the National Park and surrounding areas to be 'net zero with nature' by 2050. He explained that this report contained the work which had been carried out during 2022 and identified key areas of activity for the forthcoming year. Mr Walton asked members to note the content of the report.
- 8. Oral Report from Resources, Audit and Performance Committee (7 November 2022)**
- 8.1 Patrick Heneghan, Committee Chair, referred to key aspects of the minutes of the above meeting including the second quarter key performance indicators and progress against the 2022/23 work programme, as well as the budgetary control report where expenditure matched second quarter income. He also referred to the risk register and the increased risk which had been identified in connection with the NPA's core funding where the risk had been elevated from amber to red risk rating. Authority partnership work to encourage investment of private finance in the natural capital of the National Park had also been considered by the Committee.

Following further brief discussion, members noted the report.

9. Consultation on two Public Space Protection Orders for the National Park (AM 640/22)

- 9.1 Mr Avery began his presentation by reminding members that New Forest District Council had proposed to introduce two Public Space Protection Orders for the New Forest, he explained that this report set out the details of the PSPO's along with the Authority's response to the consultation. Members were asked to endorse the recommendation as detailed in the report.
- 9.2 Following discussion and in response to the report, a member suggested that QR codes could be added to the signage to detail why these actions were wrong. A question was asked regarding resources and the willingness of staff, Mr Avery responded that resources were constrained and that discussions were currently taking place with Rangers, a list of those who would be able to enforce PSPO's would be required by NFDC. It was also asked why sky lanterns and fireworks were not included, Mr Avery advised that NFDC had looked into this, fireworks were usually used on private land and PSPO's were specifically related to public land; all evidence to enforce a PSPO must be robust, and it was found that BBQ's were the main reason for heath fires.

It was resolved that:

1. the making of both PSPO's as drafted be supported
- 2 the proposed enforcement arrangements be supported; and
- 3 the Authority work with the relevant partner organisations to agree appropriate signage

Voting: Unanimous

10. Proposal for project with National Parks UK (AM 641/23)

- 10.1 Paul Walton introduced his report highlighting the role a National Park can play with regard to global issues around biodiversity and climate. He explained that this report was to seek approval from members to engage with Giant Panda National Park in China. This would consist of an MoU to enable the sharing of experience and management practices between the respective parks.
- 10.2 Following a full discussion and vote on the original recommendation (3:10) members were minded not to support the Officer's recommendation on this occasion as Chinese National Parks operate very differently from UK National Parks. They were uncertain of the benefits this would bring to the National Park and how much resources this would entail. Members asked Alison Barnes to respond to National Parks UK setting out the Authority's concerns.

11. Date of next meeting

- 11.1 Thursday 23 March 2023 at 10.00am – Council Chamber, Lymington Town Hall, Lymington

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 were 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.

12. Proposals for Projects with national Parks Partnership (AM 642/23)

12.1 This item was minuted in accordance with the Authority's Standing Orders.

The meeting closed at 12:50pm.

Signed: Date: (Chair)