

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 13 JULY 2023 AT 10.00 AM AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, LYMINGTON TOWN HALL, AVENUE ROAD, LYMINGTON SO41 9ZG

Present:

Members

Gavin Parker (Chair)	Dan Poole
Patrick Heneghan (Deputy Chair)	Joe Reilly
David Bence	Stephen Tarling
George Bisson	Richard Taylor
Zoe Clewer	Michael Thierry
Victoria Mander	Derek Tipp
Louise Parker-Jones	
Neville Penman	

Officers

Alison Barnes	Chief Executive Officer
Steve Avery	Executive Director
Nigel Stone	Head of Resources (Chief Finance Officer)
Paul Walton	Head of Environment and Rural Economy
David Illsley	Policy and Conservation Manager
David Stone	Corporate Services Manager – Deputy Monitoring Officer
Vicki Gibbon	Member Services Administrator

27. Apologies for Absence

- 27.1 Apologies for absence were received from Gordon Bailey, Richard Clewer, David Harrison, Mel Kendal, Caroline Rackham and Steve Trow.

28. Declarations of Interest

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

29. Chair's Announcements

- 29.1 The Chair welcomed the new members who had recently been appointed to the Authority and thanked the outgoing members for their service.

30. Minutes

- 30.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 were approved as a true record.

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 be approved as a true record.

Voting: None voting against

31. Public Question Time

- 31.1 None

32. Chief Executive's Report (AM 649/23)

- 32.1 The Chief Executive introduced her report, reminding Members that the report covered the period since the Authority meeting in March 2023.
- 32.2 Under the *Protect* theme, the Chief Executive began her report by advising the Green and Blue Horizon scheme had now come to an end, it brought together five organisations with an £800,000 investment to the Forest. The Farming in Protected Landscapes project was recently showcased at the National Parks All Party Parliamentary Group, the project has had a total of £547,000 invested in the Forest so far.
- 32.3 Continuing on the *Protect* theme Ms Barnes informed members that the two Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) had now come into effect, which prohibit the feeding / petting of ponies along with a ban on fires and BBQs in the Forest. It was advised that the planning team had seen a high number of applications this quarter and were pleased to end the previous year exceeding all national performance targets for determining applications. The Policy team had recently responded to several government consultations along with working with partner organisations to develop a strategic approach on habitat mitigation and had prepared the revised Statement of Community Involvement which would be considered later in the agenda.
- 32.4 Under the *Enjoy* theme, the Chief Executive updated members on the work of the Rangers, this included their joint operations with partners promoting responsible dog walking, a Wild Play event at Bartley Park, the ground nesting bird campaign and operation Mountie; to reduce speeding on Forest roads. A survey had been launched to report the location and size of rhododendron, this pretty invader can be detrimental to native species so does require removal - there had been 40 public recordings so far.
- 32.5 Ms Barnes was pleased to announce that Hayden Bridgeman had been a CNP New Perspectives Award nominee and had also won a Europarc Natural Heritage Scholarship. The Education and Youth team had engaged with 270 pupils in school visits over the last quarter along with organising a Wild Play event and an Exxon family and friends' day. The New Forest Show would be taking place 25-27 July, 'Our Nature Story' would be the theme for the NPA stand, a reception to launch the Re:New Nature challenge would be held along with the National Park Awards with the CLA which was in its 10th year.
- 32.6 Under the *Prosper* theme, the Chief Executive announced that the New Forest Tour began on 1 July and that there was a New Forest District residents reduced price ticket available. The Inaugural Greenprint Conference took place with 120 delegates attending which focused on growing green skills and jobs. The new local produce guide for the New Forest Marque had been distributed, while there had been a decline in membership six new members had recently been recruited however.
- 32.7 Under the *Excellence* theme, Ms Barnes highlighted the Re:New Forest Partnership Plan along with the South Downs National Park Chair and Chief Executive visit and the National Park City visit. Authority staff had recently taken part in their annual discovery days, which give staff the opportunity to learn more about the forest and spend time with their peers.

Members noted the report.

33. Oral Report from Resources, Audit and Performance Committee (5 June 2023)

- 33.1 David Bence, Deputy Chair of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee reported on the items considered at the RAPC meeting on 5 June 2023, including the annual internal audit performance and opinion report for the year ending 31 March 2023, the final quarter (January - March 2023) progress against the objectives from the 2022/23 Work Programme, the Financial Report and Treasury Report, the approval of the NPA's Health and Safety Policy and a report on the partnership between the New Forest National Park Authority and Friends of PEDALL charity.

Members noted the report.

34. Business Plan 2023-27 and Annual Work Programme 2023/24 (AM 650/23)

- 34.1 Nigel Stone introduced his report explaining that as one of the delivery organisations for the new Partnership Plan the Authority had now derived and extracted specific outcomes to produce the internal Authority Business Plan which would cover the period up to 2027. A more detailed Annual Work Programme had also been produced which would be overseen and monitored by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.
- 34.2 In relation to the Business Plan, Mr Stone explained where the hierarchy of plans came from and how they were all linked to ensure the proposed Business Plan mirrors the five themes from the Partnership Plan. He said the Plan would need to be flexible within its lifetime to reflect changing government or other outside priorities and influences.
- 34.3 In relation to the Annual Work Programme, it was advised that the priorities and objectives were challenging but achievable. This would be monitored by the Resources Audit and Performance Committee. Members resolved to support the recommendations as set out below.

It was resolved that:

1. the Business Plan 2023-27 priorities set out in Annex 1 of the report be approved
2. the Work Programme 2023/24 set out in Annex 2 of the report be approved

Voting: unanimous

35. Appointments to Committees (AM 651/23)

- 35.1 David Stone began his report by advising that due to the recent change in membership of the Authority following the local elections in May some of the Authority's committees were now carrying vacancies. To assist with meetings being quorate in the period prior to the Annual Authority meeting, Members were asked to resolve the appointments to committees as detailed below until the Annual Authority meeting in October, where all members would have the opportunity to stand for all Authority committees.

It was resolved that:

1. Caroline Rackham be appointed to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee;

2. Gordon Bailey be appointed to the Planning Committee and the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee; and
 3. Stephen Tarling be appointed to the Planning Committee,
- with immediate effect, with these appointments continuing until the Annual Authority meeting on 19 October 2023 or such earlier time as the Authority wishes to amend the membership of its Committees.

Voting: unanimous

36. Appointments to Outside Bodies (AM 652/23)

- 36.1 David Stone explained that due to the Authority's change in membership following the elections in May, there were a number of vacancies on the Authority's representation on outside bodies. With the agreement of the Chair, it was felt that these vacancies should be held over until the annual Authority meeting in October when appointments would be reviewed. If a vacant representative position was required to attend a meeting of an outside body it was agreed that the deputy or reserve would attend, if this was not possible members were asked to endorse the Chair or Deputy Chair of the Authority to attend.

It was resolved that:

- 1 the filling of the vacant appointments to external bodies be held over until the Authority meeting on 19 October 2023; and
- 2 where a vacancy has arisen in respect of the Authority's appointments to outside bodies and it is not possible for a deputy or reserve to attend a meeting of that body, that the Chair or Deputy Chair be authorised to attend.

Voting: Unanimous

37. Social Media Policy and Members Code of Conduct Update (AM 653/23)

- 37.1 George Bisson, Standards Committee Chair, gave an overview of the recent discussion which took place at the Standards Committee meeting in regard to the Social Media Policy and Members Code of Conduct. He explained that members were now asked to consider if the Code, Member Complaints Process, the two local protocols and Social Media Policy were thought fit for purpose and could be adopted.
- 37.2 Nigel Stone highlighted a small but significant addition on page 33 of the Code of Conduct, section 2.10 whereby the Monitoring Officer can refer a complaint back to any other body if it was necessary to do so.

It was resolved that:

1. The Authority considers and adopts the revised:
 - a) the Code of Conduct (Annex 2);
 - b) the Member Complaints Process (Annex 4);
 - c) the Protocol for Member and Officer Relations (Annex 5);
 - d) the Protocol for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters (Annex 6);
 - e) the Social Media Policy (Annex 7).

Voting: unanimous

38. Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (AM 654/23)

- 38.1 David Illsley began his presentation by advising that all planning authorities must prepare a 'Statement of Community Involvement' (SCI). The Authority's current SCI dates from 2013 and at the March 2023 Authority meeting members endorsed the revised draft SCI to be published for the purposes of a 7-week public consultation. He explained that following the public consultation this report summarised the responses received and the recommended amendments for the final version. Members agreed to approve the recommendation.

It was resolved that:

1. Members approve the revised Statement of Community Involvement (Annex 1) to guide our engagement with consultees in our statutory planning work.

Voting: Unanimous

39 Partnership Plan – Building a Re:New Nature Partnership (AM 655/23)

- 39.1 Paul Walton advised members that this report was the first in a series of papers to illustrate how, along with partner organisations, the theme based 'agenda for actions' within the Partnership Plan would be activated. Mr Walton highlighted various aspects of the report: the spatial approach to nature recovery; the proposal for a new forum / partnership to drive nature recovery in the National Park and beyond the boundary; the need for the forum / partnership to have an independent Chair and that the likely partners in the forum would include local authorities, along with key environmental non-government organisations such as RSPB, National Trust, HIWWT and Friends of the New Forest.
- 39.2 It was explained that the next steps would involve officially launching the Re:New Nature Challenge at the New Forest Show with the Re:New Nature Partnership being convened in the autumn of this year. Following discussion members agreed to the recommendation as detailed below.

It was resolved that:

1. pursuant to the approved Partnership Plan, take forward the development of the Re:New Nature Partnership as set out in report AM 655/23, to include a partnership forum and practitioner's forum in accordance with Appendix 2 to the report;
2. delegate authority to the Chief Executive and the Head of Environment and Rural Economy to take all action as necessary in this regard, including drafting Terms of Reference for the Re:New Nature Partnership, determining its membership, convening meetings of the partnership forum and the practitioner's forum, appointing a chair of the partnership forum, and ensuring the NPA is represented appropriately at meetings; and
3. the introduction of the spatial approach to nature recovery in the New Forest National Park be endorsed.

Voting: Unanimous

40. Date of next meeting

40.1 Thursday 19 October 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

NONE

The meeting closed at 12:25pm.

Signed: Date: (Chair)